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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Washington Times (Bill Gertz, "N. KOREA WOULD SELL NUKES TO TERRORISTS", 2008/02/05) reported that the DPRK threatened to export nuclear weapons to international terrorists in 2005, according to a US intelligence report made public yesterday. The report to Congress on arms proliferation expressed continued worries about threats from the DPRK to export nuclear arms. In April 2005, the DPRK told a US academic, who was not identified further, that Pyongyang "could transfer nuclear weapons to terrorists if driven into a corner," the report stated. It was the first time that the US intelligence community disclosed the basis for concerns about the DPRK supplying terrorists with nuclear arms.

Yonhap ("INTEL CHIEF SAYS N.K. CONTINUES UEP, PROLIFERATION", Washington, 2008/02/05) reported that the US believes the DPRK still has uranium enrichment program and continues to proliferate, the top intelligence director said. Michael McConnell, director of national intelligence, told a Senate hearing that the US remains uncertain about whether the DPRK's top leader is indeed committed to denuclearization as his country promised.

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2. Inter-Korean Relations

Associated Press ("SEPARATED KOREANS EXCHANGE VIDEOS", Seoul, 2008/02/05) reported that dozens of Korean separated family members exchanged video messages with their kin under a new program. Officials of the two Koreas exchanged videotapes and CDs containing messages from 40 families - 20 from each side - in a meeting at the border village of Panmunjom, said Wu Jung-ha, an official at the RO Korean Unification Ministry's separated family bureau. The families exchanging messages were those who have already met in person in reunions that began after the first-ever summit between the Koreas in 2000, Wu said. "We have pushed to have those who have not so far been reunited exchange the video messages, but the North argued there are not many separated families in the North," Wu said. The two Koreas plan to exchange video messages between separated families every three months. RO Korea will send video cameras, tapes and other equipment worth \$222,930 to the North to help facilitate the project.

Agence France-Presse ("NEXT SKOREA LEADER OFFERS NKOREA BETTER LIFE WITHOUT NUKES", 2008/02/05) reported that the ROK's incoming president Lee Myung-Bak will offer

impoverished the DPRK a dramatic rise in living standards if it abandons all its nuclear programmes, his office said. Lee's transition team, announcing policy goals for when he takes office on February 25, restated his pledge to raise the DPRK's per capita income to 3,000 dollars within a decade if it denuclearises fully and opens its society. In a statement, the team said the next government would significantly heighten transparency in the spending of the Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund.

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3. DPRK Human Rights

Yonhap (Lee Chi-dong, "HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WON'T HAMPER INTER-KOREAN TIES: EXPERT", Seoul, 2008/02/05) reported that the ROK's incoming government does not have to worry too much about an overall negative impact from its plan to actively address DPRK's human rights situation, a prominent US expert said. Meeting a group of journalists here after a meeting with President-elect Lee Myung-bak, Evans J.R. Revere, president of the Korea Society, also recommended that the ROK reactivate a trilateral channel with the US and Japan on dealing with the DPRK. "Human rights is one aspect of a very, very complicated set of relationships," he said. "I've always believed that countries should stick to their principles. It doesn't mean that will necessarily result in a setback in overall dialogue."

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4. DPRK Economy

IFES NK Brief ("DPRK CRACKDOWN ON TRADING OFFICES FINDS CORRUPTION", 2008/02/05) reported that it appears that from the end of last year through this January, DPRK Party, regional, cabinet and People's Committee officials have been carrying out inspections of trading companies, ordering massive layoffs and closings of companies where mis-management or other abnormalities are found. According to the source, over 100 trading companies are registered in Chungjin, South Hamkyung Province, but after the current housecleaning measures are enforced, only around 15 will remain in operation, with practically all problematic offices being closed down. The goal of these inspections appears to have been the restoration of public order, just as the recent measures preventing women under the age of 45 from working in markets was a reaction to diminishing public discipline. In the future, price controls, regulations on export goods, or other government regulations regarding international trade are likely to be strengthened.

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5. Indian Aid the DPRK

Xinhua ("DPRK ACCEPTS FOOD AID FROM INDIA", Pyongyang, 2008/02/05) reported that the DPRK accepted food aid from India, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported. The quantity of food aid was not specified by the report. DPRK officials concerned and Indian Ambassador to the DPRK ZileSingh participated the presentation ceremony held at Nampho Port, it said.

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6. PRC Envoy to the Six Party Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("NEW OFFICIAL TO HEAD CHINESE TEAM AT SIX-PARTY TALKS", 2008/02/05) reported that PRC Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei (62) will be replaced by Assistant Foreign Minister He Yafei (53) as the chief PRC negotiator in six-nation talks. Diplomatic sources in Beijing on Monday said Wu will retire from the Foreign Ministry at the National People's Congress on March 5. His most likely replacement will be He, who has plenty of experience in multilateral diplomatic talks from working in the US and at UN headquarters.

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7. DPRK Holiday Preparations

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA PREPARES FOR KIM JONG-IL'S BIRTHDAY", 2008/02/05) reported that the DPRK is busy preparing for the 66th birthday of the country's leader Kim Jong-il on Feb. 16 regarded as the biggest national holiday. Factories are also preparing to distribute special rations, including candies and cookies customarily distributed on the birthdays of Kim and his late father Kim Il-song. Pyongyang Botonggang Footwear Factory has begun producing "footwear to distribute" on the birthday. This factory produces goods based on raw materials supplied by the ROK. Beginning this year, the plant is producing women's high-heeled shoes and long boots in particular. Critics balk at the preparations which they call extravagant given the DPRK's dire humanitarian situation.

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8. US-ROK Security Alliance

Joongnag Ilbo ("USFK CONFIRMS TROOP LEVEL OF 25,000 BY YEAR END", 2008/02/05) reported that the US Forces Korea yesterday confirmed a plan to reduce its troop level to 25,000 by the end of 2008 under a global plan to reposition U.S. troops overseas. The confirmation of the previously announced plan came in response to recent news reports claiming the U.S. had decided to freeze its troop level at the current level of 28,500. The reports referred to remarks by U.S. Pacific Commander Adm. Timothy Keating and Gen. B. B. Bell, commander of U.S. Forces Korea.

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9. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Joongang Ilbo (Moon So-young, "TRADE MINISTER: EU FTA CLOSE TO BEING COMPLETE", 2008/02/05) reported that the ROK's Trade Minister Kim Jong-hoon said that free trade negotiations with the European Union are "nearly at an end." He also said the ROK needs to quickly solve the American beef import issue, one of the obstacles to ratification of a free trade agreement with the US. Regarding free trade talks with the EU, he said the two sides are sparring on issues surrounding the automobile sector. "Our side is focusing on vehicle tariffs, while the EU is talking mainly about barriers not related to tariffs, especially standards for vehicle safety," Kim said. "If the two sides compromise on this, they will be able to wrap up the talks."

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10. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

The Asahi Shimbun ("TOKYO TO INK DEALS BARRING MSDF FUEL DIVERSION TO OTHER PURPOSES", 2008/02/05) reported that Tokyo will insist in writing that oil supplied by the Maritime Self-Defense Force to foreign vessels in the Indian Ocean in the US-led fight against terrorism not be diverted for other purposes, sources said. Tokyo will limit the use of MSDF oil supplies specifically to maritime interception operations to stem the flow of weapons and drugs, the sources said. To prevent diversion of its fuel, Japan will also require MSDF officers to obtain and keep records of the foreign vessels' scheduled missions before refueling them.

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11. Japan Whaling Issue

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN RESUMES WHALING IN ANTARCTIC WATERS: REPORTS", Tokyo, 2008/02/05) reported that Japan has confirmed resuming whaling in Antarctic waters after environmental protesters stopped obstructing Japanese whalers there, press reports said. The Jiji and Kyodo news agencies, quoting officials at the Japanese Fisheries Agency, reported the resumption of Japan's so-called research whaling. But Hideaki Okada, an official at the agency's whaling division, told AFP: "We cannot comment whether research whaling has been resumed out of consideration for the safety of the operation."

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12. Sino-Australian Relations

The Associated Press (Rod McGuirk, "CHINESE FM VISITS AUSTRALIA AND DISCUSSES CLIMATE CHANGE, RELATIONS WITH US AND JAPAN", 2008/02/05) reported that the PRC's foreign minister met Australia's new center-left government Tuesday for wide-ranging discussions that included climate change and bilateral relations with the United States and Japan. PRC Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi had a breakfast meeting with Mandarin-speaking Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in the national capital Canberra and later met Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith. For the first time, the two countries held a so-called strategic dialogue - a discussion of issues of regional and global importance beyond their bilateral relationship. He said Australia would not again join in a security dialogue with the US, Japan and India as the government of Rudd's predecessor John Howard had done. But Australia will continue with a trilateral security dialogue with the United States and Japan, Smith said.

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13. US-PRC Relations

Reuters ("U.S. LAWMAKER EYES CHINA'S MILITARY BUILDUP", Washington, 2008/02/05) reported that Pennsylvania Democrat and chairman of the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee Rep. John Murtha worries Iraq is sapping the U.S. military at the exact time the United States should be adding muscle to answer Beijing's growing military and economic clout. The 75-year-old ex-Marine who actively opposes the Iraq war has overseen military spending for the past

year. Beijing's rapidly growing military spending, estimated at \$85 billion to \$125 billion last year, is still dwarfed by the United States, where a half-trillion dollars is shelled out for defense spending each year, not counting money for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While he acknowledges military challenges could come from many sources, Murtha worries most about the PRC because of the country's burgeoning need for oil coupled with Beijing's success in cultivating ties in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East to help quench its energy thirst. "I want to be prepared in case there's a confrontation about energy," such as in the Malacca Straits, Murtha said.

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14. US-PRC Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse (P. Parameswaran, "US LAWMAKERS SET STAGE FOR TRADE SANCTIONS ON CHINA", Washington, 2008/02/05) reported that US lawmakers are setting the stage for legislation slapping the PRC with punitive sanctions over currency and other trade issues after another year of record trade deficit with the Asian giant. With the United States on the brink of recession and as the campaign heats up for November presidential elections, lobbyists in Congress see greater prospects for such legislation to land on President George W. Bush's table for signature. The issues range from currency "manipulation" and "unfair" subsidies by the PRC, to trade law and counterfeit enforcement problems, to imported food and product safety, they said.

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15. PRC Internet

Los Angeles Times ("CHINA CRACKS DOWN ON IRREVERENT WEBSITES", Beijing, 2008/02/05) reported that Hu Ziwei, the wife of a popular sportscaster, grabbed a microphone to accuse her husband of infidelity at a state dinner. Video of the incident posted to the internet got 800,000 hits before the clip was censored. A harsh new law that took effect Friday forbids any content "which damages China's unity and sovereignty; harms ethnic solidarity; promotes superstition; portrays violence, pornography, gambling or terrorism; violates privacy; damages China's culture or traditions." Kaiser Kuo, director of digital strategy for Ogilvy China. Kuo says the Chinese government may be cracking down simply to protect the monopoly once enjoyed by China Central Television. By the standards of the 21st century, China Central Television's news programming often looks embarrassingly out-of-touch. For example, one recent night, when much of China was paralyzed by a freakish blizzard, the evening news featured 20 minutes of workers applauding and cheering Chinese President Hu Jintao as he toured a coal mine. Video posted on Tudou, in contrast, showed anguished close-ups of people stranded by the snow or jammed into train stations, trying to get home.

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16. PRC Freedom of the Press

BBC ("CHINA FREES HONG KONG JOURNALIST", 2008/02/05) reported that Hong Kong journalist Ching Cheong who was jailed in the PRC's mainland on spying charges has been released after serving less than half a five-year sentence. Chinese officials accused him of buying information and passing it to Taiwan - charges his family and his employer, Singapore's Straits Times, rejected. He

has now returned to Hong Kong to spend Lunar New Year with his family. Ching's plight was one of several high-profile cases highlighted by human rights groups as examples of the PRC's increasing repression of journalists.

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17. PRC Chief Economist at World Bank

BBC ("FIRST CHINESE FOR WORLD BANK JOB", 2008/02/05) reported that the World Bank has appointed its first chief economist from a developing country to work at the institution. Justin Yifu Lin, a leading academic from Beijing University who is originally from Taiwan, is the first Chinese citizen to hold the position. World Bank President, Robert Zoellick, said Professor Lin brings unique skills and experience to the job. Prof Lin believes the World Bank could help African countries find a successful development path and that the PRC's experience can be useful in this regard. His appointment to the world's largest development agency shows the growing influence of the PRC's economic reform," the BBC's China Editor Shirong Chen believes.

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