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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK-US Relations

Yonhap ("N. KOREA ACCUSES U.S. OF ATTEMPTING PERMANENT DEPLOYMENT", Seoul, 2008/02/06) reported that the DPRK accused the US of trying to maintain its military presence on the Korean Peninsula permanently to block inter-Korean reconciliation and eventual national reunification. "It is an attempt by the U.S. to occupy South Korea permanently, and we will not tolerate it and deal sternly with it," said a spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland, a mouthpiece for the DPRK's ruling Workers Party. The spokesman claimed the remarks by the U.S. commander were an attempt to divide the Korean Peninsula permanently and "crush our republic forcefully".

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2. US on US-DPRK Relations

Reuters (Arshad Mohammed and Paul Eckert, "U.S. READY FOR FULL TIES IF N.KOREA DENUCLEARIZES", Washington, 2008/02/06) reported that the US is ready to open full diplomatic ties with the DPRK if it completely gives up its nuclear weapons and programs, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Chris Hill said. "In the context of full denuclearization we would be prepared to establish full diplomatic relations," he added. He also held out the possibility of quickly opening a peace process among the two Koreas, the PRC and the United States to formally end the 1950-1953 Korean War, of creating a regional group on peace and security issues and of eventually bringing the DPRK into international financial institutions.

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3. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

RIA Novosti ("U.S. INTELLIGENCE SAYS N.KOREA HAS BROKEN NUCLEAR PLEDGE", Washington, 2008/02/05) reported that the DPRK has broken the pledge it made last year to halt all nuclear activities. Mike McConnell, the director of the United States intelligence service, told a Senate hearing that Washington is "uncertain about Kim Jong Il's commitment to full denuclearization, as he promised in the six-party agreement. While Pyongyang denies a program of uranium enrichment and they deny their proliferation activities, we believe North Korea continues to engage in both," he said. Pyongyang earlier accused the U.S. of failing to strike it off the list of states sponsoring terrorism and lift related trade restrictions, Washington's obligations under the six-party deal in November 2006.

Agence France-Presse ("DISABLING NKOREA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMS ALMOST COMPLETED: US", 2008/02/06) reported that Christopher Hill, US envoy to the Six Party Talks, told a Congressional hearing that the DPRK has nearly completed disabling its nuclear facilities but has

not made a complete declaration of its atomic arsenal. US experts are on the ground overseeing the disablement of the facilities at the key Yongbyon nuclear complex, where plutonium was produced and believed to have been used to make a nuclear bomb that Pyongyang exploded in October 2006. Hill said North Korea had still not submitted a "complete and correct" declaration of its nuclear programs after failing to meet a December 31 deadline despite prodding by the United States and others. "We intend to ensure that Pyongyang lives up to the word by submitting to the Chinese chair as soon as possible a declaration that is in fact complete and correct," he told senators at the hearing on the status of the six-party talks chaired by the PRC.

TheAssociated Press (Foster Klug, "US ENVOY URGES NKOREA TO HAND OVER LIST", Washington, 2008/02/06) reported that the chief US envoy at DPRK nuclear talks urged Kim Jong Il's government to hand over a promised list of its nuclear efforts, saying that nuclear negotiators are working to make sure "Pyongyang lives up to its word." Christopher Hill told lawmakers that six-nation disarmament talks are at a "critical, challenging" point. "There is some sense of urgency," he said at a Senate foreign affairs hearing. "Let me be clear," Hill said. "'Complete and correct' means complete and correct. This declaration must include all nuclear weapons, programs, materials and facilities, including clarification of any proliferation activities."

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4. US Fuel Oil Shipments to the DPRK

Agence France-Presse (P. Parameswaran, "US TO SEND FUEL AID TO NKOREA DESPITE NUCLEAR LIST DELAY", Washington, 2008/02/06) reported that the US said it planned to send a second shipment of fuel oil to the DPRK even though it has not provided a full declaration of its nuclear programs under an aid-for-disarmament deal. "We have another shipment which we are beginning to get going on this week," said Christopher Hill, the US envoy to the six-party talks, at a Congressional hearing. Hill said the DPRK also recently slowed down their nuclear disablement process -- by operating on one shift instead of three shifts -- partly because they felt they had not been adequately compensated for their disablement activities. "There is a perception among the North Koreans that they have moved faster on disablement than we have on fuel oil," he said.

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5. Kaesong Industrial Complex

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREANS OFFER BRIBES TO WORK AT SOUTH KOREAN-RUN COMPLEX: REPORT", Seoul, 2008/02/04) reported that North Koreans are paying bribes to officials to get jobs at the Kaesong industrial complex, where they can make 30 times more than ordinary workers. Reports from North Koreans visiting Dandong, PRC say some pay up to US\$350. An official at the ROK's Unification Ministry said he heard from South Korean businessmen operating in Kaesong that some lobbied government officials to work there, however, he had no knowledge of bribes being paid.

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6. Inter-Korean Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("TWO KOREAS AGREE ON OLYMPIC CHEERLEADERS", Seoul, 2008/02/05) reported that the Koreans have agreed to dispatch two 300-strong joint cheerleader squads to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. It is the first inter-Korean agreement since the presidential election in ROK last December voted in a conservative government. The idea was first proposed by North Korea during the inter-Korean summit last year, as revealed in confidential National Intelligence Service documents.

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7. US on Abductee Issue

Reuters ("U.S. REJECTS LINKING JAPAN ABDUCTEES TO NORTH KOREA DEAL", Washington, 2008/02/06) reported that the US rejects formally linking the issue of Japanese citizens abducted by the DPRK to diplomatic rewards for Pyongyang's pledged denuclearization, the U.S. nuclear envoy said. But Assistant Secretary of State Chris Hill told a U.S. Senate panel that ally Japan would not be left "in the lurch" or dealt any unpleasant surprises as Washington moves forward with a nuclear disarmament pact with Pyongyang. "I don't think it's in our country's interest or Japan's interest or anyone's interest to make these hard linkages in advance," Hill told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

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8. ROK-Japan Relations

Bloomberg ("JAPAN LAWMAKERS PLAN NORTH KOREA TALKS WITH PRESIDENT-ELECT LEE", 2008/02/05) reported that Japanese lawmakers led by Koichi Kato, former secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, will visit Seoul on Feb 10 and 11 for talks on the DPRK with the ROK's president-elect Lee Myung Bak. The 17-member delegation includes politicians from the biggest opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan.

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9. Sino-Japanese East Sea Gas Dispute

Reuters ("CHINA DENIES CONSENSUS ON GAS PROFITS WITH JAPAN", Beijing, 2008/02/06) reported that the PRC denied a Japanese report the two countries are considering splitting profits from gas fields in disputed waters in the East China Sea. "Related reports are inaccurate. The Chinese side's position on the East China Sea issue has not changed," PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao told a regular news conference. Japan's top government spokesman has also disputed the report.

Reuters ("JAPAN WANTS TO TAP TWO GAS FIELDS WITH CHINA-PAPER", Tokyo, 2008/02/06) reported that Japan has proposed a plan to resolve a simmering row over natural resources by jointly developing two gas fields with the PRC in disputed waters in the East China Sea. The PRC state-controlled CNOOC Ltd has said it is ready to begin production from the Chunxiao gas field, and Japan fears that operations could siphon off gas from fields that extend into what it sees as its own economic waters. Under the proposal, Japan and China would jointly develop the Tianwaitian and Chunxiao gas fields in the East China Sea, the daily said.

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10. Russo-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Kyodo ("FUKUDA EYES RUSSIA VISIT IN MAY FOR TALKS WITH PUTIN", Tokyo, 2008/02/06) reported that Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda is considering visiting Russia, possibly in May, for talks with President Vladimir Putin, in hope of seeking a breakthrough on stalled negotiations over disputed Russian-held territory, Foreign Ministry sources said Wednesday. Putin conveyed to former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori during talks in December his strong hope of meeting Fukuda directly. "I understood well from our talks and the letter that President Putin wants to resolve this territorial dispute, and so we will also proactively work on" efforts to reach a resolution, Fukuda told reporters on Wednesday evening, referring to a letter he received from Putin around the time of Mori's visit.

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11. PRC Economy

Xinhua ("U.S. SLOWDOWN COULD BE OPPORTUNITY, NOT CRISIS, FOR CHINA", Beijing, 2008/02/06) reported that a slowdown in the U.S. economy will affect the PRC, but maybe in a positive way, according to Chinese economists and analysts. Yu Yongding, director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics under CASS, said that the PRC should take the opportunity to stimulate domestic demand. Yu said that doing so would help workers who lost their jobs due to changes in export growth find new jobs.

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12. PRC Corruption

Associated Press ("CHINESE OFFICIAL GETS LIFE FOR BRIBERY", Beijing, 2008/02/06) reported that the former communist party boss of Olympic host city Qingdao was sentenced to life in prison for accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes. Du Shicheng was found guilty of taking \$870,000 worth of bribes from 2000 to January 2006 while serving as the port city's most powerful official, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. Corruption can be punished with the death penalty in China, but Xinhua said the judges showed leniency toward Du because he confessed to some crimes authorities had not previously known about. The government has been making efforts to stop rampant graft - the cause of widespread public anger that has undermined the Communist Party's authority - and thousands of officials have been punished, some executed, in the last several years.

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Nautilus Institute

2342 Shattuck Ave. #300, Berkeley, CA 94704 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:
nautilus@nautilus.org