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Contents in this Issue:

- I. Napsnet
  - 1. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program
  - 2. US-ROK Relations
  - 3. US-ROK Security Alliance
  - 4. US-ROK Military Exercises
  - 5. Russian Violation of ROK Airspace
  - 6. ROK-Japan Trade Relations
  - 7. Comfort Women Issue
  - 8. Japanese Territorial Disputes
  - 9. US Military in Japan
  - 10. Sino-Japanese Relations
  - 11. PRC Nuclear Arsenal
  - 12. Cross Straits Military Balance
  - 13. Taiwan UN Membership
- II. ROK Report

- 14. DPRK Human Rights
- 15. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. Napsnet

1. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters ("CHINA IN EFFORTS TO BRIDGE U.S., N.KOREA DIFFERENCES", Beijing, 2008/03/06) reported that the PRC is in discussions with the United States and the DPRK on how to bridge differences and restart the six-party talks, Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei told reporters on the sidelines of the PRC's annual parliament session on Thursday. "China has raised all kinds of means with both the American and the DPRK sides. We are still discussing these means," Wu stated. Wu said North Korea and the other parties disagreed over what constituted "complete and accurate," in reference to any declaration of its nuclear programs.

(return to top)

2. US-ROK Relations

Donga Ilbo ("BUSH TO HOST LEE AT CAMP DAVID", Seoul, 2008/03/06) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak and U.S. President George W. Bush will meet at Camp David, a U.S. presidential retreat near Washington, in mid-April. President Lee and the First Lady will have a private dinner with President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush. Lee will have a summit meeting with the U.S. president after staying overnight at Camp David. This is the first time that a summit meeting between the leaders of ROK and the United States have been held there. Until now, all ROK presidents have attended official dinners at the White House with their attendants.

(return to top)

3. US-ROK Security Alliance

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA FACES FRESH CALL TO PAY MORE FOR USFK UPKEEP", Seoul, 2008/03/06) reported that Washington wants Seoul to shoulder a greater share of the upkeep of the U.S. Forces Korea, U.S. Ambassador Alexander Vershbow said Wednesday. “The U.S. would like Korea to share the level of support up to 50 percent in terms of non-personnel stationing costs,” he said. Vershbow told the Korea Defense Daily, a newspaper published by the Defense Ministry, that Seoul's new administration could reach an agreement "for a longer term, instead of having to negotiate every year or a year and a half.”

(return to top)

4. US-ROK Military Exercises

Korea Herald ("TO N.K.'S IRE, JOINT DRILLS EVINCE STRONG D.C.-SEOUL ALLIANCE", Seoul, 2008/03/06) reported that the ongoing joint military exercise by the ROK and the United States is a clear sign of President Lee Myung-bak's determination to enhance the bilateral military alliance and to convince the DPRK to comply with international agreements on denuclearization, ROK experts say. Cho Seong-ryoul, director of the Institute for National Security Strategy, which is affiliated with the National Intelligence Service, explained that "the United States wants to show its commitment to the Lee Myung-bak government's goal of enhancing the South Korea-U.S. alliance. The drill embodies the principle which both countries agree on." "With the launch of a new government in South Korea, the United States also expects to refresh bilateral relations. There was a rift during the previous, anti-American government. The enthusiastic promotion by the United States of the current drills can be interpreted as an effort to take the initiative, so as to bring the ties between South Korea and the United States to a higher level," said Kwon Jae-sang, a board member of the Korea Defense and Security Forums, a private security think tank.

(return to top)

5. Russian Violation of ROK Airspace

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "KOREAN, US FIGHTERS INTERCEPT RUSSIAN AIRCRAFT", Seoul, 2008/03/06) reported that a Russian reconnaissance aircraft approached a U.S. aircraft carrier on the eastern waters off the Korean Peninsula Wednesday, entering the ROK's air defense safety zone, a military source said Thursday. Two U.S. F/A-18 fighters from the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier participating in annual drills by ROK and American troops successfully intercepted the Russian aircraft, a Tupolev TU-142 BEAR-F and escorted it out of the area, the source said. Four F-16 fighters of the ROK Air Force also conducted maneuvers to support the U.S. fighters, he added.

(return to top)

6. ROK-Japan Trade Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL TO WORK WITH TOKYO TO REDUCE TRADE DEFICIT", Seoul, 2008/03/06) reported that during ROK President Lee Myung-bak's first visit to Tokyo, planned for next month, the government and business leaders will formally ask Japan to cooperate in reducing Seoul's trade deficit with Tokyo. Knowledge-based Economy Minister Lee Youn-ho on Wednesday said, "Before President Lee's scheduled visit to Japan, we and the Federation of Korean Industries are trying to find ways to drastically reduce the trade deficit with Japan, with focus on the materials and components industry."

(return to top)

7. Comfort Women Issue

Chosun Ilbo ("WOMEN'S DAY BRINGS GLOBAL PROTEST FOR 'COMFORT WOMEN'", Seoul,

2008/03/06) reported that Marking the 100th International Women's Day on Saturday, rallies condemning the Japanese military's wartime sexual enslavement of women from Asian countries were held around the world. Rallies were staged in the ROK, as well as Japan, the U.K., the Philippines, Australia, Taiwan and Indonesia. In Australia and at Britain's University of Warwick, there were campaigns to collect signatures for a parliamentary resolution denouncing Japan's enslavement of women during World War II.

(return to top)

8. Japanese Territorial Disputes

Asahi Shimbun ("MAN SHOOTS SELF IN FRONT OF DIET", Tokyo, 2008/03/06) reported that an apparent right-wing activist carrying protest letters fatally shot himself in front of the Diet on Wednesday. One of the letters was addressed to Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda calling on him to be more assertive in his dealings over the abduction and territorial issues.

(return to top)

9. US Military in Japan

Associated Press (Chisaki Watanabe, "4 MARINES TOGET COURTS-MARTIAL IN JAPAN", Tokyo, 2008/03/06) reported that the U.S. military will court-martial four Marines in Japan for the alleged rape of a Japanese woman, a Marine Corps official said Thursday. The four Marines — accused of an attack on a 19-year-old woman in October — were charged by the military in December. Japanese authorities investigated the incident but local prosecutors dropped the case in November. Officials refused to provide reasons for not pursuing prosecution.

(return to top)

10. Sino-Japanese Relations

Asahi Shimbun ("TOKYO, BEIJING TO POSTPONE HU'S VISIT UNTIL MID-MAY", Tokyo, 2008/03/06) reported that Japan and the PRC plan to postpone PRC President Hu Jintao's visit to Japan from April to mid-May apparently because of fallout from the food-poisoning scare over imported gyoza dumplings, sources said. The planned visit of PRC Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi to Japan in late March to prepare for Hu's visit will also likely be postponed, they said.

(return to top)

11. PRC Nuclear Arsenal

Washington Times (Bill Gertz, "U.S. TO BROACH NUKE CONCERNS WITH CHINA", Washington, 2008/03/04) reported that the Pentagon is set to begin strategic arms talks with the PRC amid concerns outlined in an annual report questioning Beijing's control over the military's growing nuclear arsenal. The report said the PRC's new road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles and ballistic-missile submarines "will create new command and control challenges for China's leadership, now confronted with a different set of variables related to release and deployment authorities." It

added that the PRC's military "has only a limited capacity to communicate with submarines at sea and the PLA Navy has no experience in managing [a nuclear missile submarine] fleet that performs strategic patrols." "Pentagon concerns over China's command and control of nuclear forces are growing," said a Pentagon official.

(return to top)

12. Cross Straits Military Balance

Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA SAYS US EXAGGERATING TAIWAN THREAT", Beijing, 2008/03/06) reported that the Chinese Communist Party's main newspaper said Thursday that the U.S. is exaggerating the PRC's threat against Taiwan to justify arms sales to the island. A recent U.S. Defense Department report also overstated the PRC's space weapons and cyberwarfare capabilities and glossed over the People's Liberation Army's steps toward greater transparency, the paper said in a signed editorial. The editorial called U.S. warnings of a growing gap in military capabilities a "hackneyed phrase" that appeared each year in the Pentagon report. The article said the PLA had boosted transparency by issuing annual reports on its overall status, publicizing spending and engaging in joint drills with more than 20 nations. It pointed also to Beijing's constructive role in hosting talks on dismantling DPRK's nuclear capability and dispatch of engineering troops to Sudan's Darfur region.

(return to top)

13. Taiwan UN Membership

Washington Post (Edward Cody, "U.S., CHINA RESIGNED TO TAIWAN VOTE", Taipei, 2008/03/05) reported that the PRC and the United States have resigned themselves to Taiwanese plans for a referendum on whether the self-ruled island should apply for UN membership under the name Taiwan. Neither country has abandoned its strong opposition to the referendum, officials said, but U.S. and PRC officials hope the measure will be defeated by the island's voters.

(return to top)

II. ROK Report

14. DPRK Human Rights

Good Friends ("DPRK: 'THIS SHOOTING IS TO PREVENT ILLEGAL BOARDER CROSSINGS'", 2008/03/06) reported that one DPRK government official said that the open execution of 15 criminals at Onsungkun was a forewarning action made to prevent increased illegal boarder crossing in spring season. He said, “Even those who had money are crying they are having difficult days. Those who barely survived the days are hopeless. And geographically speaking, people are disappearing after everyday. Some illegally cross the boarder on their way back from their cousin’s house, and even graduating class students are disappearing everyday. Therefore, we made the gunshot to give people a right understanding.”

(return to top)

15. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Hankyoreh Newspaper (Seung Joo-bek, "WE MUST NOT OVERREACT TO DPRK LEADER'S MOOD", 2008/03/05) carried a commentary by a researcher from the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses which said that in inter-Korean relations, the positions of the DPRK and ROK supreme leaders have absolute influence. However, even if this is acknowledged, the policies toward the DPRK should not be planned according to how DPRK leaders feel. Fortunately, we have "constitutional principles" more important than "the President's feeling." Different policies and positions needed for coping with DPRK should ultimately be set up with optimistic human relations based on standards of "peaceful unification, justice, morality, and fraternity." Constitutional principles must be the guideline for policies toward the DPRK.

Donga Ilbo ("DPRK SHOULD CAREFULLY READ CHANGES IN ROK", 2008/03/06) wrote that the ROK government's attitude toward the DPRK, compared to that of the old administration, is definitely changing. We hope that this can be an opportunity for the DPRK to realize that the new administration is different from the Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Mu-Hyun administrations at a fundamental level. Inter-Korean relations should loosen up the tensions and focus on whether it would be effectual for improving human rights in the DPRK. The DPRK must carefully read the message of change Lee Myung-bak administration is sending.

(return to top)

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