



NAPSNet Daily Report 7 April, 2008

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 7 April, 2008", NAPSNet Daily Report, April 07, 2008,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-7-april-2008/>

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I. Napsnet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Korea Herald (Lee Joo-hee, "NEGOTIATORS IN SINGAPORE FOR CRUCIAL N.K. TALKS", Singapore, 2008/04/07) reported that the chief nuclear negotiators from the United States and the DPRK arrived in Singapore Monday afternoon to compare their final positions on Pyongyang's nuclear declaration. Sources say the two sides have agreed so far to specify the DPRK's suspected clandestine uranium enrichment program and any proliferation activities it may have made in a confidential report, while other points such as the amount of produced plutonium will be included in an official statement. Should there be a breakthrough in the talks with Kim Kye-gwan, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill will meet with his Chinese counterparts in Beijing to start working on the next phase, the sources said.

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2. DPRK Internal Conditions

IFES NK Brief ("SCRAP METAL SMUGGLING RAMPANT IN NORTH KOREA", Seoul, 2008/04/04) reported that as smuggling scrap metal across the DPRK-PRC boarder has become widespread among DPRK residents lately, police are investigating the illegal trade, leading to the arrest of all of the residents in the border region that were involved in the smuggling. On April 1, the Daily NK quoted a source inside the DPRK as saying, "An order was handed down by the central government at the beginning of March to 'come down hard on those scrap metal smugglers', and the police and security force investigation is ongoing." The source went on to report that in the Kumsandong Fertilizer Factory in Hyesan, "everything metal that wasn't bolted down is gone, and only the walls of the factory remain...in the future [authorities] will punish scrap metal smugglers severely."

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3. Inter-Korea Relations

Yonhap (Shim Sun-ah, "CHILL IN INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS SET TO CONTINUE: EXPERTS", Seoul, 2008/04/06) reported that inter-Korean relations are unlikely to improve in the immediate future, irrespective of progress in six-party talks, analysts said at the weekend. "North Korea is likely to try sidelining South Korea and focusing solely on improving ties with the United States," one of the sources said. Analysts said the current tension may lead to additional short-range missile tests

and skirmishes in the demilitarized zone or near the west sea border. However they say Pyongyang's choices when it comes to increasing tension are constrained for the time being due to the upcoming Summer Olympics in Beijing.

Associated Press ("NKOREA WARNS SKOREA GOVERNMENT WILL FAIL", Seoul, 2008/04/07) reported that the ROK's new government will not last if it continues to allow its U.S.-led policy to ruin reconciliation efforts on the Korean peninsula, the DPRK said Monday. Rodong Shinmun criticized President Lee Myung-bak's government for "following the U.S. imperialists" and driving inter-Korean relations to catastrophe. Those who "dance to the whistle of outside forces will only suffer a collapse," it said in a commentary.

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "PYONGYANG URGES SEOUL TO HONOR SUMMIT ACCORDS", Seoul, 2008/04/06) reported that Kim Young-dae, vice chairman of the Presidium of the DPRK's Supreme People's Assembly, urged the ROK on Saturday to honor summit declarations on cross-border economic cooperation. Kim called the summit pacts the most "reasonable and realistic" agreements to help reunify the two Koreas. He strongly criticized Seoul for putting priority on relations with the United States, calling the ROK a "traitor." Kim also claimed the ROK was increasing tension and threatened the DPRK would take countermeasures.

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4. DPRK on ROK Missile Defense

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "N. KOREA BLASTS US MISSILE SHIELD", Seoul, 2008/04/06) reported that the DPRK denounced Saturday the ROK's potential joining in the U.S.-led ballistic missile defense (BMD) system, calling it a scheme to preemptively strike the DPRK. It accused the ROK's conservative forces of pushing ahead with a plan to cooperate with the U.S. BMD initiative.

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5. DPRK Olympic Torch Relay

Chosun Ilbo ("UN SNUBS N.KOREA IN OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY", 2008/04/07) reported that the UN has decided not to participate in the Olympic torch relay in the DPRK. Britain's Sunday Times reports the UN "has withdrawn its staff from the Olympic torch run in North Korea amid concerns that the relay will be used as a propaganda stunt." Quoting diplomats, the daily said this was "believed to be the first acknowledgment by the world body that the Olympic torch relay is a political event that can be exploited by unscrupulous governments." UNICEF spokesman Christopher de Bono said the organization "originally decided to participate in the Pyongyang leg torch run in response to a request from, and as a demonstration of support for, the International Olympic Movement. However, we are no longer convinced that UNICEF's participation in the run will support the aim of raising awareness of the situation of children" in the DPRK.

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6. ROK Military Diplomacy

Yonhap ("AIR FORCE CHIEF TO VISIT RUSSIA, CHINA, JAPAN", Seoul, 2008/04/06) wrote that ROK Air Force chief Kim Eun-gi will visit Russia, the PRC, and Japan this week to discuss technological exchanges in the aerospace sector and witness the ROK's first astronaut blast off for the International Space Station, the Air Force said Sunday. Kim Sunday left for Russia, where he is to meet with his Russian counterpart, Alexander Zelin, to discuss ways of boosting cooperation in aviation and space technology, the Air Force said. He later heads to the PRC to meet with his counterpart Xu Qilian and seek the PRC's cooperation in establishing a military hotline between the two nations.

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7. ROK Military Procurements

Korea Times (Kim Sue-young, "SPY AIRPLANE NICKNAMED 'PEACE EYE'", Seoul, 2008/04/07) reported that the Air Force has nicknamed the country's first airborne early warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft as "Peace Eye." The spy airplane will be deployed from 2011. Two aircrafts will be delivered in 2011 and the other two will arrive in the ROK the following year.

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8. Bird Flu in ROK

BBC News ("S KOREA TACKLES BIRD FLU", Seoul, 2008/04/07) reported that the ROK has confirmed a second outbreak of the H5N1 bird flu virus at a duck farm, a week after reporting its first case in more than 13 months. Workers are culling thousands of ducks at the Jeongeup farm in the south-west of the country, the Farm Ministry said. They are also investigating two nearby farms where birds had died over the weekend.

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9. Japanese A-Bomb Victims

Kyodo ("GOV'T BEGINS SCREENING A-BOMB VICTIMS UNDER NEW EXTENDED CRITERIA", Tokyo, 2008/04/07) reported that the Japanese Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry began a screening process Monday for recognizing people as suffering from atomic-bomb-related diseases and therefore as eligible for special medical benefits under a newly expanded set of criteria. People to be newly recognized as sufferers under the expanded criteria, revised for the first time since May 2001, are expected to total about 1,800 annually, about 10 times more than those recognized under the old criteria. Officially recognized sufferers receive about 137,000 yen in special monthly medical benefits.

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10. Japan-Taiwan Relations

Yomiuri (Toshinao Ishii, "TAIWAN'S LEE TO BOLSTER JAPAN TIES", Taipei, 2008/04/05) reported that Former Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui is keen to act as an unofficial adviser on relations with

Japan for President-elect Ma Ying-jeou after Ma takes office in May. "Japan-Taiwan ties are as important or more important than Taiwan-China ties, and our solidarity with Japan is crucial for our economic development," Lee told The Yomiuri Shimbun on Thursday. "Mr. Ma doesn't know much about Japan. Someone who is clued up on Japanese affairs should be doing the job [of adviser]."

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11. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN'S VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT HEADED TO CHINA: OFFICIAL", Taipei, 2008/04/07) reported that Taiwan vice president-elect Vincent Siew will head to the PRC this week and could meet with President Hu Jintao, his spokesman Wang Yu-chi said Sunday. Siew will head on Friday to Hainan island for the Boao Forum for Asia, a gathering of business people and officials focused on greater trade cooperation in Asia. Siew will attend the weekend forum in his capacity as the chief of a non-profit organisation he founded, Wang said.

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12. Tibetan Unrest

Associated Press (Scott McDonald, "COMMUNIST BOSS: TIBET READY FOR TORCH", Beijing, 2008/04/06) reported that Zhang Qingli, the Communist Party boss of Tibet, says the region is stable but warned of possible sabotage against the Olympic torch relay, state media reported Sunday. Zhang was quoted as saying "that the social order in Lhasa and other parts of Tibet has resumed (as) normal." He warned "that grave challenges remain ahead, as the Dalai clique is plotting for new sabotage activities."

Associated Press (Cara Anna, "CHINA BLOCKS REPORTING IN TIBETAN AREAS", Beijing, 2008/04/05) reported that dozens of checkpoints have sealed off a chunk of western PRC twice the size of France, keeping out foreign journalists and other unwanted visitors as part of a campaign to squelch bad publicity. To avoid accusations of muzzling the media, officials deny the existence of a travel ban, saying only that reporters are recommended to keep away for their own safety.

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13. PRC-Pakistan Relations

CBS News ("CHINA EXPANDS MILITARY TIES WITH PAKISTAN", Islamabad, 2008/04/05) reported that the PRC has taken a significant step in meeting Pakistan's military needs with the completion of a militarily important naval frigate as part of an \$800 million deal, which analysts say will further deepen Islamabad's reliance on Beijing as a key supplier of military hardware. Senior western diplomats based in Islamabad said the PRC's interest in expanding its military ties with Pakistan is linked to its overall ambition of emerging as a formidable military and defense power in the Asia-Pacific region, with the capability of eventually reaching out to influencing the oil rich Middle East.

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II. ROK Report

14. ROK-US Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("THE REASONS FOR DISPUTES OVER US BASE RELOCATION COST", 2008/04/07) wrote that the dispute over US base relocation costs has become a controversial issue between ROK and US. This issue is very sensitive, requiring prudent government approach. US claims that money allotted for "military construction cost" can be used as relocation cost. However, the construction cost should be interpreted as money used for constructing facilities once the relocation is over. The biggest problem here is the possible intensification of the economic burden on the ROK government. It is also very likely that the US is going to demand ROK government for a drastic increase in the total contribution to defense expenses. US base relocation issue can be a negative influence to the national security once it causes another miscarriage in cost allotment. This issue must be amicably agreed on in ROK-US summit talk taking place in mid-April.

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15. DPRK Nuclear Problem

Donga Ilbo ("[editorial] DPRK, DO NOT EVEN DREAM OF 'OPEN TO US, ISOLATE ROK'", 2008/04/07) wrote that the head representatives of the US and DPRK at the six-party talk meet in Singapore tomorrow. Many pay attention to the result of this meeting as the promised date for the DPRK report of its nuclear program has not been fulfilled after three months have passed. In the diplomatic society positive scenarios of the DPRK agreeing to the plan of indirectly admitting UEP and suspicion regarding nuclear collaboration with Syria are suggested. However, it is too soon for optimism. The fact that the DPRK proposed the meeting first also uneases the mind. The DPRK has depended on the strategy of "open to the US, isolate the ROK" whenever tension rises in the Korean Peninsula. It would be a mistake for the DPRK to think that strategy will still work. Since the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak administration, US and ROK head for the recovery of the alliance in one voice. The DPRK must awake from an illusion that the new ROK government will tremble when it pretends to ally with the US.

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