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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. Napsnet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Korea Times (Kim Yon-se, "'N. KOREA COULD RESTART NUCLEAR REACTOR OPERATION'", Seoul, 2008/03/30) reported that Professor Siegfried S. Hecker of Stanford University said it will take at least six months for the DPRK to reactivate the nuclear complex in Yongbyon if it moves to withdraw from the six-party agreements. "North Korea will have only limited capacity for plutonium production if the country decides to break out of the six-party agreement and restart nuclear operations," Hecker stated. The 50- and 200-megawatt reactors do not appear salvageable, he said. "Hence, the DPRK will not be able to ramp up plutonium production over the next five to 10 years."

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2. US, ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap ("S. KOREA, U.S. TO DISCUSS N. KOREA NUKE", Seoul, 2008/03/31) reported that US envoy Christopher Hill is due to arrive in Seoul Tuesday afternoon and hold a dinner meeting with his counterpart Chun Yung-woo, ROK officials said Monday. "Assistant Secretary of State Hill will make a trip to South Korea from April 1 to 3 and he will have an opportunity to have consultations with South Korean officials on the North Korean nuclear issue, South Korea-U.S. relations, and other matters of mutual concern," Foreign Ministry spokesman Moon Tae-young said. On Wednesday, Hill is scheduled to meet with South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kwon Jong-rak and Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Yong-joon, according to Moon.

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3. Six-Party Talks

Donga Ilbo ("'6-WAY TALKS ONLY WAY TO RESOLVE N.K. NUKES'", Seoul, 2008/03/31) reported that the US, Japanese, PRC, and Russian ambassadors to Seoul say the six-way talks are the only way to achieve a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, and that the cooperation of the six parties is essential to these efforts. Ambassador Ning Fukui said, “There have been some delays in taking the six-party talks to the next level due to some difficulties they face. However, the overall direction of the talks remains the same."

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4. Alleged DPRK-Syria Cooperation

Asahi Shimbun (Nanae Kurishige, "SYRIA GOT N. KOREA HELP FOR N-FACILITY", Tokyo, 2008/03/31) reported that Israeli airstrike against Syria last September targeted a nuclear-related facility that was under construction with technical assistance from the DPRK, according to Israel's prime minister, Ehud Olmert. Japanese government sources said over the weekend that Olmert briefed Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda about the attack during summit talks in Tokyo on Feb. 27. "While we cannot confirm the facts, the fact that such an assertion was made at an official occasion such as a summit meeting is significant, making it highly credible," said one high-ranking Foreign Ministry official. Another Foreign Ministry official pointed out, however, that the Israeli leader "may have only presented facts that were favorable for the Israeli side."

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5. DPRK Human Rights

Associated Press ("NKOREA REJECTS UN RIGHTS RESOLUTION", Seoul, 2008/03/29) reported that the DPRK on Saturday rejected a recent U.N. resolution condemning its human rights abuses as a U.S.-led political plot. The DPRK "sternly refutes the resolution," because it is a political plot hatched by the EU and Japan "at the prodding of the U.S.," the DPRK Foreign Ministry said, according to the country's official Korean Central News Agency. "The U.S., the EU and Japan will be held fully accountable for all the unpredictable consequences," KCNA said without elaborating on what those consequences would be.

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6. US on DPRK Missile Tests

Associated Press ("US WARNS N KOREA ON MISSILE TESTS", Washington, 2008/03/28) wrote that the US called the DPRK's latest missile tests "not constructive" and urged Pyongyang to instead focus on nuclear disarmament. White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said the DPRK should "focus on the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula" and "deliver a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear weapons programmes and nuclear proliferation activities".

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7. DPRK Military Maneuvers

Korea Herald (Jin Dae-woong, "N.K. FLIGHT MANEUVERS RISE NEAR BORDER", Seoul, 2008/03/31) reported that the DPRK has significantly increased its fighter jet maneuvers near the DMZ since the inauguration of President Lee Myung-bak, thereby putting the ROK military on high alert, a Seoul official said Monday. Since late February, the DPRK's MIG-21 and other fighter jets have done sorties very close to the Demilitarized Zone and the Northern Limit Line more than 10 times, according to a military official who spoke on condition of anonymity. "The North Korean military stepped up its air force and armored troops exercises during this year's winter-time exercises. The number of drills increased by about 50 percent compared to previous years," the official added.

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8. Inter-Korea Relations

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, "NKOREA THREATENS SOUTH WITH DESTRUCTION", Seoul, 2008/03/30) reported that the DPRK threatened the ROK with destruction Sunday after Seoul's top military officer said his country would consider attacking the DPRK if it tried to carry out a nuclear attack. "Our military will not sit idle until warmongers launch a pre-emptive strike," said an unidentified KCNA military commentator. "Everything will be in ashes, not just a sea of fire, if our advanced pre-emptive strike once begins." A senior military officer at the ROK Defense Ministry said officials were working "to ensure the public would not worry about" the DPRK's recent actions and statements. He declined to elaborate and asked not to be named because he was not authorized to speak to media.

Yonhap ("CHEONG WA DAE REMAINS CALM AFTER REPEATED NK THREATS", Seoul, 2008/03/30) reported that the ROK presidential office Cheong Wa Dae said Sunday that it will handle inter-Korean ties from a "long-term perspective." "President Lee convened a meeting of security-related secretaries, including his chief security policy advisor Kim Byung-kook, on Sunday morning to discuss the government's counteractions against the North's provocations," said a ranking Cheong Wa Dae official. "But the government won't weigh short-term gains and losses in coping with the North Korean threats. We'll just take a long-term approach to the issues. Therefore, the defense or unification ministry, instead of Cheong Wa Dae, will be at the forefront of the government's reaction to the communist North's provocations," said the official.

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9. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Korea Herald (Kim Yoon-mi, "GAESEONG COMPANIES ANXIOUS BUT HOPEFUL ", Seoul, 2008/03/31) reported that ROK entrepreneurs doing business in the Kaesong Industrial Complex are worried that political problems might dampen their business operations. "I would say politics and business are two separate issues. But to be frank with you, I am concerned," Ok Sung-seok, CEO of Nine Mode, which runs a shirt-making factory in Kaesong, said. "But we have a strong faith that inter-Korean economic cooperation through the Kaesong industrial complex would not be easily swayed by political issues, as it has never been damaged over the last four years" he added.

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10. DPRK Defectors

Donga Ilbo ("12 N.KOREANS ENTER S.KOREAN EMBASSY IN LAOS", Seoul, 2008/03/29) reported that the ROK embassy in Laos said that 12 DPRK refugees, including 11 females and one male, entered the embassy on March 27. “After confirming the identities of the North Korean refugees, we’ll discuss with the government of Laos to treat them as they wish as much as possible based on humanitarianism and international customs,” said ROK Ambassador to Laos Park Jae-hyeon.

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11. ROK Peacekeeping Operations

("FIELD VETERANS ADVOCATE MORE UN PEACEKEEPING", Seoul, 2008/03/31) reported that two veteran officers at the UN Peacekeeping Office called on the ROK to take a more active role in peacekeeping. "This is in line with Korea's historical experience. It is in line with Korea's geopolitical position, and it is in line with the current developments in Korea," said Song He-ran, who heads the Central Highland Region office of the UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan. Colonel Kim Ung-geon, who will become the highest-ranking Korean military officer to ever assume a senior position at UN PKO headquarters in New York, stated, "The UN PKO is a perfect blue ocean to explore for our military. Many people keep asking why we should send our boys to dangerous foreign places and make them bleed. But every drop of their blood and sweat is counted by the international community that is watching us."

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12. Japanese Missile Defense

Associated Press (Mari Yamaguchi, "TOKYO MISSILE DEFENSE NOW COMPLETE", Tokyo, 2008/03/29) reported that Japan installed the final piece of a missile defense system for Tokyo on Saturday. Air Self-Defense Forces personnel set up a land-based Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missile intercepter system at the Kasumigaura base in Ibaraki prefecture, just northeast of Tokyo, regional defense official Keisuke Tanaka said. It is the last of four PAC-3 sets deployed around Tokyo to protect the capital region, Tanaka said. The system at the Kasumigaura base, 47 miles northeast of Tokyo, includes five launchers, a special vehicle equipped with radar and another that serves as a control station, he said.

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13. US-Japan Security Alliance

Yomiuri (Hiromu Namiki, "EXPERT URGES REVITALIZED JAPAN-U.S. ALLIANCE", Tokyo, 2008/03/31) reported that Japan and the United States should revitalize their alliance and build international institutions to contain the rise of the PRC and promote peace in the Asia-Pacific region, Kenneth B. Pyle, professor emeritus at Washington University, said Sunday. Pyle said that the institutions need not be especially grand, saying, "It should initially be a focused institution dealing with concrete issues such as resource sharing, environment and particular security issues, and gradually develop into a larger institution." "Japan would have to decide issues of its future

international role, its attitude toward collective security and the role of the Self Defense Forces, and its balance between Asia and the West," he said.

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14. US Military in Japan

Asahi Shimbun ("POLICE: SAILOR ADMITTED STABBING IN PHONE CALL TO FRIEND", Yokosuka, 2008/03/31) reported that A U.S. Navy serviceman whose credit card was found in the taxi of a slain cabby told an acquaintance that he had stabbed somebody on the night of the killing, police sources said Monday. According to phone records and other sources, the 22-year-old serviceman, who has Nigerian citizenship, called a Nigerian friend via cellphone on March 19 and said he did it, the sources said.

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15. Japanese Textbook Controversy

BBC ("JUDGE DISMISSES JAPAN WWII LIBEL", Tokyo, 2008/03/28) reported that Japanese judges have thrown out a libel case against Nobel prize-winning author Kenzaburo Oe. Oe's book Okinawa Notes claims that the Japanese military ordered hundreds of civilians to commit suicide as US troops advanced during World War II. A retired army officer and another man said the military never gave the order, but the court dismissed their claim.

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16. Japanese Chemical Weapons from WWII

TIME (Andrew Monahan, "JAPAN'S CHINA WEAPONS CLEANUP HITS A SNAG", 2008/03/31) reported that the Japanese company responsible for removing chemical weapons abandoned by Japanese forces in China at the end of World War II will not be able to complete its work, with a corruption scandal forcing its closure. Critics say the fault lies with the government itself, for a failure of oversight that allowed the Abandoned Chemical Weapons Disposal Corp. (ACWDC) to misappropriate approximately 100 million yen ($1 million) of public funds. While a Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson said that the cleanup "is extremely important for improving trust," the government has not indicated how it plans to get the project back on track.

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17. Tibetan Unrest

BBC ("FOREIGN DIPLOMATS ON TIBET VISIT", Beijing, 2008/03/29) wrote that foreign diplomats are in Tibet on a fact-finding visit approved by the PRC. The UK and the US are among the 15 nations invited on the one-day trip to Tibet's capital Lhasa. The US welcomed the move, but said diplomats and observers should be allowed to see areas surrounding Lhasa.

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II. ROK Report

18. Inter-Korean Relations

Kyunghyang Shinmum ("DPRK GOVERNMENT'S OVER-CRITICISM ON ROK", 2008/03/31) wrote that the degree to which DPRK government is criticizing ROK has reached a dangerous level. The DPRK must stop all its emotional response to the ROK and prepare a mood for conversation before it's too late. Both the ROK and DPRK lose in a negative political mood on the Korea Peninsula. The ROK government should also revive inter-Korean talks.

Seoul Newspaper ("TENSION IN KOREAN PENINSULA MUST NOT BE PROLONGED", 2008/03/31) wrote that to the response of Kim Tae-Young, the chairman of ROK joint chief of staff, to the National Assembly hearing two days ago, the DPRK has dubbed it "intemperate speech of preemptive strike and demands cancellation and apology from him." We must understand that this strategy is on the continuum of recent attacks on ROK and US and that the aim of this strategy is to foment tension. We fear the continued attack of the DPRK that now tries to test the DPRK policy of the new administration.

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19. DPRK Food Problem

Goodfriends ("'A SECURITY ALARM FOR ARMY FOOD'", 2008/03/29) wrote that in the midst of farmers crying that they cannot go to work because they are hungry, it is difficult to even get seeds. However, the National Defense Committee ordered all the regions to seize the small amount of food that is left to the civilians to provide the military with food. In the meantime the government is investigating whether the farms have secretly kept or hidden food.

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20. DPRK Human Rights

Pressian (Yoon Young-sang, "NEW LIBERAL PARTY, 'REORGANIZATION OF LIBERALS' AND DPRK ISSUES, DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS, NEED TO BE SPOKEN", 2008/03/31) carried an article by the vice chairman of the New Liberal Party Policy Board, who wrote that the New Liberal Party frankly speaks that we must not only consider humanitarian problems or labor problems in which both the ROK and DPRK are involved but also show positive interest and will for issues the DPRK has such as the DPRK human rights issue. Remaining silent on DPRK human rights issues must never be seen as liberal any more. We must not approach the DPRK human rights issues as political aggression to attack and dismantle the DPRK like the US and Lee Myung-bak administration do.

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