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1. DPRK Military Exercises

KBS World News ("NK FIRES ARTILLERY SHELLS INTO OWN YELLOW SEA WATERS", 2010/12/08) reported that the DPRK fired artillery shells into its own waters northeast of the ROK's Baengnyeong Island in the Yellow Sea around 9 a.m. on Wednesday. An official at the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Seoul said that several artillery shells landed in waters north of the inter-Korean maritime border. He added that the artillery firing appears to have been part of a regular military drill by the DPRK and is not a cause for concern.

http://world.kbs.co.kr/english/news/news_IK_detail.htm?No=77792

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2. US on Sino-DPRK Relations

Voice of America ("US REPEATS CALLS FOR CHINA TO PUT PRESSURE ON N. KOREA", 2010/12/08) reported that a top U.S. State Department official has urged the PRC to make it clear to the DPRK that there are consequences for its actions. The remarks from Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg are but the latest in a string of calls from the Obama administration for Beijing to put more pressure on Pyongyang. Speaking at the Center for American Progress on Tuesday in Washington, Steinberg stressed the crucial role the PRC could play. "The recent tensions on the peninsula, which have been caused by a series of provocations by North Korea, highlights the need for strengthened regional cooperation and in that context for strong U.S. - China cooperation on this important strategic issue," he said. Steinberg said a strong message urging the DPRK to show restraint is needed. "That is what's creating the instability and the fragility. The tensions that we see and the dangers that we see, come from the fact that there does not seem to be effective restraints on North Korea engaging in these provocations," he said.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/asia/US-Repeats-Calls-for-China-to-Put-Pressure-on-N-Korea-111475369.html>

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3. Russia on Inter-Korean Relations

Korea Times ("RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR URGES RESTRAINT", 2010/12/08) reported that regional players should refrain from any action that could be interpreted as provocative, the top Russian envoy in the ROK said Wednesday. Speaking before a National Assembly forum, Russian Ambassador to Seoul Konstantine Vnukov also recommended increasing economic cooperation among Russia and the two Koreas as a way to ratchet down tensions and deal with the DPRK's nuclear program. "Russia is currently considering the very serious situation around the Korean Peninsula and asking countries to prevent further escalation," he said. "Parties concerned should avoid behavior that could be misinterpreted because military action can escalate quickly."

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/12/116_77689.html

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4. ROK-US Military Relations

Korea Herald ("S. KOREA, U.S. TO CONTINUE JOINT DRILLS, REFINE SEOUL'S LEADING ROLE AGAINST LOCAL PROVOCATION", 2010/12/08) reported that military chiefs from the ROK and the United States agreed Wednesday to continue joint drills to effectively deter DPRK aggression and refine Seoul's leading role in dealing with local provocations, giving the ROK more authority in the case of future attacks by the DPRK. In a joint statement issued after their talks in Seoul, Gen. Han Min-koo of the ROK's Joint Chiefs of Staff and his U.S. counterpart Adm. Mike Mullen said they "agreed to primarily refine the ROK-supported, U.S.-supporting plans for local provocation in order for the alliance to resolutely respond to further North Korean aggression." Han and Mullen also "agreed to continue combined exercises designed to effectively deter North Korean aggression and strengthen the joint capabilities to respond," the statement said. The two sides "acknowledged that the artillery fire on Yeonpyeong was a deliberate and illegal armed attack which violates the U.N.

charter and armistice agreement" that ended the 1950-53 Korean War, the statement said.

<http://www.koreaherald.com/national/Detail.jsp?newsMLId=20101208000983>

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5. Japan Self-Defense Force

Reuters ("JAPAN TO RAISE ARMED FORCES MOBILITY TO BOOST DEFENSE", 2010/12/08) reported that Japanese Vice Defense Minister Jun Azumi said Japan's armed forces need to improve their mobility to boost the country's defense capability in the southwest, where it shares a maritime border with the PRC. Azumi also said Japan aims to strengthen its security cooperation with the ROK, Australia and India, on top of its ties with closest ally the United States. "In a sense, the Cold War era structure has remained unchanged in the Far East. Only, China's military expansion has added to instability," Jun Azumi told Reuters in an interview on Wednesday. "Our attention was on the north during the Cold War. But we have to shift our focus to the defense of southwest ... The most important step to strengthen our defense over the next 10 years is to secure the mobility (of our troops)." Azumi said the timing is right for Japan and the ROK to deepen their security ties. "Given our history, there might have been reluctance on the South Korean side (for security cooperation with Japan). But due to the North Korean situation, the environment for such talks is developing," Azumi said.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6B71DU20101208>

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