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MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Xinhua News Agency ("S KOREAN UNIFICATION MINISTER CALLS FOR POSITIVE TURN IN DPRK'S NUCLEAR ISSUES", Seoul, 2009/12/22) reported that the ROK's Unification Minister Hyun In-taek on Tuesday said there needs to be a turning point next year in nuclear issues of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), local media reported. The minister also said he sees renewed hopes in its relations with the DPRK despite stalled nuclear negotiations and soured inter-Korean ties. "Inter-Korean relations have not been put back on the right track, but there have been (positive) changes," he said, citing medical aid Seoul sent earlier this month to Pyongyang to help treat A/H1N1 flu patients there. The country should deepen its understanding on the DPRK besides its nuclear issues, Hyun added.

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2. ROK on Six-Party Talks

Agence France Presse ("S.KOREA WANTS SIX-PARTY TALKS 'NO LATER' THAN FEB", Seoul, 2009/12/22) reported that six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear disarmament must resume soon if they are to be revived at all, ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-Hwan was quoted as saying Tuesday. "The six-party talks should be resumed in January or before the Lunar New Year holidays (mid-February) or the end of February," Yu told local journalists, according to Yonhap news agency. "Otherwise the life of the talks may come to an end."

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3. US on Six-Party Talks

Yonhap News (Hwang Doo-hyong, "U.S. WAITING RESPONSE FROM N. KOREA ON 6-WAY TALKS RESUMPTION: STATE DEPT. ", Washington DC, 2009/12/22) reported that the United States expressed optimism Tuesday that the DPRK will come back to the six-party talks on ending its

nuclear weapons programs even though Pyongyang has yet to say when that might happen. "We thought we had a constructive meeting, but we obviously await, you know, a formal indication from North Korea as to what it's prepared to do," said Philip Crowley, assistant secretary of state for public affairs. "There have been a number of times where people have declared the six-party process dead before. I think those claims of mortality have been premature."

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4. DPRK Leadership

Korea Times (Kim Sue-young, "MANAGED NK SUCCESSION LIKELY TO CONSOLIDATE POLITICAL CONTROL ", 2009/12/22) reported that if the DPRK conducts a successful father-to-son succession or establishes a collective leadership system, relations between Pyongyang and Washington would not undergo great changes, a leading DPRK watcher said. Scott Snyder, director of the Center for U.S.-Korea Policy at the Asia Foundation, said the DPRK's recent moves to strengthen the National Defense Commission and design new constitutional arrangements appear to seek a "conservative and inward-focused" leadership. "Such a leadership would continue to focus on consolidating internal political control and on utilizing nuclear weapons pursuits to extract economic benefits from the international community," he said in his contribution to the Washington Quarterly, a journal on international affairs published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Institute for Far Eastern Studies ("2009 INSPECTIONS BY KIM JONG IL FOCUS ON ECONOMIC, MILITARY SITES", 2009/12/22) reported that the latest on-site visit by Kim Jong Il, in mid December, marked the 156th inspection of the year. This is an increase of approximately 170 percent over last year. Among those accompanying the 'Great Leader', Secretary of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party Kim Ki-nam was seen most frequently, traveling with Kim Jong Il on 107 different occasions. According to DPRK media officials, Kim Jong Il's on-site inspections this year include 64 visits to economically important locations, 43 to military installations, 13 to sites related to foreign affairs, and 36 to other sites, for a total of 156 visits. Kim made only 90 visits during 2008. Last year, 55 percent (50 visits) of Kim Jong Il's on-site inspections were to military sites, while 26 percent (24 visits) of trips were to sites related to the economy. This year, 41 percent of site visits were to economically-relevant sites, while only 27 percent were to military sites.

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5. DPRK Weapons Shipment

New York Times (Thomas Fuller, "DESTINATION OF ARMS SEIZED BY THAIS REMAINS A MYSTERY", Bangkok, 2009/12/22) reported that ten days after the Thai government announced that it had seized an aircraft carrying weapons from the DPRK, the final destination and the buyer of the arms cache remains a mystery. A research organization based in Belgium that specializes in the analysis of arms trafficking posted documents this week on its Web site that appear to show Iran as the drop-off point. The lawyer for the five-man crew detained in Thailand maintains that the cargo was to be offloaded in Ukraine, and other experts said it was far too early to reach any conclusions, because documents are often forged and designed to deceive in the smoke-and-mirrors world of arms trafficking.

Associated Press (Denis D. Gray, "WEAPONS-CARRYING PLANE HEADED FOR SRI LANKA",

Bangkok, 2009/12/23) reported that defense lawyer Somsak Saithong said Wednesday after visiting the jailed crew of a DPRK aircraft seized in Thailand that they denied any knowledge of accused international weapons trafficker Victor Bout. He quoted the men as saying that their flight plan called for a refueling stop in Bangkok before flying on to Sri Lanka. Police Col. Supisarn Bhaddinarinath, acting chief of the Crime Suppression Division, said that investigators have so far found no evidence that the aircraft was bound for Iran or any link between Bout and the arms seizure. But according to a flight plan seen by arms trafficking researchers, the aircraft was chartered by Hong Kong-based Union Top Management Ltd., or UTM, to fly oil industry spare parts from Pyongyang to Tehran, Iran, with several other stops, including Bangkok, Colombo in Sri Lanka, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine.

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6. Inter-Korean Naval Clashes

Agence France Presse ("S.KOREA VOWS TO SAFEGUARD DISPUTED SEA BORDER", Seoul, 2009/12/22) reported that the ROK's military vowed Tuesday to protect the disputed Yellow Sea border with the DPRK after the communist state threatened to open fire in waters controlled by Seoul. "We are maintaining the usual watertight vigilance against any possible North Korean provocations, to safeguard the NLL maritime border," a Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesman said. "We want them to stop making the far-fetched argument," the Joint Chiefs spokesman said, adding there were no unusual movements Tuesday in the area.

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7. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News (Kim Hyun, "SEOUL TO RETURN SEVEN DRIFTERS BACK TO N. KOREA: OFFICIAL", Seoul, 2009/12/22) reported that the ROK will send back seven DPRK fishermen to their communist homeland this week as the DPRK citizens who drifted here earlier in the week expressed hope to return to the DPRK, an official at the unification ministry said Tuesday. The DPRK citizens will be returned through the joint security area of Panmunjom as the DPRK accepted the ROK's offer to have them returned Wednesday, the official said, asking not to be identified. "We sent a message signed by the head of the Korean Red Cross to North Korea this afternoon and said we will send back the seven North Koreans on Dec. 23," the official said.

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8. Inter-Korea Economic Cooperation

Yonhap (Kim Hyun, "KOREAS REACH BROAD CONSENSUS ON JOINT FACTORY PARK", Seoul, 2009/12/23) reported that the two Koreas reached consensus during a survey in the PRC and Vietnam that both sides want their joint factory park to become internationally competitive. "They didn't go into any specifics with us, but as they saw advanced-level factories in Chinese and Vietnamese industrial parks and their competitive products, they said they wished the Kaesong park would grow like them," Kim Young-tak, a Unification Ministry official who led the ROK team, said at a press briefing. "The notable thing was that the North side was always cooperative and actively participated," Kim said.

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9. ROK Afghanistan Dispatch

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki?, "SEOUL TO ATTEND NATO MEETING ON AFGHANISTAN", 2009/12/22) reported that the ROK will dispatch a delegation to a NATO-led international conference on Afghanistan to be held early next year, officials at the Ministry of National Defense said Tuesday.??NATO's military committee recently invited the ROK to the conference, which will focus discussion on the reconstruction mission of coalition troops in the Central Asian nation, they said. ?? "A general-ranked officer from the Joint Chiefs of Staff will attend the meeting," an official said. "We expect our participation in the conference will help expand relations with NATO member states to a greater extent."

JoongAng Ilbo ("ASSEMBLY DELAYS REVIEW OF AFGHANISTAN TROOP PLAN", 2009/12/22) reported that the National Assembly will delay reviewing the plan to dispatch ROK troops to Afghanistan until February next year, jeopardizing the government's plan to begin its reconstruction mission in July. The Ministry of National Defense, which submitted the plan, had previously maintained that it had to be approved by the National Assembly this year so that the ROK could honor its schedule to begin the mission on July 1, 2010 and "not risk losing credibility internationally by missing the date."

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10. ROK Climate Change

Yonhap (Byun Duk-kun, "LEE SAYS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION KEY TO FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE", Seoul, 2009/12/22) reports that President Lee Myung-bak on Tuesday called for efforts to develop the country's public transportation system, including its railways, saying it can no longer afford to ignore the global threat of climate change. The president also noted that the ROK's high dependence on industries and means of transportation that consume large amounts of energy will soon undermine its competitiveness in the international community. "I believe we must build more railways than roads for many reasons, including the environment," Lee said in a luncheon meeting with officials in the central city of Daejeon, where he earlier received a joint policy briefing from the ministries of culture, and education and science.

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11. USFJ Base Relocation

Kyodo News ("JAPAN STICKS TO POSTPONEMENT ON BASE ISSUE DESPITE U.S. PRESSURE", Tokyo, 2009/12/22) reported that Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada said Tuesday that he has no plans to reconsider the government's decision to put off reaching a conclusion until next year on the issue of where to relocate a U.S. Marine Corps base in Okinawa Prefecture despite fresh pressure from Washington. Okada's remarks came in response to U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's move the previous day to call in the Japanese ambassador for an extraordinary meeting to say that the United States wants Japan to swiftly implement the relocation of the Futenma base as agreed upon bilaterally in 2006.

Kyodo News ("HATOYAMA SAYS HE UNDERSTANDS U.S. STANCE ON FUTEMMA ISSUE", Tokyo, 2009/12/22) reported that Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said Tuesday he fully understands that the United States wants Japan to relocate a U.S. military airfield in Okinawa Prefecture in line with a 2006 bilateral deal, after U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton apparently expressed such hopes in talks with a Japanese official. "I fully understand the basic stance of the United States (toward the base relocation issue)," Hatoyama told reporters in front of his official residence. In a meeting in Washington with Japanese Ambassador to the United States Ichiro Fujisaki, Clinton urged Japan to quickly implement the bilateral accord, stating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station should be transferred within the prefecture, according to a source close to Japan-U.S. ties.

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12. Japan-US Security Alliance

Kyodo News ("DOCUMENT ON SECRET JAPAN-U.S. NUCLEAR PACT KEPT BY EX-PM SATO'S FAMILY ", Tokyo, 2009/12/22) reported that A document on a secret Japan-U.S. pact, signed by then Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato and U.S. President Richard Nixon in 1969 allowing the United States to introduce nuclear weapons into Okinawa in the event of a contingency, has been kept by Sato's family, a family member disclosed Tuesday. The discovery of the document, whose existence has been denied by Japan's Foreign Ministry, is expected to influence the ongoing probe by a third-party panel set up by the ministry into the existence of secret deals between the two countries.

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13. Japan on Iran Nuclear Program

Kyodo News ("JAPAN'S HATOYAMA URGES IRAN TO ACT TO DISPEL NUCLEAR SCEPTICISM", Tokyo, 2009/12/22) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama on Tuesday urged Iran's nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili to take action to dispel international scepticism over the country's nuclear development programme, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said. During a 35-minute meeting at the prime minister's office, Jalili told Hatoyama that developing any weapons of mass destruction including nuclear arms would violate the teachings of Islam and that his country would never develop nuclear weapons, the ministry said.

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14. Japan on ICC

Kyodo News ("OKADA, ICC CHIEF AGREE ON NEED TO EXPAND ICC MEMBER STATES", Tokyo, 2009/12/22) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada and visiting International Criminal Court President Song Sang Hyun on Monday agreed on the need to ensure the court's effectiveness by having the United States and other Asian countries become member states, a Japanese Foreign Ministry official said. "So it is absolutely necessary to enhance public awareness of the ICC and particular cooperation with the states parties like Japan to get some more Asia-Pacific countries to become the ICC family for the purpose of achieving this goal," Song said.

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15. Japanese Whaling

Associated Press (Rod McGuirk, "JAPANESE WHALERS CLASH WITH MILITANT ACTIVISTS", Canberra, 2009/12/23) reported that Japanese whalers and militant conservationists have clashed in the Antarctic Ocean over two days, both sides said Wednesday. The New Zealand-registered Sea Shepherd Conservation Society ship *Ady Gil* came within 66 feet (20 meters) of colliding with the bow of Japanese harpoon ship *Sonan Maru No. 2* on Wednesday, the Japanese government-sponsored Institute of Cetacean Research said in a statement. The activists tried to blind the Japanese crew with lasers and "fired ball-like projectiles with a projectile-launching device" during an attack that lasted 3.5 hours, the statement said. Sea Shepherd accused the Japanese of using crowd-control sound technology known as a Long Range Acoustic Devices, or LRADs, as well as water cannon against the *Ady Gil* crew. The activists said they responded with lasers to get the Japanese to back off to a safe distance. The whalers also accused the *Steve Irwin* crew of hurling bottles of butyric acid — a rancid liquid that occurs in spoiled butter — during a two-hour conflict on Tuesday.

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16. PRC on Iran Nuclear Program

Bloomberg (Bill Varner, "CHINA SIGNALS RESISTANCE TO IRAN SANCTIONS, SEEKS FURTHER TALKS", 2009/12/22) reported that The PRC signaled resistance to any U.S. and European push for tougher United Nations sanctions on Iran, saying talks aimed at preventing its development of nuclear weapons should be given a chance to succeed. "We ask for more time to be given and efforts to be made to see if we can reach some sort of breakthrough," La Yifan, the PRC's envoy for Security Council and political affairs at the UN, said in an interview yesterday. "The door to diplomatic efforts is not completely slammed yet. Efforts should focus on trying to find a solution to the current impasse."

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17. Sino-US Trade Relations

Associated Press ("ARBITRATOR RULES AGAINST CHINA ON U.S. MEDIA IMPORTS", Geneva, 2009/12/21) reports that arbitrators at the World Trade Organization on Monday upheld a ruling that the PRC had illegally restricted imports of American music, films and books. And in a new case, Washington accused Beijing of manipulating the prices for important ingredients in steel and aluminum production. Monday's ruling by the organization's appellate body knocked down the PRC's objections to a decision in August against Beijing's policy of forcing American media producers to route their business through state-owned companies. If the PRC fails over the next year to bring its practices in line with international trade law, the United States can ask the W.T.O. to authorize commercial sanctions against Chinese goods.

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18. PRC Civil Rights

Agence France Presse ("ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR AT CHRISTMAS IN NORTH CHINA", 2009/12/22) reported that Christians in north PRC are facing a Christmas of fear after 10 local religious leaders were jailed in recent weeks and their new church shut down amid a crackdown on unauthorised worship. Five of the church leaders were given prison terms of up to seven-years by a Linfen court, while the others were sentenced without trial to labour camps for two years, their lawyer said. Their crimes: "Illegally occupying farm land" and "disturbing transportation through a mass gathering". "The authorities are clearly sending a message to the Christians," lawyer Li Fanping, who defended the church leaders at their trial last month, told AFP.

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19. Cross-Straits Relations

Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "TAIWAN, CHINA SIGN TRADE AGREEMENTS AMID PROTESTS", Taichung, 2009/12/22) reported that negotiators from the PRC and Taiwan signed three trade deals Tuesday amid protests from critics who fear the Taiwanese government's PRC-friendly policies are opening the door to eventual unification with the mainland. Chairwoman Tsai Ing-wen of the main opposition Democratic Progressive Party blasted President Ma Ying-jeou for negotiating with China in a way that flouts "democratic rules."

Associated Press (Annie Huang, "CHINA NEGOTIATOR: TAIWAN TRADE PACT 'LONG PROCESS'", Taichung, 2009/12/23) reported that PRC top Taiwan negotiator Chen Yunlin said Wednesday a proposed free-trade pact will be a "long process" that can benefit both sides. "We can complement each other, we can grow together," he said.

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II. PRC Report

20. PRC Environment

Xinhua News Agency ("2009 PUBLIC SATISFACTION SURVEY ON ENVIRONMENT LAUNCHED", 2009/12/23) reported that 2009 Public Satisfaction Survey On Environment was launched in Beijing yesterday. The survey is sponsored by China Environment Culture Promote Association and guided by Ministry of Environment Protection. After the launch, questionnaire survey will be carried out in major cities and some rural areas of the country.

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21. PRC Civil Society and Education

Xinhua News ("10,000 STUDENTS IN SICHUAN GET 15 MILLION RMB GRANT", 2009/12/23) reported that 10,000 high school students in Sichuan earthquake disaster areas got 15 million RMB love grant given by China Children and Teenager's Fund yesterday. The grant gives the students not only economic help but also spiritual encouragement and make them feel confident to the future.

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22. PRC Energy Supply

Xinhua Net ("ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF CHINA COALBED METHANE REACHES 700 MILLION M3", 2009/12/23) reported that annual production of coalbed methane (CBM) has reached 700 million m3 at present, according to the Ministry of Land and Resources yesterday. Coalbed methane is a kind of clean and efficient energy as well as a hidden trouble of coal safety production. The development of CBM is significant in ensuring coal safety production, increasing the utilization of energy and protecting air environment.

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