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Contents in this Issue:

- I. NAPSNet
  - 1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program
  - 2. DPRK on Relations with the US
  - 3. ROK on Six Party Talks
  - 4. DPRK Economy
  - 5. Sino-DPRK Relations
  - 6. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation
  - 7. US-ROK Military Relations
  - 8. ROK Role in Iraq
  - 9. USFJ Base Repositioning
  - 10. Cross Strait Relations
  - 11. Hong Kong Government
  - 12. PRC One Child Policy
  - 13. PRC Media
- II. ROK Report

- 14. Yaskuni Shrine Issue
- 15. ROK Unification Policy

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Agence France-Presse ("US 'SKEPTICAL' ABOUT NKOREA NUCLEAR DECLARATION", Washington, 2008/01/02) reported that the White House said that it was "skeptical" that the DPRK would provide a full accounting of its nuclear programs after the DPRK missed a December 31 deadline to do so. "We still have not heard from the North Koreans as to when they will provide a complete and accurate declaration," said spokeswoman Dana Perino. Asked whether Washington had any indication that Pyongyang would fully unveil its atomic programs, Perino replied: "They were a part of the agreement that established this deadline, and we don't have any reason to believe that they won't, but we are skeptical, given the length of time that it's taken." US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte will head to Beijing in "mid-January" for regularly scheduled talks.

(return to top)

2. DPRK on Relations with the US

Kyodo ("N. KOREAN MEDIA URGE SHIFT FROM ARMISTICE TO PEACE PACT WITH U.S.", Beijing, 2008/01/01) reported that the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency reported the nation's three leading newspapers have proposed a shift from an armistice accord to a peace pact with the United States in their joint New Year's editorial for 2008. The Rodong Sinmun, Joson Inmingun and Chongnyon Jonwi said, ''An end should be put to the U.S. policy hostile toward the DPRK and the Armistice Agreement be replaced with a peace pact,'' the KCNA reported.

(return to top)

3. ROK on Six Party Talks

Yonhap (Lee Chi-dong, "SIX-WAY TALKS ON NK NUKE POSSIBLE BEFORE FULL DECLARATION: S. KOREA", Seoul, 2008/01/02) reported that a new round of six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear ambitions can be held without Pyongyang's full declaration of its suspected activity as a way of encouraging the DPRK to move on the stalled process, a senior ROK foreign ministry official said. "Certainly, it would be desirable for the negotiations to be resumed after the North provides a complete list of its nuclear programs," the official said on the customary condition of anonymity. "But there is no fixed sequence. Restarting the talks first can be an alternative option as as to

encourage the North to do so." He added, however, Seoul has not received any proposal from the host PRC on the date for the new round.

(return to top)

4. DPRK Economy

Bloomberg (Ed Johnson, "NORTH KOREA PLEDGES PEACE DRIVE AFTER DEADLINE MISSED", 2008/01/01) reported that the DPRK pledged in a New Year message to improve relations with the ROK and the international community after missing a deadline to declare its nuclear programs. The DPRK will "continue to make earnest efforts for stability on the Korean peninsula and peace in the world," the state-run KCNA reported. "This year we should make decisive efforts to shore up the power, coal and metal industries and railway transport,'' KCNA reported. The nation must also "channel efforts into the geological prospecting and mining industry'' and increase production in forestry and the chemical and building-materials industries, it said. The editorial called for improved agricultural techniques, including the planting of high-yield crops, increased production of consumer goods and scientific innovation in the country.

(return to top)

5. Sino-DPRK Relations

Reuters (Ben Blanchard, "AIR CHINA DELAYS PYONGYANG ROUTE FOR THREE MONTHS", Beijing, 2008/01/02) reported that Air China has postponed Wednesday's opening of a new route to the DPRK's capital, Pyongyang, until March, citing operational reasons, but denied the decision was linked to politics. Beijing-based Air China would become the only foreign airline to offer scheduled services to the DPRK. "It's been pushed back until March as related preparatory work is still going on," said Air China spokesman Wang Yongsheng, without elaborating. "On Air China's side, preparations are basically complete. "There are no political reasons," he added.

(return to top)

6. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap ("KAESONG OUTPUT INCREASES 150 PCT: UNIFICATION MINISTRY", Seoul, 2007/12/28) reported that the total output of a ROK-built industrial complex in the DPRK's border town of Kaesong totaled over US$180 million this year, shooting up 150 percent from a year ago, Seoul's Unification Ministry said. "The total production by businesses at the Kaesong industrial complex recorded an estimated $185 million this year, up about 150 percent from $74 million last year," the ministry said in a press release.

Yonhap (Lee Joon-seung, "S. KOREA TO DEVELOP TWO RESOURCE RICH AREAS IN N. KOREA", Seoul, 2007/12/27) reported that the ROK plans to develop two resource rich regions in the DPRK that can benefit both countries and fuel cross-border economic cooperation, the government said. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy said the Dancheon region in South Hamgyeong province on the east coast and the Haeju-Nampo region in the western part of the country will be developed in the future."Dacheon has two or three mines that hold promise for future development," said a ministry official. He said the area is to be built up as a special resources zone with emphasis

being placed on constructing electricity generating plants, power cables, and railways. For the Haeju-Nampo region, the ministry said it is offering support so that local companies can obtain development rights for limestone, graphite and phosphate.

(return to top)

7. US-ROK Military Relations

Yonhap ("DEFENSE CHIEF SAYS WARTIME OPERATIONAL CONTROL MUST BE TRANSFERRED ON TIME", Seoul, 2008/01/03) reported that ROK Defense Minister Kim Jang-soo said Thursday the wartime operational control of ROK troops must be transferred from the United States by 2012 as scheduled. "The transfer of the wartime operational control must be completed by April 17, 2012 as South Korea and the U.S. have agreed," Kim told reporters. "(The transfer) of wartime operational command is what was agreed between the heads of the two states and also between their defense ministers." But Kim Woo-sang, a key advisor to the President-elect Lee Myung-bak on foreign and security issues, has said the incoming administration may reschedule the transfer depending on "the security conditions surrounding the Korean Peninsula in 2012."

(return to top)

8. ROK Role in Iraq

Yonhap ("S. KOREA TO DECREASE ACTIVITY OF TROOPS IN IRAQ", 2007/12/27) reported that ROK troops will continue their work to help reconstruct Iraq next year, but their mission will be greatly reduced, the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The announcement came shortly after parliament voted to extend Zaytun's presence in war-torn Iraq. Zaytun was dispatched there in 2004 at the request of the United States.

(return to top)

9. USFJ Base Repositioning

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("GOVT TO MAKE CONCESSION ON FUTENMA BASE RELOCATION", 2008/01/01) reported that the government intends to make a concession on a stalled relocation plan of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture by allowing alternative facilities to be built on reclaimed land about 90 meters further from the current shoreline than previously planned. The Okinawa prefectural government and the Nago municipal government, which is to host the relocated facilities, have indicated they may be willing to accept the government's new plan, according to sources. The government's initiative may break through the impasse over the planned relocation of the Futenma facilities currently situated in Ginowan to a coastal area of Camp Schwab in Nago.

(return to top)

10. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse (Benjamin Yeh, "TAIWAN LEADER SAYS WANTS UNCONDITIONAL PEACE

WITH CHINA", Taipei, 2008/01/01) reported that Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian said he wanted an unconditional peace accord with the PRC to end decades of hostility and defended his plans for a referendum on the island's UN membership bid. In a New Year broadcast, his last while in office, Chen warned however that no pact would be possible if Beijing kept its 'One China' policy. PRC President Hu Jintao called in October for an agreement to formally end the state of hostilities.

Reuters ("TAIWAN SEES JUMP IN CHINA MISSILE BUILD-UP", Taipei, 2008/01/01) reported that Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian said on Tuesday the PRC now had 1,328 ballistic missiles aimed at the self-ruled island, up by more than a third from a previous estimate, further threatening stability in the Taiwan Strait. In his final New Year's Day address before stepping down in May, Chen said the number of short-range ballistic missiles deployed against Taiwan had proliferated from 200 in 2000, when he took office, and now exceeded his most recent estimate of 988.

(return to top)

11. Hong Kong Government

The Financial Times (Robin Kwong and Tom Mitchell, "BEIJING DELAYS HK ELECTIONS UNTIL 2017", Hong Kong, 2007/12/30) reported that the people of Hong Kong will not be able to elect their chief executive for at least another decade, the PRC's legislature decreed at the weekend in the latest setback for the territory's democracy aspirations. The decision flagging direct elections no sooner than 2017 by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress – which also ruled out full elections for Hong Kong's legislature until 2020 – came two weeks after Hong Kong's chief executive, Donald Tsang, acknowledged for the first time that more than half the population wanted to elect his successor by universal suffrage in 2012.

(return to top)

12. PRC One Child Policy

The Associated Press ("REPORT: RICH FLOUT CHINA CHILD POLICY", Beijing, 2008/01/02) reported that a growing number of rich and powerful people in central PRC are brazenly flouting the country's one-child policy, a newspaper said Wednesday. The violations in Hubei province are leaving local family planning officials powerless, the Beijing Morning Post reported. Even when fined by authorities, many rich that have openly ignored the rules are slow to provide the money, the newspaper said. The report said 1,678 people, including government officials, were punished in 2007 for not adhering to the policy, which has been in place for almost 30 years. There were no details about the punishments.

(return to top)

13. PRC Media

Washington Post (Edward Cody, "FOR CHINA'S JOURNALISM STUDENTS, CENSORSHIP IS A CORE CONCEPT", Beijing, 2008/01/02) reported that about 200 Tsinghua University journalism students filled a classroom one recent Friday evening for a two-hour lecture on the political history of Tibet. The mountainous territory has always been an inalienable part of China, they were told, and the Dalai Lama is a sly traitor hiding behind his Buddhist religion to promote secession. Against that

background, the party's Central Committee in 2001 urged PRC media and journalism schools to adopt the concept of "Marxist journalism." The term was broadly interpreted to mean journalism that the government views as improving society and taking account of PRC realities, including censorship under one-party rule.

(return to top)

II. ROK Report

14. Yaskuni Shrine Issue

Hankyoreh Shinmun (editorial, "NEW LEADERS IN THE ROK AND JAPAN, SOLVE THE YASKUNI PROBLEM", Seoul, 2008/01/03) reported that the Yaskuni shrine officials refused the Korean desire again to remove their ancestors' from the shrine. This should be done because there was no step taken to verify their opinion on being honored there, in addition to their offsprings' dislike of the present condition. The new leaders in the ROK and Japan should make solving this issue a priority for better relations between two countries.

(return to top)

15. ROK Unification Policy

Joongang Ilbo (Lee Hong-gu, "THE NEW ADMINISTRATION AND THE MINISTRY OF UNIFICATION", Seoul, 2008/01/03) wrote that it is natural that a new administrative organization has been discussed by the incoming administration. However, it should be careful in dealing with the position and future of the Ministry of Unification since Korean unification is the most important issue for us to achieve regardless of partisan interests. Although the Ministry of Unification has not perfectly fulfilled its performance in terms of making peace in Korean Peninsula for last several years, its role is still essential and should be more strengthened than ever in the future regime.

(return to top)

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