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1. US-DPRK Talks

Associated Press ("U.S., NORTH KOREA HOLD 'BUSINESSLIKE' TALKS ON DETAILS OF PYONGYANG'S NUCLEAR SHUTDOWN", 2007-08-13) The Associated Press Published: August 13, 2007 BEIJING: reported that U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill was optimistic after meeting with DPRK counterpart Kim Kye Gwan, saying the discussion was "very businesslike" and aimed to smooth the way for the two-day talks later this week in the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang. The U.S. and DPRK discussed details of how Pyongyang will declare and disable its nuclear facilities, talks that the top U.S. envoy said would lay the groundwork for upcoming six-nation meetings. The envoy said he and Kim have a tentative agreement to meet in late August to discuss the possibility of normalizing relations between their countries.

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2. ROK on Military Exercise

Korea Times ("SEOUL POSTPONES MILITARY EXERCISE", 2007-08-13) reported that the ROK has put off a large-scale field exercise that was planned for later this month due to the upcoming inter-Korean summit. But the Ulchi Focus Lens (UFL) exercise by the ROK and U.S. forces will run as scheduled from Aug. 21-30, a ministry spokesman said. "We have decided to put off the Hwarang Exercise for the very significant national event," the spokesman told reporters, dismissing reports the annual joint drill might be rescheduled due to the inter-Korean Summit. "But UFL will be held as planned." During the exercise, however, ROK troops will not participate in the field, Kim added.

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3. DPRK on Joint ROK-US Military Exercise

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA MILITARY TELLS U.S. TO HALT JOINT EXERCISE", 2007-08-10) reported that the DPRK called on the U.S. military on Friday to halt a joint training exercise with ROK forces, saying the drills could sabotage Six Party negotiations.

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4. DPRK-Iran Relations

Bloomberg ("IRAN, NORTH KOREA SAY THEY WILL STRENGTHEN THEIR ECONOMIC TIES", 2007-08-9) reported that Iran and the DPRK agreed to strengthen their economic cooperation. According to Iran's Ministry of Commerce, the countries signed an agreement yesterday on boosting ties in construction and technology, as well as other economic areas. Iran is under UN sanctions for refusing to end the production of enriched uranium, which can be used to fuel a reactor or form the core of a bomb. Iran says its program is part of a plan to produce nuclear energy, while the U.S. accuses Iran of trying to develop atomic weapons.

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5. Inter-Korean Summit

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA'S KIM LOOKING TO ENSURE SURVIVAL IN SUMMIT WITH SOUTH: OFFICIAL", 2007-08-13) reported that the last high-ranking official from Seoul to meet Kim

Jong Il, former Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said the DPRK leader is seeking to ensure the stability of his authoritarian regime in agreeing to the inter-Korean Summit. He also believes the DPRK will abandon its nuclear programs as it has pledged to do amid warming relations with Washington, because Kim made clear at their June 2005 meeting in Pyongyang that his motivation for building bombs was solely because of deep-seated fears of the United States.

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6. DPRK Floods

Reuters ("HUNDREDS DEAD, MISSING IN NORTH KOREAN FLOODS", 2007-08-13) reported that hundreds of DPR Koreans are dead or missing and thousands of homes have been destroyed after days of torrential rain. The (DPR) Korean Central News Agency reported that crops had been ruined and infrastructure, including major railways, roads, bridges and power lines, were left badly damaged by the rains between Aug. 7 and 12. Tens of thousands of hectares of farmland were flooded, and 800 public buildings, more than 540 bridges and 70 sections of railway destroyed.

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7. ROK Hostages in Afghanistan

Chosun Ilbo ("TALIBAN FREE TWO KOREAN HOSTAGES", 2007-08-13) reported that Taliban kidnappers released two ROK hostages, Kim Gina (32) and Kim Kyung-ja (37), after 26 days in captivity in Afghanistan. Foreign Ministry spokesman Cho Hee-yong officially confirmed the women had been released and handed over to ROK officials. Cho said the two women, who were reported to be ill, were now in a safe place under the protection of ROK authorities. The hostages' release is being read as a good sign for the safety of the remaining hostages, implying a concession by the Taliban, who had been insisting on a prisoner swap. But the Islamist militants stated the two women's does not herald the unconditional release of the other captives.

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8. ROK on Colonial Collaborators

Yonhap ("S. KOREA TO SEIZE ASSETS OF COLONIAL-ERA COLLABORATORS WITH JAPAN ", 2007-08-13) reported that a presidential panel said it has decided to confiscate more than one million square meters of land owned by descendants of 10 people who allegedly collaborated with Japan during its 1910-45 colonial rule of Korea. The people in question are said to have helped Japan colonize and rule Korea and received titular ranks or huge amounts of money from the Japanese colonizers.

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9. US-Japan Security Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN, U.S. CONCLUDE PACT ON PROTECTING SHARED MILITARY INFO", 2007-08-13) reported that Japan and the US concluded an agreement aimed at protecting bilaterally exchanged classified military information, a move expected to facilitate the sharing of sensitive defense-related data as the two countries promote closer defense cooperation. Under the agreement, both governments will restrict the personnel allowed to access secret military information provided by the other country. The agreement also outlines strict procedures for the handling and storage of the

data.

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10. Japan Defense Policy

Japan Today ("SDF COULD USE WEAPONS TO GUARD FOREIGN TROOPS ON U.N. MISSIONS", 2007-08-13) reported that a government panel was almost in agreement that Self-Defense Forces personnel on U.N. peacekeeping missions overseas could use weapons to guard other troops on the same missions, its members said. Under the current legislation, the SDF personnel are not permitted to use weapons to rescue foreign troops that are under attack after the Japanese troops arrive on the scene.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN TO BUILD STEALTH JET IN FIVE YEARS", 2007-0--13) reported that Japan's defense ministry has decided to build a stealth fighter and wants a first test flight within five years, a news report said. The move could concern Washington as Japan is a major customer of US defense equipment, the Tokyo Shimbun said. Japan is moving ahead because the US military has been reluctant to sell Japan F-22 Raptors, the latest US Air Force jets built to evade radar detection at supersonic speeds. (return to top)

11. Sino-Japanese Relations

Kyodo News ("CHINESE DEFENSE MINISTER TO VISIT JAPAN THIS MONTH", 2007-08-13) reported that PRC Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan is looking to visit Japan starting Aug. 29, diplomatic sources said. The visit is expected to last five days, and officials are arranging a meeting between Cao and Defense Minister Yuriko Koike for Aug. 30, the sources said. Koike and Cao are expected to discuss reciprocal visits by vessels of the Maritime Self-Defense Force and the PRC navy, and the creation of a hotline between the two countries' defense authorities, the sources said.

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12. PRC Africa Diplomacy

International Herald Tribune ("CHINA, SEEKING RESOURCES, BRINGS DEEP POCKETS TO AFRICA", 2007-08-13) reported that in large oil-exporting countries like Angola and Nigeria, the PRC is building or fixing railroads, and landing giant exploration contracts in Congo and Guinea. In mineral-rich countries that had been all but abandoned by foreign investors because of unrest and corruption, PRC companies are reviving output of cobalt and bauxite. The PRC has even become the new mover and shaker in agricultural countries like Ivory Coast, once the crown jewel in France's postcolonial African empire, where PRC companies are building a new capital, in Yamoussoukro, paid for by PRC loans.

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13. PRC Southeast Asian Diplomacy

Agence France-Presse ("MILITARY BUILDUP CASTS SHADOW ON CHINA'S SOFT POWER INROADS IN ASIA ", 2007-08-13) reported that the PRC may be making huge strides in projecting "soft power" in Southeast Asia amid US preoccupation in Iraq, but the region remains wary of the Asian giant's military ambitions, experts say. Once a US stomping ground, Southeast Asia is seeing greater PRC involvement in diplomacy, trade, investment, cultural and educational exchanges as

well as foreign aid to less developed states.

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14. Shanghai Cooperation Organization Drill

Xinhua ("EXPERTS: SCO JOINT DRILL TO CRACK DOWN ON "THREE EVIL FORCES"", 2007-08-13) reported that the ongoing "Peace Mission 2007" anti-terror joint drill, sponsored by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), will target the "three evil forces" but will not push SCO into a military alliance, PRC and Russian experts said on Saturday. "To crack down on the 'three evil forces' - terrorism, separatism and extremism - is a key aspect of defense and security cooperation among SCO members and the joint exercise reflected its long-existing stance," said Pan Guang, director of a Shanghai-based SCO study center.

(return to top) Itar-Tass ("RUSSIA, CHINA COMMAND SATISFIED WITH SCO EXERCISE DRESS REHEARSAL", 2007-08-13) reported that the military commanders of Russia and the PRC have highly assessed the results of the dress rehearsal of the active phase of the Peace Mission 2007 joint antiterrorist manoeuvres of member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) that was conducted on Monday. "Officials that were at the observation site unanimously assessed the exercise - the training session passed quite satisfactorily. All tactical tasks have been fulfilled at a rather high level," head of the manoeuvres from the Russian side Colonel-General Vladimir Moltenskoi said. "So we consider the training to be quite successful," he underlined. (return to top)

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