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MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Weapons Shipment

Reuters ("IRAN DENIES LINK TO N.KOREAN ARMS FOUND IN THAILAND", Tokyo, 2009/12/21) reported that Iran's chief nuclear negotiator on Monday denied Tehran was linked to weapons seized in Thailand this month from a plane travelling from the DPRK, after reports that their final destination might have been Iran. "The question that we are after such things is completely baseless and we are not at all after such weapons, let alone bringing in or importing from other countries," Saeed Jalili told a news conference in Tokyo. "Our approach is ... completely different from that of North Korea. We seriously oppose nuclear weapons of mass destruction," he said.

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2. DPRK Economy

Institute for Far Eastern Studies ("NORTH KOREA REVISES ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT LAWS ", 2009/12/21) reported that the Korean Central Broadcasting Station (KCBS) announced on December 16 that the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly Standing Committee has revised the DPRK's Real Estate Management Law, the Commodities Consumption Level Law, the General Equipment Import Law, and other laws related to economic management. The KCBS reported that the Real Estate Management Law "regulates fundamental issues of real estate registration and inspection, use, and payment of user fees," but offered no further details.

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3. Sino-DPRK Relations

Bloomberg (John Brinsley, "KIM JONG IL MAY VISIT CHINA EARLY NEXT YEAR", 2009/12/21) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il will probably visit the PRC in January or February for the first time in four years, the Yomiuri newspaper said, citing unidentified sources. Kim intends to meet with PRC President Hu Jintao and other officials, the Japanese paper said. A high-ranking DPRK

representative has been in the PRC since last month to lay the groundwork for the visit, the Yomiuri said.

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4. US on DPRK Leadership

Yonhap News (Hwang Doo-hyong, "OBAMA URGED TO KEEP N. KOREA INFORMED OF BENEFITS OF REFORM: SCHOLAR ", Washington, 2009/12/21) reported that the Barack Obama administration, with an eye toward the successor to DPRK leader Kim Jong-il, should keep sending a clear signal to Pyongyang about the benefits of foregoing nuclear weapons and pursuing reform, a U.S. scholar argues. "Any change in the DPRK leadership after Kim Jong-il may represent an opportunity to transform U.S.-DPRK relations, especially if a successor leadership is willing to forego nuclear weapons development and move along the path of economic reform," Scott Snyder, director of the Center for U.S.-Korea Policy at the Asia Foundation, said in the January edition of the Washington Quarterly, published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

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5. Inter-Korean Naval Clashes

Xinhua News Agency ("S. KOREAN NAVY REGRETS OVER DPRK'S WARNING", Seoul, 2009/12/21) reported that the ROK Navy on Monday expressed deep regret over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s claim on the inter-Korean maritime border in the western sea, vowing to defend the existing Northern Limit Line (NLL). In a statement, the ROK Navy described the DPRK's claim as "irrational", saying that Seoul expressed grave concern as Pyongyang's "threat raised unnecessary tension" between the two sides. The statement said that the NLL is the de-facto western maritime inter-Korean border, which should be defended, urging to stop all actions that might cause tension in nearby waters.

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6. Inter-Korea Relations

Agence France Presse ("TIES WITH SEOUL NOT LINKED TO NUKE DISPUTE: N.KOREA", Seoul, 2009/12/21) reported that the DPRK said the nuclear standoff should not impede efforts to improve relations with the ROK, accusing the Seoul government of using the issue as an excuse to block warmer ties. "The nuclear issue has nothing to do with North-South relations and therefore, it cannot become an obstacle to improving inter-Korean relations," the North's ruling party newspaper Rodong Sinmun said in a commentary carried by the state news agency.

Bernama ("SOUTH KOREA TO INCREASE HUMANITARIAN AID TO NORTH KOREA", Seoul, 2009/12/21) reported that the ROK government plans to increase its spending on humanitarian and economic aid to the DPRK local media Yonhap reported Monday. According to government sources, the ROK will contribute a few billion won (several million U.S. dollars) from the Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund to a couple of aid projects being led by international organisations including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The government source said the Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Committee is planning to convene as early as this week to finalize the deal.

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, "2 KOREAS TO OPEN MODERNIZED MILITARY HOT LINES", Seoul, 2009/12/22) reported that the two Koreas have nearly finished connecting fiber-optic cables across the DMZ for a military hotline and will test the nine communication channels later this week before formally opening them next week, ROK Unification Ministry spokesman Chun Hae-sung said Tuesday. The fiber-optic cables will be laid near nine outdated copper cable hot lines, some of which the North cut off in 2008, citing technical problems, before restoring them, according to the ministry.

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7. ROK Afghanistan Dispatch

Xinhua News Agency ("S KOREAN MINOR PARTIES OPPOSES TROOP DISPATCH TO AFGHANISTAN", Seoul, 2009/12/21) reported that the ROK's four opposition parties on Monday vowed to oppose the government's plan to extend the period of troop dispatch to Afghanistan, local media reported. Four lawmakers representing the opposition parties, including the liberal-leaning main opposition Democratic Party and left-leaning Democratic Labor Party, issued a joint statement to parliament denouncing the ruling Grand National Party's move to pass the troop redeployment bill. "We cannot accept the troop redeployment to Afghanistan, and will do our best to stop it," the statement read, according to Yonhap News Agency.

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8. ROK Military

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "NEW ARMORED VEHICLE SINKS DURING EXERCISE", 2009/12/21) reported that a newly deployed amphibious K21 infantry fighting vehicle (IFV) sank during a river-crossing training exercise south of Seoul earlier this month, military authorities said. The vehicle that entered service Nov. 30 was undergoing trials with two others. Army officials and experts said a problem with the design could have caused the accident in which three crew members had to be rescued.

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9. ROK Nuclear Energy

Yonhap News ("LEE TO PUSH FOR EARLIER OWNERSHIP OF FULLY INDEPENDENT ATOMIC-ENERGY TECH ", Seoul, 2009/12/21) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak will push to obtain fully independent atomic-energy technologies earlier than the envisioned target year of 2015 as part of the nation's efforts to drive down carbon emissions, the president said Monday. "Although we do not currently possess core technologies, (the government) plans to advance the target year of technology independence, which was originally set for 2015, by a few years," said Lee after a meeting with officials on 2010 plans. "Atomic energy is the realistic alternative to reduce carbon emissions, as well as being the most economic eco-friendly project," the president noted.

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10. ROK Security

Yonhap News (Lee Chi-dong, "S. KOREA TO APPOINT TWO PROFESSORS AS SECURITY AMBASSADORS", Seoul, 2009/12/21) reported that the ROK' s foreign ministry said Monday that it plans to appoint two well-known professors as ambassadors for international security affairs later in the week. A ceremony to formally appoint Nam Joo-hong at Kyonggi University and Lee Jung-min at Yonsei University to the post will be held on Tuesday at the ministry's headquarters in central Seoul, ministry spokesman Moon Tae-young said. "On the basis of their various experiences and expertise in the international security field, they will be tasked with engaging in such activities as publicizing the government's policy and attending international conferences," he told a press briefing.

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11. ROK Cyber Security

Yonhap News ("S. KOREA'S SPY AGENCY SUSPECTS N. KOREA HACKED JOINT WAR PLAN ", Seoul, 2009/12/21) reported that the ROK's intelligence agency suspects the DPRK may be behind the recent hacking of a ROK-U.S. war plan designed to cope with contingency in the DPRK, according to lawmakers who were briefed by the agency Monday. "We don't have concrete evidence to prove it was committed by North Korea, but we are suspecting so," Won Sei-hoon, chief of the National Intelligence Service, was quoted as saying in a closed-door briefing to National Assembly intelligence committee, citing the Chinese IP address.

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12. USFJ Base Relocation

Kyodo News ("CLINTON MEETS JAPAN'S ENVOY TO U.S. OVER BILATERAL RELATIONS", Washington, 2009/12/21) reported that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met Monday with Japanese Ambassador to the United States Ichiro Fujisaki in what appears intended to relay Washington's hope to implement as agreed upon with Tokyo a bilateral deal on where to relocate a key U.S. military airfield in Okinawa. "The topic for discussion was the secretary's views on overall Japan- U.S. relations," Fujisaki told reporters after the talks, noting there was no change in the U.S. position on the base relocation issue. He said Clinton invited him to talk "from a standpoint that she attaches an importance to Japan-U.S. ties." He also said it is rare for the top U.S. diplomat to meet with an ambassador and that he "seriously takes it to heart."

Associated Press ("JAPAN SETS MAY DEADLINE TO RESOLVE US BASE DISPUTE", Tokyo, 2009/12/22) reported that Japan aims to resolve the dispute over the relocation of the Futenma air base by May, Defense Minister Toshifumi Kitazawa said Tuesday. While setting May as the deadline, Kitazawa insisted Tokyo hopes to settle the issue as quickly as possible.

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13. Japan on Iran Nuclear Program

Associated Press ("JAPAN EXPRESSES 'STRONG CONCERNS' OVER IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME ", Tokyo, 2009/12/21) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada conveyed his "strong concerns" to Iran's visiting chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili regarding his country's nuclear programme, news reports said. Okada told Jalili that it was "extremely regrettable" for Iran to fail to accept a proposal brokered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to transfer low-enriched uranium out of Iran for processing. Okada also told Jalili to "take heed of international concerns about Iran's relationship with North Korea" because of its nuclear and missile programmes, news reports said.

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14. Japan Energy

Asia Times (Kosuke Takahashi , "JAPAN EYES METHANE HYDRATE AS ENERGY SAVIOR", Tokyo, 2009/12/21) reported that Japan may have found a way to reduce its almost total dependence on other countries for the oil that drives the industries on which the country's wealth is built. Betting that Japan can extract and commercially exploit methane hydrate, the hoped-for alternative to oil, investors last week drove up the price of Japan Drilling. The mineral is abundant in the seabeds surrounding Japan and may, over and above revitalizing the country's economy, reshape Tokyo's diplomatic and military relationships with the outside world, including the United States.

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15. Japan Space Program

Kyodo News ("3 ASTRONAUTS INCLUDING JAPAN'S NOGUCHI LIFT OFF FROM KAZAKHSTAN", Baikonur, 2009/12/21) reported that a Japanese astronaut left for the International Space Station Monday from the Baikonur space center in Kazakhstan as one of the three crew members of Russia's Soyuz space capsule. Soichi Noguchi, 44, will stay at the ISS for about five months through next May in his second space trip following one in 2005 as a crew member of the U.S. space shuttle Discovery. During his stay at the ISS, Noguchi will be involved in various scientific studies making use of the space environment, including looking at how space radiation affects the human body.

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16. PRC Labor

New York Times (Edward Wong, "CHINA'S EXPORT OF LABOR FACES SCORN ", Rung Son, 2009/12/21) reported that the PRC, famous for its export of cheap goods, is increasingly known for shipping out cheap labor. These global migrants often work in factories or on PRC-run construction and engineering projects, though the range of jobs is astonishing. But a backlash against them has grown. Across Asia and Africa, episodes of protest and violence against PRC workers have flared. Vietnam and India have moved to impose new labor rules for foreign companies and restrict the number of PRC workers allowed to enter, straining relations with Beijing.

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17. PRC Social Unrest

British Broadcasting System (Shirong Chen , "SOCIAL UNREST 'ON THE RISE' IN CHINA " , 2009/12/21) reported that social unrest is on the rise in the PRC, according to an analysis by a PRC think-tank. The country is grappling with more acute social problems than ever before, according to a report from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Crime is also up, despite a nationwide campaign to shore up social stability. Although continued economic growth has provided a greater number of jobs, the PRC has seen more social conflict in 2009 than before.

Reuters (Stefanie McIntyre , "HUNDREDS PROTEST IN MACAU ON HANDOVER ANNIVERSARY", Macau, 2009/12/21) reported that about a thousand people marched through Macau's streets, urging the government to fight corruption and grant them more political freedom, as the territory marked its 10th anniversary under PRC rule. The protesters waved banners that called for universal suffrage in 2019 and chanted anti-corruption slogans hours after PRC President Hu Jintao attended the swearing-in of the territory's new chief executive, Fernando Chui. "Now is the time to start again the timetable for democratic development for Macau," Antonio Ng, a Macau legislator and one of the key organizers of the protest, told Reuters.

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18. Sino-Cambodia Relations

Agence France Presse ("CHINA BOOSTS CAMBODIA AID AFTER UIGHURS DEPORTED", Phnom Penh , 2009/12/21) reported that the PRC signed pacts worth one billion dollars in aid to Cambodia Monday and thanked Phnom Penh for its controversial decision to deport a group of Uighurs seeking refuge back to Chinese soil. The pacts were worth 1.2 billion dollars in aid and loans to Cambodia, according to government spokesman Khieu Kanharith, who said the two countries agreed to strengthen their relations in all fields. Uighur leader Rebiya Kadeer said the deportation reflected Beijing's growing clout in the region, saying Phnom Penh's decision was "no doubt influenced by enormous Chinese pressure, backed by hundreds of millions of dollars in aid".

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19. PRC Ethnic Unrest

Associated Press (Tini Tran, "CHINA DEFENDS DEPORTATION OF UIGHUR ASYLUM-SEEKERS", Beijing, 2009/12/21) reported that the PRC's foreign ministry defended the repatriation of 20 Muslims who had fled to Cambodia, saying the move was in line with immigration law and usual practice. "In line with immigration law, Cambodia has in recent days deported 20 Chinese citizens who illegally entered their country," PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said in a faxed statement. "The Chinese side received the above-mentioned people according to usual practice."

Cable News Network ("U.S. SLAMS DEPORTATION OF UYGHUR REFUGEES FROM CAMBODIA TO CHINA", 2009/12/21) reported that the U.S. State Department said it was "deeply disturbed" at the deportation of 20 Uyghur asylum seekers from Cambodia back to the PRC. The deportation "will affect Cambodia's relationship with the U.S. and its international standing," said acting State

Department spokesman Gordon Duguid in a statement. "The United States is deeply concerned about the welfare of these individuals, who had sought protection under international law," Duguid said.

Associated Press (Cara Anna, "CHINA DENIES AID PACKAGE, UIGHUR EXPULSIONS LINKED", Beijing, 2009/12/22) reported that the PRC government denied Tuesday that the \$1.2 billion in aid it gave Cambodia was linked to the deportation back to the PRC of 20 minority Muslim Uighurs who had sought asylum. A PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman defended the deportations Tuesday and called the handling of the Uighurs an "internal affair" and saying there were "no strings attached" to the aid package. "According to my knowledge, some are suspected of criminal cases," Jiang Yu told a regularly scheduled news briefing. "Public security forces will handle the relevant outlaws. Their whereabouts, I have no information to offer you."

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20. PRC on Climate Talks

Associated Press (Gillian Wong, "CHINA: CLIMATE TALKS YIELDED 'POSITIVE' RESULTS", Beijing, 2009/12/21) reported that the PRC lauded the outcome of a historic U.N. climate conference that ended with a nonbinding agreement that urges major polluters to make deeper emissions cuts — but does not require it. Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said the international climate talks produced "significant and positive" results. The Obama administration also defended the agreement as a "great step forward" — despite widespread disappointment among environmentalists that the pact does not include mandatory targets that would draw sanctions.

Associated Press ("CHINA BLASTS CLAIM IT 'HIJACKED' CLIMATE TALKS", Beijing, 2009/12/22) reported that PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said a British editorial accusing the PRC of "hijacking" climate talks seemed designed to sow discord among developing nations. She said the comments by an individual British politician — not mentioning Miliband by name — were an attempt to "shirk the obligations of developed countries to their developing counterparts and foment discord among developing countries, but the attempt was doomed to fail." Jiang added that developed countries are "absolutely unqualified to censure developing countries" on climate change since many of them have not honored existing commitments to curb global warming. "China has made arduous efforts," she said. "In terms of attitude and effectiveness of our actions, our measures are on par with any other country."

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21. Sino-French Energy Cooperation

United Press International ("FRANCE, CHINA SIGN AVIATION, NUCLEAR DEALS", Beijing, 2009/12/21) reported that construction began Monday on the Taishan nuclear power station, a PRC-French joint venture in the PRC's Guangdong province. The inauguration of the largest Sino-French joint venture in the energy sector was attended by PRC Vice Premier Li Keqiang and visiting French Prime Minister Francois Fillon, Xinhua news agency reported. The presence of the leaders of the two nations reflected the importance they attach to enhancing nuclear energy cooperation, CGNPC Chairman Qian Zhimin said.

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