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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Missile Program

Yonhap News (Sam Kim, "N. KOREA BELIEVED TO HAVE REVAMPED MISSILE TECHNOLOGY: SOURCE", Seoul, 2009/02/05) reported that the DPRK is believed to have improved its missile technology to expedite the technical procedure for test-firing its most advanced missile, a ROK intelligence source said. Citing classified information, the source said the DPRK has also revamped its launch pad on the east coast. "They have tried to improve (the missile) for the last couple of years, and we believe there has been improvement," the source said.

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2. DPRK on Missile Program

Yonhap News (Kim Hyun, "N. KOREA WATCHING U.S. MILITARY IN WEIGHING MISSILE TEST: REPORT", Seoul , 2009/02/05) reported that a pro-DPRK newspaper suggested that Pyongyang's decision on whether to test-launch a long-range missile could depend on a ROK-US joint military exercise scheduled for next month. The DPRK military will likely adopt a "tougher measure" should the US military stationed in the ROK go ahead with its annual joint war drill, said Choson Sinbo, a Tokyo-based newspaper that usually conveys the DPRK's position, apparently in reference to reports that Pyongyang is preparing a missile test.

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3. PRC on DPRK Missile Program

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA URGES NORTH KOREA NOT TO FUEL REGIONAL TENSIONS", Beijing, 2009/02/05) reported that the PRC urged its ally the DPRK not to do anything that would harm regional stability. "We hope all the parties can recognize that maintaining stability is in the common interest of the people of the Korean peninsula," foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said when asked about the reported missile test plans.

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4. DPRK Leadership

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREAN HARDER LINE LINKED TO LEADER'S ILLNESS: EXPERT", Washington, 2009/02/05) reported that the DPRK is taking a harder line in the six-party nuclear negotiations as hawks now dominate defense policy following the illness of leader Kim Jong-Il , a US expert said. Selig Harrison, speaking at a Washington think tank following his trip to the DPRK last month, stressed two other factors: the fallout from the leader's illness and political changes in the ROK. DPRK officials he met with dismissed reports of Kim's stroke in August as a "fabrication," but Harrison said that he believed the reports and that, according to "several well-informed sources," Kim has a greatly reduced work schedule. "He has turned over day-to-day management of domestic affairs to his brother-in-law Jang Song-Thaek and foreign affairs and defense policy is now largely in the hands of hawks in the national defense commission," he said.

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5. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Korea Herald ("SEOUL BALKS AT PRICE OF N. KOREA FUEL RODS", 2009/02/05) reported that the ROK is cautious over whether to purchase unused nuclear fuel rods from the DPRK due to the astronomical asking price, diplomatic sources said. "North Korea suggested a price of unspent fuel rods during our fact-finding team's visit to the North," a source said. The source declined to elaborate on the suggested price, only saying it was a far higher than international market price. Other sources said the DPRK claimed the price should include the cost of extracting the fuel rods. That would make it approximately ten times the market price, according to them.

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6. DPRK Economy

Xinhua News ("DPRK TOP LEADER CALLS FOR MODERNIZING INDUSTRY", 2009/02/05) reported that Kim Jong Il, top leader of the DPRK, has called for industrial production to be modernized and made more scientific to boost output, the official Rodong Sinmun daily said. The country must rely on science and technology to increase industrial production, Kim said while inspecting a machine factory in South Hamgyong province. He called for strengthening cooperation between technicians and workers so as to increase their technological capabilities.

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7. DPRK Food Supply

Yonhap News (Lee Chi-dong, "N. KOREA STILL SHORT OF FOOD DESPITE GOOD HARVEST: EXPERT", Seoul, 2009/02/05) reported that the DPRK 's food-related trouble is likely to continue despite a relatively good harvest last year, a leading US expert on the DPRK nation's economy said. "It is too early to break out the champagne," Marcus Noland, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said. "The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that North Korean grain production fell for three consecutive harvests, reaching 3.43 million metric tons in 2008-2009," he said. "The good harvests should be treated with caution. Overall grain balances in North Korea remain perilously close to the survival margin."

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8. DPRK Communication Technology

PC World ("NORTH KOREAN 3G SERVICE ATTRACTS 6,000 IN 2 WEEKS", 2009/02/05) reported that Koryolink, the DPRK 3G cellular network established in mid-December by Egypt 's Orascom Telecom , has attracted several thousand subscribers in the first two weeks since it began accepting applications in January. "We didn't start sales until about two weeks ago," said Naguib Sawiris , chairman of Orascom Telecom in a telephone interview . "So far we have about 6,000 applications. The important point is that they are normal citizens, not the privileged or military generals or party higher-ups. For the first time they have been able to go to a shop and get a mobile phone."

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9. US-ROK Security Alliance

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA, U.S. TO COMBINE AIR FORCE COMMAND", 2009/02/05) reported that a ROK-US Combined Air Force Command will be set up in Osan, General Walter Sharp, commander of the US Forces Korea, said. In a speech at the 2009 Korean-American Association general meeting, Sharp said the combined air force command will provide the air force capability needed to deal immediately with an attack. When the ROK-US Combined Forces Command is dissolved upon transfer to the ROK of operational control of the Korean troops, an operational center with weaker leadership than the CFC will be set up, but retired brass have expressed fear that that would weaken the country's ability to respond to an emergency.

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10. Japan SDF Anti-Piracy Operations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN TO SEND PIRACY FACT-FINDING MISSION TO NEAR SOMALIA ON SUN.", Tokyo , 2009/02/05) reported that Japan 's Defense Ministry said it will send a fact-finding mission to Djibouti and three countries in the Middle East on Sunday to lay the groundwork for the Maritime Self-Defense Force's antipiracy mission off the coast of Somalia. The 13-member team will collect technical information in Yemen, Oman and Bahrain as well as Djibouti on a 13-day tour that includes examining port and airfield facilities the MSDF would use once its destroyers and patrol aircraft are dispatched.

The Asahi Shimbun ("COUNTER-PIRACY BILL INCLUDES EXPANDED SDF WEAPONS USE", 2009/02/05) reported that a planned general law will expand the Self-Defense Forces' authority to use weapons to thwart pirates and protect foreign ships that do not carry Japanese nationals or cargo, an outline of the bill showed. If passed, the SDF for the first time will be allowed to use weapons beyond the current limit of self-defense or evacuation during overseas dispatches.

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11. Japanese Politics

Associated Press (Mari Yamaguchi, "LAWMAKER DEMANDS JAPAN PM APOLOGIZE OVER POW LABOR", Tokyo, 2009/02/06) reported that Yukihisa Fujita, a member of the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan, said Friday Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso should apologize for his family's use of Allied prisoners of war as forced labor in its coal mine during World War II . "Mr. Aso should take this opportunity and send a sincere message to the survivors," said Fujita. "If it were not Mr. Aso's family mine, the POW issue might have been buried in the dark forever."

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12. Japanese Whaling

Associated Press (Kristen Gelineau, "SHIPS COLLIDE IN ANTARCTIC WHALING CLASH", Sydney, 2009/02/06) reported that a boat from the Sea Shepard Conservation Society collided with a Japanese whaling vessel in the Antarctic Ocean on Friday. No one was injured. Paul Watson of the group said his boat was trying to prevent a Japanese ship from dragging a whale on board when another Japanese boat shot in front of Watson's vessel, causing a collision. "The situation down here is getting very, very chaotic and very aggressive," Watson said. The Institute of Cetacean Research, the Japanese government-affiliated organization that oversees the hunt characterized the collision as a "deliberate ramming." Shigeki Takaya, a Fisheries Agency spokesman for whaling in Japan, called the incident "appalling and unforgivable." "We will ask concerning countries, including Australia, to immediately stop them from carrying out such horrendous acts," Takaya said.

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13. Russo-Japanese Relations

Kyodo News ("AGREEMENT REACHED ON RELEASE OF FISHERMEN DETAINED BY RUSSIA", Yonago, 2009/02/05) reported that the employer of a crab-fishing boat crew detained in Russia said it has reached an agreement with Russian authorities on their release. Hiyoshi Suisan, the seafood processor which owns the boat that was seized Jan. 27 in waters off the Noto Peninsula, said it has sent an undisclosed payment and the Russian authorities have agreed to free all 10 fishermen as soon as they have confirmed receiving it.

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14. USFJ Base Realignment

Stars and Stripes (Chiyomi Sumida, "JAPANESE MINISTER SEES NO CHANGE TO REALIGNMENT PLANS", Naha, 2009/02/05) reported that there will be no change under the Obama administration in a plan to realign US forces in Japan, Japan's minister of foreign affairs Hirofumi Nakasone said before wrapping up a one-day trip to Okinawa. During a news conference in Naha, the foreign minister said he spoke with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton soon after she assumed office and they agreed on the importance of carrying out the realignment plan the countries signed in May 2006. The plan includes moving about 8,000 Marines and their families from Okinawa to Guam once a new Marine air facility is built to replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

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15. Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Xinhua News ("CHINA URGES JAPAN TO IMMEDIATELY CEASE ACTION ON DIAOYU ISLANDS", 2009/02/05) reported that the PRC urged Japan to immediately cease action concerning the Diaoyu Islands issue, noting that the actions, aimed to strengthen control over the islands, are infringement to the PRC's territorial sovereignty. The Diaoyu Islands and adjacent islets have been PRC territories since ancient times, PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said. "Any actions from Japan to strengthen the actual control over the islands are infringement to China's territorial sovereignty, which is illegal and invalid, and should be stopped immediately," Jiang said.

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16. Cross Strait Relations

China Post ("TAIWAN NEEDS TO MINIMIZE CHINA THREAT: MA", Taipei, 2009/02/05) reported that President Ma Ying-jeou reiterated that Taiwan needs to minimize the threat posed by the PRC in order to uphold the country's best interests. In line with this goal, Ma said, the government has adopted a China policy that is aimed at maintaining cross-Taiwan Strait stability and promoting regional peace to safeguard the security of the Taiwan people. While doing so, Taiwan's military must not relax its vigilance, but rather should maintain its readiness, Ma said, noting that strong defense preparedness was what has protected Taiwan from possible attacks by the PRC over the past decades.

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17. PRC Energy Supply

People's Daily Online ("CHINA TO DOUBLE EFFORTS IN PROMOTING NEW ENERGY CONSTRUCTION", 2009/02/05) reported that the PRC will accelerate steps to shut down small, technologically out-dated and high energy-consuming thermal power plants, coal mines and oil refineries, and accelerate the construction of large-scale energy infrastructures and major energy projects, an official from the National Energy Bureau said. Additionally, starting this year, several 10 million-kilowatt-plus capacity wind power bases will be built in places including Gansu, Inner Mongolia, Hebei and Jiangsu over the course of the next 10 or so years.

Caijing Magazine (Chen Zhu, "STRATEGIC OIL RESERVES STARTS OPERATION", 2009/02/05) reported that planning is underway for the PRC's second batch of strategic oil reserves, according to

the country's top economic planner, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). As of November 2008, the PRC began initial work in the construction of eight facilities with a planed reserve volume of 26.8 million cubic meters, the equivalent of 169 million barrels. However, the NDRC did not provide further details about site selection or the state of construction of the new reserves.

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18. US-PRC Climate Change Collaboration

The New York Times (Edward Wong and Andrew C. Revkin, "EXPERTS IN U.S. AND CHINA SEE A CHANCE FOR COOPERATION AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE", Beijing, 2009/02/05) reported that an increasing number of officials and scholars from both the US and the PRC say climate change is likely to become a focal point in dialogue. American and PRC leaders recognize the urgency of global warming, the scholars and officials say, and believe that a new international climate treaty is impossible without agreements between their nations, the world's two largest emitters of greenhouse gases. In a sign of this new emphasis, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton plans to stress the importance of new steps on energy and global warming when she visits the PRC, perhaps as soon as this month, an Obama administration official said.

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19. PRC Food Supply

BBC News ("CHINA DECLARES DROUGHT EMERGENCY", 2009/02/05) reported that the PRC has declared an emergency in eight northern and central drought-hit regions, where nearly four million people are suffering water shortages. Nearly half of the PRC's winter crop - some 10m hectares (24m acres) of wheat and rape seed - are also under threat. President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao ordered all-out efforts to fight the drought, allocating 400m yuan ($58m, £40m) in relief assistance. Eight wheat-growing regions - Hebei, Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangsu, Henan, Shandong, Shaanxi and Gansu - are under threat, Xinhua reported.

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20. PRC Unrest

Agence France-Presse ("WORKERS PROTEST AS ITALIAN SOFA MAKER FOLDS IN CHINA", Beijing, 2009/02/05) reported that over 2,000 factory workers in the PRC launched a protest after their employer, an Italian maker of luxury sofas, closed down in the wake of the global financial crisis, local authorities said. On January 8, the workers went on strike in protest over not having been paid for two months. One week later, the workers launched a sit-in, refusing to leave the factory, after they learned that the company's legal representative and managing staff from Hong Kong and further abroad had disappeared.

Associated Press (Audra Ang, "CHINA POLICE TAKE AWAY CITIZENS AIRING GREIVANCES", Beijing, 2009/02/06) reported that police in Beijing took away at least eight people trying to air grievances in front a government building Friday. The eight were part of a loosely organized group of about 30 people from all around the country who had come to Beijing in hopes the central

government would help them with a variety of problems, mostly centered around local corruption.

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21. PRC Internet Censorship

The New York Times (Andrew Jacobs, "CHINESE LEARN LIMITS OF ONLINE FREEDOM AS THE FILTER TIGHTENS", Beijing, 2009/02/05) reported that since early January, the PRC government has been waging a decency campaign that has closed more than 1,500 Web sites found to contain sex, violence or “vulgarity.” Numerous other sites, including Google, have responded by removing any pages that might offend puritanical sensibilities. But indecency is often in the eye of the beholder. Last month, Bullog, a popular bastion for freewheeling bloggers, was shut down for what the authorities said were its “large amounts of harmful information on current events,” according to a notice posted by the site’s founder, Luo Yonghao. Many people here believe that Bullog may have crossed a line by posting information about Charter 08, an online petition calling for democratic reforms.

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II. PRC Report

22. PRC Energy Supply

Xinhua Net ("CHINA ELECTRICITY COUNCIL: CHINA'S POWER GLUT TO CONTINUE, BEIJING", 2009/02/04) reported that the PRC will see a continuous power glut in 2009 as the global economic downturn forces factories to scale back output and electricity consumption, according to a report released by the China Electricity Council (CEC). PRC power enterprises would experience the toughest days throughout the first two quarters of 2009. The annual power consumption is likely to register a five percent growth this year, said Wang Yonggan, General Secretary of the CEC. Power consumption grew 5.23 percent in 2008, 9.57 percentage points lower than a year ago and the slowest in eight years, according to the CEC data.

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23. PRC Civil Society

Beijing Times (Li Ai, "BEIJING TO ESTABLISH VOLUNTEERS’ FEDERATION", 2009/02/05) reported that Beijing Volunteers’ Association will be upgraded as Beijing Volunteers’ Federation, to carry out unified management of various volunteer organizations in Beijing, according to a meeting about volunteers’ service held by Beijing Municipal People's Political Consultative Conference. Members of the Political Consultative Conference expressed concerns about the cost protection, lack of insurance, and incentive mechanism of the volunteers, suggesting the establishment of a unified information platform and ID system, to provide insurance for volunteers.

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24. PRC Civil Society and the Environment

Gansu Daily (Zhou Zhejun, "U.N. CHILDREN'S FUND TO CONTRIBUTE 4.68 MILLION RMB ON RECONSTRUCTION OF WEN COUNTY", 2009/02/05) reported that according to Wen County Love Commission, U.N. Children's Fund will give a fund of 4.68 million RMB for the reconstruction of the water and environment improvement project of Wen county, Gansu province. As a result of the 5.12 Earthquake, the ecological environment of Wen county was seriously damaged, especially the circulatory system of the groundwater. The first phase of the project has been launched recently.

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org