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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Test

Kyodo ("VEHICLES OBSERVED ENTERING N KOREAN NUCLEAR FACILITY", 2006-08-24) reported that a Japanese government source has confirmed vehicles entering and leaving a nuclear testing facility. "We are not sure if the movement is directly leading to an underground nuclear test but we are looking at it cooperating with countries concerned," the source said, referring to the United States and ROK in response to the movement at a facility in northeastern DPRK. The source, meanwhile, said Japan has not confirmed another move reported by an ROK newspaper that Pyongyang ordered residents in the northeastern part of the country to evacuate due to fears of radiation.

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2. DPRK Weapons Development

Joong Ang Ilbo ("REPORT: NORTH HAS BUILT 9 MISSILE BASES SINCE 1994", 2006-08-29) reported that DPRK is operating 18 missile bases and 10 research and development facilities, and is increasingly shipping its weapons by air to avoid detection, according to Defense International, a military journal. Nine missile bases have been constructed since 1994, while 1,200 Rodong and Scud missiles, which target all of the ROK, have been deployed. The journal, citing intelligence data from Taiwan and the United States, said that prior to 1994 only three missile bases had been built. Reportedly, nine mobile missile pads and some underground launching facilities are at the headquarters for its missile forces, in Pyongan province. The journal also reported that one missile base, located in Hamgyong province, had Rodong and Taepodong missiles specifically to target all of Japan. Another base in Gangwon province was 50 kilometers (31 miles) away from the inter-Korean border. Meanwhile, the DPRK has increasingly used air routes to deliver its missiles and related parts to buyers faster and without detection, with help from private Russian firms, according to a report from the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, part of the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California.

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3. DPRK Construction Blast

Joong Ang Ilbo ("BIG BANG IN THE NORTH, BUT NOT A NUCLEAR TEST", 2006-08-28) reported that the minor explosion which caused a small man-made earthquake in the DPRK was not a nuclear test, according to the Korea Institute of Geoscience & Mineral Resources. "If the North conducted a nuclear test, our center would have sensed an earthquake wave of a magnitude above 4.0 on the Richter scale. The earthquake's magnitude was around 2.0, which can be created when two tons of TNT are exploded," an official at the institute said in a telephone interview with the JoongAng Ilbo. He said such man-made earthquakes have occasionally occurred in the DPRK. "A lot of construction has reportedly been going on in Pangyo," he said. The institute operates earthquake watch centers nationwide.

(return to top) Yonhap News Agency ("NORTH KOREA SAYS 25 AUGUST BLAST CARRIED OUT FOR HYDRO PROJECT", 2006-08-27) reported that the DPRK said it conducted a large-scale blast

operation two days ago for a waterway project. The operation was carried out on Friday in a reservoir at Goksan county of Hwanghae Province near the border with the South's Kangwon Province, the North's Korean Central Broadcasting Station reported. "The large-scale blast operation paves the way for the completion of the Risang Reservoir Project earlier than scheduled," the broadcaster said. (return to top)

4. DPRK Financial Sanctions

Wall Street Journal ("PYONGYANG LASHES OUT AT U.S.; POSSIBLE NUCLEAR TEST IS LINKED TO SANCTIONS ON BANKING ACTIVITIES", 2006-08-28) reported that the DPRK lashed out at a US clampdown on its financial transactions, while a pro-Pyongyang newspaper in Japan linked the issue to a prospective nuclear bomb test. The country's neighbors and the U.S., meanwhile, watched for signs that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il is on the way to Beijing. News accounts in PRC and the ROK last week said Kim is expected to make the trip later this week, though neither the PRC nor the DPRK has confirmed them. US officials defend their right to investigate counterfeiting of US currency and other illegal activities. The amount of money frozen in the Macau bank, they point out, is less than the weekly energy and food assistance the DPRK would receive under the agreement it made last year -- but didn't carry out -- with the US, PRC, Japan, Russia and the ROK in exchange for halting its weapons development.

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5. US on DPRK Refugee-Defectors

Yonhap News Agency ("WASHINGTON OPENS DOOR TO N KOREAN REFUGEES: US ENVOY", 2006-08-27) reported that Jay Lefkowitz, Washington's special envoy for DPRK human rights, told Radio Free Asia (RFA) the United States will continue to serve as a "safe haven." The special US envoy, tasked with monitoring human rights abuses in the reclusive state while assisting defectors from there, canceled his planned visit to an inter-Korean industrial complex of Kaesong in early July because of the country's missile tests on July 5. Lefkowitz said he will re-arrange the visit as soon as possible, though not specifying a detailed timeframe.

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6. DPRK Floods

Wall Street Journal ("FLOODS ADD TO NORTH KOREANS' WOES; THOUSANDS MAY HAVE DIED IN STORMS THAT AGGRAVATED SHORTAGES, SANCTION EFFECTS", 2006-08-28) reported that the DPRK suffered extensive damage from monsoon rains and floods last month, adding pressure to its economy just as it faces new sanctions in the wake of a missile test in early July. Estimates vary widely about the number of people killed or left homeless by two storms in mid- and late July. The ROK and northeast PRC suffered considerable damage from the same storms. A large typhoon also ripped through southeastern PRC earlier this month, killing 450 people and temporarily displacing 15 million from their homes. Observers generally believe that the DPRK’s poverty and the severe restrictions its government places on information make the nation ill-prepared for dealing with natural disasters, observers generally believe. The UN World Food Programme estimates that the DPRK lost about 110,000 tons of grain due to the storms, exacerbating the expected shortfall of about 990, 00 tons this year.

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7. PRC Oil Shipments to the DPRK

Associated Press ("CHINA REDUCES OIL SHIPMENT TO N.KOREA", 2006-08-26) reported that the PRC has reduced shipments of crude oil to the DPRK, apparently in response to Pyongyang's missile tests. The PRC, key provider of oil to the DPRK, also has agreed to cooperate with the ROK to prevent a possible DPR Korean nuclear test. The report cited unnamed officials at an oil storage terminal near the Chinese border city of Dandong.

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8. Expert Travel to DPRK

Yonhap News Agency ("US SCHOLAR TO VISIT N KOREA AMID FEARS OF POSSIBLE NUCLEAR TEST", 2006-08-25) reported that Selig Harrison, director of the Asia program at the US-based Center for International Policy, is to visit the DPRK in the near future. Harrison refused to elaborate on the purpose of his trip, but sources close to him have said he was expected to report the outcome of his visit at a seminar in Washington. An expert on Northeast Asian affairs and author of the book "Korean Endgame: A Strategy for Reunification and US Disengagement," Harrison has visited the DPRK nine times, mostly recently in April last year, during which he met with the top negotiator in the multilateral nuclear talks, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan.

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9. US Missile Defense System

Washington Post ("RUMSFELD UNSURE OF ABILITY TO INTERCEPT KOREAN MISSILES", 2006-08-27) reported that after his first look inside the nerve center of the US missile defense system, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld sounded a note of caution about expectations that interceptors poised in 10 underground silos here would work in the event of a missile attack by the DPRK Asked at a news conference whether he believed the missile shield was ready for use against a missile like the one test-fired unsuccessfully on July 4, Rumsfeld said he would not be fully convinced until the multibillion-dollar defense system has undergone more complete and realistic testing. Rumsfeld also said the DPRK does not pose a military threat to the ROK, calling Pyongyang more of a danger as a distributor of weapons to other countries and perhaps terrorists. Rumsfeld said it is clear that the overall condition of the DPRK military has deteriorated.

(return to top) New York Times ("RUMSFELD SEES SOME PROGRESS IN MISSILE PLAN BUT SEEKS TEST", 2006-08-27) reported that Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld’s assessment of the Missile Defense System was more cautious than that of the Missile Defense Agency director, Lt. Gen. Henry A. Obering III of the Air Force. General Obering said recently that he was confident the system could have shot down a ballistic missile test-fired July 4 by the DPRK, if it had been a live attack aimed at the United States. The two-stage rocket broke up shortly after launching and fell into the Sea of Japan. The Bush administration has taken the unusual step of deploying the system, which is designed to shoot down a limited number of missiles, before testing is completed and before all the radars and sensors necessary to track incoming missiles are in place. In the last two flight tests, the system halted the firing sequence before the interceptor missile left its silo. General Obering said those setbacks were due to "minor glitches" in software and workmanship by contractors that had "nothing to do with the functionality of the system." Even so, after the second failed test in February 2005, the system was taken down until December. (return to top)

10. US-ROK Security Alliance

Agence France-Presse ("US WANTS SOUTH KOREA TO TAKE WARTIME CONTROL IN 2009", 2006-08-28) reported that US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has suggested that the ROK take wartime control of its troops in the next three years, the defense ministry here said. Rumsfeld sent a letter to ROK Defense Minister Yoon Kwang-Ung, insisting that the transfer of wartime command take place in 2009 -- three years earlier than wanted by Seoul, defense officials said.

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("2009 TROOP CONTROL HANDOVER WOULD MAGNIFY TAX BURDEN", 2006-08-28) reported that the ROK will have to pay some W490,000 (US$1=W964) per head in taxes if the ROK takes over wartime operational control of its troops from the US in 2009, as Washington proposes, according to an estimate by the Chosun Ilbo based on figures from the ministries of defense, and planning and budget. (return to top)

11. ROK-Japan Atomic Safety Agreement

Yonhap ("SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN SIGN ATOMIC SAFETY COOPERATION PACT", 2006-08-28) reported that the ROK and Japan have signed a pact on cooperation in atomic energy that will allow them to share critical information on safety, government officials said. The Ministry of Science and Technology said the Cooperation Plan between the ROK ministry and Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology also calls for quick notification in case of emergencies.

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12. Japan Central Asian Diplomacy

Agence France-Presse ("JAPANESE PM HEADS FOR KAZAKHSTAN, UZBEKISTAN", 2006-08-28) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi left for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as the first sitting Japanese premier to visit Central Asia, the government said. The visit, the first by any Japanese prime minister to the region, comes as Tokyo looks to bolster cooperation with the oil- and gas-rich nations to compete with the booming PRC economy for regional energy resources.

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13. Japan and Cross Strait Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN SHRUGS OFF CHINA'S PROTESTS OVER TAIWAN GENERAL'S VISIT", 2006-08-28) reported that a senior Japanese Defense Agency official shrugged off protests from the PRC over Taiwan army commander-in-chief Gen. Hu Chen-pu's visit to Japan in which he observed a large-scale Japanese Self-Defense Force live-fire drill. "We, as the government, have not invited him," Defense Agency Vice Minister Takemasa Moriya said, adding Japan has violated no promises to the PRC.

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14. PRC-Kazakhstan Joint Military Drill

The Associated Press ("CHINESE, KAZAKH FORCES STAGE EXERCISE", 2006-08-28) reported that border forces from the PRC and Kazakhstan held an anti-terrorism drill with armed helicopters and anti-riot vehicles, state media reported. The exercise by some 700 border police included a

simulated battle in which the PRC guards were supposed to force terrorists into a narrow valley and cliff caves near Yining, near the border with Kazakhstan. The drill was attended by about 100 observers from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's members, which also include Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

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15. US-PRC Trade Relations

BBC News ("US PINS TRADE TALK HOPES ON CHINA", 2006-08-28) reported that the US has sent a trade official to the PRC in an attempt to revive stalled WTO talks. US trade representative Susan Schwab is in Beijing meeting PRC Commerce Minister Bo Xilai and other officials. "China is likely to be a major beneficiary of a successful Doha round," said Ms Schwab, but could be a "major loser" if trade talks fail.

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16. PRC Development

The Los Angeles Times ("DOUBLE OPPORTUNITY IN CHINA'S FAR WEST", 2006-08-28) reported that outposts in the PRC's far west are booming with oil, cotton, coal and trade. The PRC government, analysts say, is pushing west with two clear motives: to spread economic development, and to keep in check Tibetans and, here in the Xinjiang region, the Uighurs, Muslims of Turkic descent.

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17. PRC Journalist Trial

The Associated Press ("NYT RESEARCHER GETS 3 YEARS IN PRISON ", 2006-08-28) reported that a PRC researcher for The New York Times was acquitted of state secrets charges but was convicted of fraud and sentenced to three years in prison, one of his defense lawyers said. Zhao Yan, 44, was detained in 2004.

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