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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

New York Times ("DIPLOMACY FAILS TO SLOW ADVANCE OF NUCLEAR ARMS ", 2004-08-08) reported that US intelligence officials and outside nuclear experts have concluded that the Bush administration's diplomatic efforts with European and Asian allies have barely slowed the nuclear weapons programs in Iran and the DPRK over the past year, and that both have made significant progress. In a tacit acknowledgment that the diplomatic initiatives with European and Asian allies have failed to curtail the programs, senior administration and intelligence officials say they are seeking ways to step up unspecified covert actions intended, in the words of one official, "to disrupt or delay as long as we can" Iran's efforts to develop a nuclear weapon. But other experts, including former Clinton administration officials, caution that while covert efforts have been tried in the past,

both the Iranian and DPRK programs are increasingly self-sufficient, largely thanks to the aid they received from the network built by Abdul Qadeer Khan, the former leader of the Pakistani bomb program.

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2. ROK on US - DPRK Relations

Korea Times ("SEOUL DOWNPLAYS US RHETORIC ON NK NUKES", 2004-08-09) reported that ROK diplomats are attaching no great significance to a senior Washington official's remark that the US would consider "all the tools available" to frustrate the DPRK's nuclear ambitions. A senior Foreign Affairs-Trade Ministry official said there is "no news in the U.S. sticking to the `all-option--on-the-table' truism," which has long been the approach of the U.S. administration led by President George W. Bush. "It can be seen as part of a propaganda battle between Washington and Pyongyang, a usual occurrence ahead of major meetings." Yun Deok-min, professor at the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS), however, argued the U.S. is not and will not be on the defensive as far as the DPRK nuclear issue is concerned. "The U.S. is simply mobilizing all its diplomatic forces," Yun said. "And it should be regarded as kind of an ultimatum before opting for 'plan B.'" He didn't elaborate what he meant by plan B.

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3. DPRK - US Relations

Korean Central News Agency of the DPRK ("KCNA: DPRK FULLY READY TO COPE WITH ANY FORM OF WAR", 2004-08-07) reported that the "operation plan 5027-04" much touted by the U.S. and ROK forces is nothing but a roadmap leading those keen to start a war of aggression in Korea to graves. The DPRK is fully ready to cope with any form of war in order to defend peace and security on the Korean peninsula. A spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland declared this in a statement Friday. He said: The operation plan mapped out by the U.S. imperialists and the south Korean military is an extremely adventurous and dangerous war scenario for mounting a preemptive attack on the DPRK as it is aimed at carrying out a "blitz warfare" by use of precision guided weapons and ultra-modern military equipment.

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4. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

United Press International ("U.S. SEEKS INSPECTIONS IN N.KOREA", 2004-08-07) reported that the US wants inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency to verify the DPRK's dismantlement of nuclear programs, sources say. Sources told the Kyodo News Service that the U.S. government is considering bringing in nuclear-related materials and equipment from the DPRK in the same way it dealt with Libya after the country declared it would abandon weapons of mass destruction.

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5. DPRK on US - Japanese Interdiction Exercises

The Associated Press ("N KOREA ASSAILS JAPAN, US FOR OCTOBER MARITIME DRILLS", 2004-08-07) reported that the DPRK on Saturday lashed out at the U.S. and Japan for their plans to hold

maritime drills near Tokyo to battle weapons proliferation, saying the exercises justified its development of nuclear weapons. Tokyo has said the October exercises would be similar to previous drills held under the U.S.-sponsored Proliferation Security Initiative, in which troops intercepted and boarded ships to practice stopping illegal arms shipments. A spokesman for the DPRK's Foreign Ministry said in a statement carried by the state-run Korea Central News Agency Saturday that the drills were part of a U.S. attempt to "isolate and blockade" the country. "The present situation where the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK has reached a dangerous phase proves the justice of the measures taken by it to bolster all the means for self-defense including the nuclear deterrent force," KCNA quoted the unnamed spokesman saying.

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6. Japanese - DPRK Relations

The Associated Press ("JAPAN, NORTH KOREA TO HOLD TALKS IN BEIJING", 2004-08-09) reported that Japanese and DPRK diplomats will meet in Beijing this week for working-level talks aimed at resolving a dispute over the DPRK's kidnapping of Japanese nationals decades ago and the DPRK's nuclear programs, Japan's Foreign Ministry said Monday. The two-day meetings, starting Wednesday, would be the first since Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi flew to Pyongyang May 22 for a summit with the DPRK's reclusive leader Kim Jong Il. The two sides, which have never had diplomatic relations, have said they eventually hope to establish ties.

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7. Japanese - DPRK Relations

Kyodo News ("US EX OFFICIAL: N KOREA SEES JAPAN RUSHING FOR TALKS", 2004-08-09) reported that the DPRK appears to have come up with a view that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is rushing to resume bilateral talks on normalizing diplomatic ties to boost his political leadership following the setback for his ruling Liberal Democratic Party in July's election, a former U.S. State Department official told Kyodo News service on Monday. Kenneth Quinones, who was an analyst on DPRK affairs for the department from 1992 to 1997, said in an interview with Kyodo News that DPRK officials and scholars he met during a visit to Pyongyang last week consider the DPRK as being in an advantageous position over Japan in bilateral efforts to normalize ties because Japan is in a rush to normalize ties.

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8. US on Iranian - DPRK Relations

The Associated Press ("U.S.: NORTH KOREA WORKS ON NEW MISSILES", 2004-08-05) reported that the US has determined that the DPRK is working on new ballistic missile systems designed to deliver nuclear warheads and that it is testing the technology by proxy in Iran, a Bush administration official said Thursday. Having agreed to a self-imposed test ban, the DPRK is sharing technology information with Iran, which carries out missile tests on the DPRK's behalf, the administration official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

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9. DPRK - Iranian Relations

The Associated Press ("IRAN DENIES PROVIDING MISSILE TEST SITE", 2004-08-07) reported that Iran on Saturday dismissed allegations it was providing test sites for DPRK long-range missiles designed to deliver nuclear warheads, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported. A Bush administration official claimed earlier that the DPRK was getting around a self-imposed missile test ban by sharing technology information with Iran, which is allegedly carrying out missile tests on the DPRK's behalf. Iranian Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani rejected the claim, saying, "Iran does not cooperate with North Korea in missile technology and it does not need to."

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10. Israeli - DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("ISRAELI ENVOY EXPRESSES HOPE FOR DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH NORTH KOREA", 2004-08-06) reported that Israel hopes to establish diplomatic relations with the DPRK and is ready to help develop its agricultural and social infrastructure and technology, Jerusalem's envoy to Seoul said Friday. "From our point of view, we are ready for any kind of cooperation in any field with North Korea," Ambassador Uzi Manor said in an interview with Yonhap News Agency. "If we get a positive response from them, of course we shall welcome it and we shall try to do our best, the same as we do with other countries."

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11. Australian - DPRK Relations

BBC News ("AUSTRALIA TEAM VISITS NORTH KOREA", 2004-08-07) reported that Australia has sent a delegation of officials to the DPRK for discussions aimed at defusing nuclear tensions on the Korean Peninsula. It hopes to use Australia's regional influence to persuade Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons program. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer has announced he will visit the DPRK later this month. Mr Downer believes his government can act as an intermediary between the DPRK and the US. Australia has said the nuclear stand-off on the Korean peninsula is the most serious security issue facing the Asia-Pacific region.

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12. ROK - US Military Alliance

Korea Times ("OIL PIPELINE CHARGES TO BE HIKED FOR USFK", 2004-08-09) reported that United States Forces Korea (USFK) is expected to pay more than double the current amount of charges for using new oil pipelines instead of the old ones often blamed for environment pollution by civic groups, officials said Monday. South North Pipeline (SNP), operated by private-run Daehan Oil Pipeline Corporation (DOPCO), will cost USFK some 11.2 billion won ($9.7 million) per year, while former Trans Korea Pipeline (TKP), which was also consigned to DOPCO in 1999 by the National Defense Ministry, cost some 5.5 billion won ($4.7 million) yearly in the past. "We expect this agreement will help enhance the oil transportation capability of USFK. It will also contribute to national security by making the military supply supporting system between South Korea and the U.S. more efficient," a foreign ministry official said in a statement.

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13. US - ROK Relations

Yonhap ("SEOUL, WASHINGTON IN TALKS OVER KAESONG INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX ", 2004-0--06) reported that the ROK and the US have opened discussions on Seoul's plans to send key facilities and materials for an industrial complex being built in the DPRK border town of Kaesong, officials said Friday. The working-level talks, which have been under way in the ROK and the US since last month, focused on a number of key facilitates ROK companies need to take to the DPRK to run their factories, the officials said.

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14. ROK on DPRK Defectors

The Korea Times ("NK DEFECTORS TO FIND COMFORT IN `NEW VILLAGE'", 2004-08-09) reported that the inaugural issue of a biweekly publication for the 6,000 DPRK defectors in the ROK will be released on Sep. 1, a group of defectors working on the newspaper said Monday. The 16-page tabloid, named "New Village," is the second production in the media for defectors after the launch of an Internet broadcast, "Free North Korea," at www.freenk.net in May. A 36-year-old staff member of the newspaper explained that "New Village" will detail the life stories of those from the DPRK "northern village" and help defectors understand the ROK's capitalist society. "We will exclude all political stuff from our newspaper," chief editor Jung Joo-bin said. "We will mainly focus on presenting information helpful for adjusting to life in this society, such as introducing laws that are different with those of the North."

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15. Sino - DPRK Relations

Donga Ilbo ("CHINESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY TRAINS RIVER CROSSING AT APROK RIVER ", 2004-08-09) reported that Sankei Shimbun reported yesterday that the Chinese People's Liberation Army (CPLA) conducted river-crossing exercises using floating bridges over the Aprok River, the PRC's boundary with the DPRK. The report quoted an observer from RENK (Rescue the North Korean People), a Japanese NGO that supports DPRK defectors. According to RENK, the CPLA started its training in early July, and it lasted for about two weeks in the Aprok River areas across Shinuiju. The Sankei Shimbun report noted it is very rare for the PRC troops to conduct such exercises in the border region with the DPRK, adding that the training might be a measure to fortify border control of teh DPRK defectors, but could also be to pressure the DPRK regarding the nuclear issue.

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16. PRC on DPRK Defectors

Reuters ("N.KOREA ASYLUM ACTIVIST RELEASED FROM CHINA JAIL", 2004-08-09) reported that a Japanese man accused of helping DPRK citizens flee abroad via the PRC has been released from Chinese custody and allowed to leave the country, a Japanese embassy spokesman said on Monday. Takayuki Noguchi, of the Tokyo-based rights group Life Funds for North Korean Refugees, was arrested last December in the southern region of Guangxi while trying to help two DPRK asylum seekers escape to Cambodia. Noguchi was jailed for eight months and fined $2,400. The PRC has an agreement with its neighbor to repatriate illegal migrants. In recent years, however, it has allowed

scores of DPRK asylum seekers who managed to enter foreign embassies and consulates to travel to the ROK via third countries.

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17. Inter - Korean Event

Yonhap ("CIVIC ALLIANCE TO HOLD INTER-KOREAN EVENT IN MID-AUGUST", 2004-08-07) reported that an alliance of civic groups vowed Saturday to hold an inter-Korean event in the DPRK on the 57th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan in mid-August. The alliance said it will go ahead with plans to organize the three-day event from Aug. 14, despite concern that once-blossoming relations between the two Koreas have entered a freeze.

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18. Inter - Korean Trade

Yonhap ("N. KOREA PROMISES TO SEND DELEGATION TO TRADE MEETING IN S. KOREA ", 2004-08-07) reported that the DPRK has promised to send a delegation to a meeting of overseas Korean businessmen which will be held in the ROK in October, organizers said Saturday. The World Federation of Overseas Korean Traders Associations plans to hold its third convention in Jeju, the ROK's southern resort island of Jeju, from Oct. 26-28 to discuss ways of promoting trade among its members.

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19. Inter - Korean Security Relations

Yonhap ("RULING PARTY RELUCTANT TO ABOLISH SECURITY LAW: LAWMAKER ", 2004-08-09) reported that an opposition party lawmaker on Sunday claimed the ruling Uri Party is not willing to completely do away with the country's decades-old security law, saying it will eventually compromise for a revision of the law instead. Representative Roh Hoe-chan of the minor opposition Democratic Labor Party maintained the drive by some ruling party lawmakers to abolish the National Security Law is only an effort to demonstrate the party's commitment to reform.

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20. Inter - Korean Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("OLYMPICS AIRED NORTH AND SOUTH, BUT IN HDTV HERE", 2004-08-09) reported that both the DPRK and ROK will be able to watch the Olympics live this month, thanks to some help from ROK television crews in Athens. But the broadcast quality will be higher in the ROK. Broadcasters from both sides of the Demilitarized Zone said after a meeting in Mount Geumgang on Aug. 4 and 5 that the crews from Seoul would film events involving the DPRK or ROK, the opening and closing ceremonies and other highlights and provide them to Pyeongyang for rebroadcast in the DPRK, either live or delayed.

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21. DPRK Human Rights

Voice of America News ("UN APPOINTS HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATOR FOR NORTH KOREA", 2004-08-07) reported that the UN has appointed a Thai law professor to investigate alleged human rights abuses in the DPRK. In a statement released Friday, UN officials said Vitit Muntarbhorn, a law professor and human rights expert from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, will take the position. He is required to investigate and report on the DPRK's compliance with its obligations under international humanitarian law. Mr. Muntarbhorn has worked for the UN previously as an expert on children's rights. He also has expertise in refugee law and women's rights. The United Nations Human Rights Commission in April called on the DPRK to allow an independent expert to investigate claims of torture and other abuses. The DPRK rejected the criticism of its human rights record.

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22. DPRK Atomic Blast Survivors

The Associated Press ("ISOLATION STRANDS N. KOREA A-BOMB VICTIMS", 2004-08-06) reported that the atomic bomb survivors living in the DPRK share an unhappy distinction: they are the only victims of the U.S. nuclear attacks on Japan who receive no assistance from the Japanese government. "There is one remaining issue involving overseas atomic bombing survivors, and that is North Korea," Health Minister Chikara Sakaguchi said last week. Little is known about bomb survivors in the DPRK, many of whom were repatriated to their homeland in the late 1950s. "All these years, the Japanese government has abandoned survivors in North Korea," said Lee Sil Gun, a 75-year-old pro-DPRK resident in Japan and himself a Hiroshima survivor. Lee, who interviewed about a dozen survivors during a visit to Pyongyang two years ago, said many DPRK survivors are getting old, frail and in dire need for help as soon as possible.

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23. US - Japanese Relations

The Associated Press ("TWO EX-U.S. SAILORS ARRESTED IN JAPAN", 2004-08-06) reported that Japanese police arrested two former U.S. Navy sailors for allegedly trying to smuggle Ecstasy and other illegal stimulants worth over $1.80 million into Japan through the U.S. military mail service, officials said Friday. The 30,000 Ecstasy tablets confiscated marked the second biggest drug bust for the stimulant in Japan. Local police arrested Babe Cole, 25, and William Jenkins, 27. Cole was formerly a sailor in the U.S. Navy and is now a staff member at the welfare section of Yokosuka, a U.S. Naval Base west of Tokyo. Jenkins was also a U.S. Navy sailor but is now unemployed, said Kanagawa state police spokesman Hiroyoshi Ichikawa. The drugs have a combined street value of $1.80 million.

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24. Sino - Japanese Relations

The New York Times ("IN SOCCER LOSS, A GLIMPSE OF CHINA'S RISING IRE AT JAPAN", 2004-08-08) reported that an international soccer match is never a place for the faint of heart. But the insults aimed at the Japanese team during the Asian Cup soccer tournament, held in the PRC this year, are being called the latest example of a strain of rising anti-Japanese nationalism among many younger Chinese that seems increasingly volatile. The Saturday night Asian Cup final did little to

soothe that animosity. Japan won 3-1, though television replays suggested a that Japanese player illegally hand-touched the ball on his team's controversial second goal. After the game, police officers scuffled with Chinese fans after they pelted the Japanese team's bus with bottles. But an overwhelming majority of fans left the stadium dazed and silent, some even weeping. The collision on the soccer field between the two countries touched on a doubly raw nerve in the PRC. Men's soccer is enormously popular in the PRC, but the national team has been a disappointment. Japan's team has long been superior. The PRC team's unexpected run to the Asian Cup finals sparked a huge outpouring of public support, and huge expectations.

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA APOLOGIZES TO JAPAN AFTER MINISTER'S CAR ATTACKED", 2004-08-09) reported that Beijing police have apologized to Japan after a car carrying a Japanese embassy official was attacked by angry PRC football fans, the embassy said. The car carrying Chikahito Harada, a minister at the embassy, was hit by an unidentified object as it left the Workers' Stadium after the Asian Cup final Saturday night in which Japan beat arch rivals China 3-1. The car's back window was smashed when the object was thrown from the crowd, fuming over defeat to a country many still despise because of its war-time invasion of China. "Somebody threw something at the car as it left the stadium. The back window was broken but fortunately no-one was hurt in the incident," an embassy official told AFP. "The Beijing police called to apologize. This is a fact."

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25. Sino - ROK Relations

Donga ilbo ("HALF OF KOREA'S AIR POLLUTANTS COME FROM CHINA ", 2004-08-09) reported that the ROK is becoming exposed to "second-hand smoke" coming from China, the world's factory, which emits pollutants into the air. In particular, approximately 30 percent of Korea's ecosystem has been shown to be critically harmed-to an unbearable level-by such pollutants coming from the PRC, which means that this pollution problem can no longer be neglected. Seoul National University's Earth System Sciences Program Department Professor Park Soon-woong and his research team finished a paper titled "The amount of long distance and domestically emitted pollutant acidity accumulated in Korea's ecosystem." According to the paper, during the period from 1994 to 1998, air pollutants such as sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides originating from the PRC composed an annual average of 40 percent and 49 percent each, respectively, of Korea's air pollutants.

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26. Japan Nuclear Accident

The New York Times ("WORKERS KILLED IN ACCIDENT AT JAPAN NUCLEAR POWER PLANT", 2004-08-09) reported that blasts of non-radioactive steam killed four workers and severely burned seven others today in the first fatal accident at a Japanese nuclear power plant, according to officials. "Radioactive materials weren't contained in the steam that leaked out," an official for the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency said at a news conference here. "We've received a report that there is no impact from radiation on the surrounding environment."

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27. Fischer Case

The Associated Press ("FISCHER WANT TO RENOUNCE CITIZENSHIP", 2004-08-06) reported that former world chess champion Bobby Fischer, detained in Japan for allegedly traveling with a

revoked U.S. passport, wants to renounce his American citizenship, his lawyer said Friday. Fischer called the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo from detention at Narita airport outside the capital to tell U.S. officials his demands, his lawyer Masako Suzuki told reporters at a news conference. "I no longer wish to be an American citizen. Enough is enough," he said in a handwritten statement issued through his lawyer.

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28. Jenkins Case

The Associated Press ("JAPAN WANTS JENKINS' ORDEAL TO END SOON", 2004-08-06) reported that Japan hopes to resolve a potential custody battle with the US over accused U.S. Army deserter Charles Jenkins soon, an official said Friday, as Jenkins prepared to discuss his legal case with a U.S. military attorney for a second day. Washington says it intends to formally request custody of Jenkins but has yet to do so. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda didn't say when he thought Jenkins' ordeal might end. "It's better for this issue to be resolved soon, rather than have it drag on," he told a news conference.

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29. Koguryo History Issue

Yonhap ("SEOUL TO FORM TASK FORCE TO FIGHT BEIJING'S 'HISTORY DISTORTION' ", 2004-0--09) reported that a diplomatic row between the ROK and PRC involving an ancient Korean kingdom is expected to deepen, as Seoul has decided to form a task force to counter Beijing's attempt to allegedly distort the history of Koguryo (37 B.C.-A.D. 668). The government and the ruling Uri Party agreed Monday to form a high-profile organization to counter the PRC's move, officials said. The envisioned body will be affiliated with either the Office of the Prime Minister or the National Security Council, they added. "We will also expand support for academic institutions studying the Koguryo Kingdom," Rep. Ahn Young-keun, Uri Party's chief policy coordinator, said. "It reflects our resolution to get tougher on the issue."

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30. Taiwan on Cross Strait Relations

Reuters ("TAIWAN VP SAYS CHINA AIMS 800 MISSILES BY NEXT YEAR", 2004-08-09) reported that the PRC will have 800 missiles aimed at Taiwan by 2005, Vice President Annette Lu said on Monday, defending a controversial statement that the island and its giant foe were in a state of "quasi-war". That would be a substantial increase from the 500 missiles that Taiwan says the PRC already has set up along its southeastern coast in preparation for a possible military showdown to take back the island it views as a renegade province. Lu said her "quasi-war" description last Friday -- which prompted President Chen Shui-bian's office to issue a rare denial to cool confrontational rhetoric with the PRC -- was an "objective description of the fact".

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31. PRC on Cross - Strait Relations

Reuters ("CHINA, TAIWAN RATCHET UP RHETORIC ON TENSIONS", 2004-08-09) reported that the PRC and Taiwan blamed each other Friday for a dangerous escalation in tensions, underscoring

the hostility between the arch foes and analysts' fears that the two might be heading for war. In Hong Kong, a top PRC official on Taiwan affairs described the situation as on "the verge of danger." Vice Minister of the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Office, Wang Zaixi, said Beijing would resolutely stop any move toward Taiwan independence. "Taiwan independence and splitting (from China) has become a real threat. The relationship between the two sides of the Strait has reached the verge of danger," Wang said during a visit to Hong Kong.

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32. PRC Foreign Trade

The New York Times ("CHINA IN AFRICA: ALL TRADE, WITH NO POLITICAL BAGGAGE", 2004-0--08) reported that a look of satisfaction played on the trade official's face as he reeled off statistics recently from a ministry report about the PRC's booming commerce with Africa. "Forty African countries have trade agreements with China now," said the official, Li Xiaobing, deputy director of the West Asian and African Affairs division of the Trade Ministry. "We are doing a railway project in Nigeria, a Sheraton hotel in Algeria and a mobile telephone network in Tunisia. We are all over Africa now." The PRC's fast-rising involvement with Africa grows out of the PRC's immense and growing need for natural resources, in particular for imported oil, of which 25 percent now comes from Africa.

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33. PRC Media Monopoly

The Associated Press ("CHINA ISSUES FOUR DIGITAL TV LICENSES", 2004-08-06) reported that the PRC has issued licenses to four companies to broadcast digital television, ending the monopoly once held by state-run China Central Television, the government said Friday. The announcement comes amid rapid changes in the PRC's state-dominated television market meant to expand competition and drive innovation. All of the companies approved for new licenses are state-owned, an official from the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television told Dow Jones Newswires. Foreign companies are barred from holding broadcasting licenses, but PRC regulators have approved a handful of foreign channels to make limited broadcasts on local cable systems.

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34. PRC Religious Freedom

The Associated Press ("CHINESE SENTENCE THREE CHURCH ACTIVISTS", 2004-08-06) reported that a PRC court on Friday sentenced three activists in the independent Protestant church to up to three years in prison for leaking state secrets, a court official and overseas church activist said. The court in the eastern city of Hangzhou found Xu Yonghai, Liu Fenggang and Zhang Shengqi guilty of passing on information to an overseas magazine about a court case involving another member of the independent church, the China Aid Association said. Liu was also found guilty of passing on information about the destruction of unofficial churches outside Hangzhou in a crackdown last year, CAA reported. Liu received a three-year sentence, Xu two years and Zhang one year, the group said.

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35. PRC Farming Issues

The Washington Post ("FARMERS' RISING ANGER ERUPTS IN CHINA VILLAGE: LAND SEIZURES, STAGNATION FUEL UNREST", 2004-08-07) reported that hundreds of police stormed this village in central PRC before dawn last Saturday and fired rubber bullets into large crowds of unarmed farmers who had threatened a protest in the provincial capital, injuring dozens in one of the most violent clashes known to have taken place in the PRC countryside in recent years. No villagers were killed, but residents said about 10 were hospitalized with serious injuries, including a woman who was shot nine times in the back and another who was shot five times. The confrontation is a reminder of the stark challenge that rural unrest poses for the Communist Party, which is now struggling to contain rising anger in the countryside over high taxes, official corruption and farm incomes that are stagnating even as the national economy booms.

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36. PRC Health Care

The Washington Post ("IN CHINA, EYESIGHT FIXED BY RAIL: CATARACT SURGERIES FOR POOR PEASANTS PERFORMED ON TRAINS", 2004-08-08) reported that the operation that restored sight to Samat's right eye has been repeated more than 50 times a day in recent weeks aboard an extraordinary train, the Lifeline Express, that has pulled onto a shunting spur on the outskirts of this remote and history-laden city 2,000 miles from Beijing in the shade of the snow-covered peaks of far northwestern PRC. The train, the brainchild of a Hong Kong accounting executive, is one of three that chug across the PRC as mobile operating rooms, bringing skilled Beijing specialists to perform free cataract operations for poor peasants who cannot afford the 15- to 20-minute procedure needed to peel away the clouded lenses blocking their vision. Aboard the Express, two doctors perform the operations 10 to 12 hours a day, treating one patient after another in an assembly line of life-altering moments.

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37. PRC AIDS Issue

Agence France-Presse ("ANOTHER AIDS ACTIVIST GOES MISSING IN CHINA", 2004-08-09) reported that a leading PRC AIDS activist has gone missing in central Henan province, activists said, accusing local government officials of abducting him to cover up a debilitating AIDS epidemic. "Li Dan was taken away by local government and village officials in Zhecheng county," Wan Yanhai, a leading Beijing-based AIDS activist told AFP. "They took him away without an arrest warrant or any other official document, so that is why we consider this a kidnapping." Li and a colleague were detained on Sunday night as they prepared to visit Shuangmiao village where other AIDS activists and patients had been preparing protests over government treatment of the epidemic, Wan said.

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38. PRC Flooding

Agence France-Presse ("RED CROSS WARNS CHINA CANNOT COPE WITH FLOODS DEVASTATING COUNTRY", 2004-08-09) reported that the Red Cross warned that PRC authorities were unable to cope with flooding that has devastated large tracts of rural areas, destroying the livelihoods of millions of people. According to PRC government figures released Friday, a total of

5.49 million hectares (13.56 million acres) of farmland and 71.63 million people have been affected by floods this year. Some 340,000 houses have been destroyed. Since late June, incessant heavy rains have led to severe mountain torrents, mud-rock flows and landslides across the country, with 584 people reported killed or missing.

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39. ROK Employs Kurdish Militia

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA EMPLOYS KURDISH MILITIA TO PROTECT KOREAN CIVILIANS IN ARBIL", 2004-08-08) reported that the Kurdish "Peshmerga" militia is carrying out the duty of protecting ROK people residing in the northern Iraqi area of Arbil, where ROK troops are stationed. An official from the Defense Ministry said on Sunday, "In order to protect ROK civilians, we employed about 60 members of the Peshmerga as bodyguards. They are protecting those ROK people who should go out of the territory for business or so." The Iraqi militiamen were hired because their combat abilities are outstanding, and outside of the bases, it could be safer that Iraqis themselves to perform protection duties.

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40. US Bases in Japan Realignment

Kyodo ("SIT-IN STALLS BASE WORK", 2004-07-28) reported that protesters on July 27 marked the 100th day of their sit-in to oppose a planned offshore airport for use by the US Marine Corps, blocking the seabed drilling site off Nago, northern Okinawa. The drilling, a project overseen by the Naha Defense Facilities Administration Bureau, has yet to begin due to the protest. Since the sit-in began, some 80 people per day have taken part, setting up tents in a vacant lot near the fishing port and blocking the one road that leads to the site when bureau officials come. Meanwhile, plans are under way to hold a massive rally in Naha in mid-September.

The Japan Times ("REDUCE JAPAN'S BURDEN", 2004-07-28) reported that Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi urged US Pacific Command Commander Adm. Thomas Fargo to reduce Japan's burden in hosting US forces through an ongoing review of the disposition of the US military in the Asia-Pacific region. Kawaguchi was quoted as telling Fargo that it is "important" to reduce the burden on Japanese municipalities, including those in Okinawa Prefecture, that host US bases and military facilities, the officials said. She also called on Fargo to maintain the deterrence provided by US forces in Japan through the envisaged global military realignment.

The Asahi Shimbun ("MISAWA AIR BASE TAKES OVER HAWAII'S PATROL COMMAND FOR ASIA", 2004-07-28) reported that the US air base at Misawa in Aomori Prefecture has taken over command functions from Hawaii for naval patrol and reconnaissance for Asia as part of the US military's global repositioning. Responsibility for Asian reconnaissance now comes under the Command for Patrol and Reconnaissance Force Fifth Fleet and Patrol and Reconnaissance Force Seventh Fleet, established in Misawa Air Base last October under a rear admiral. The base is in charge of patrol and reconnaissance over areas covered by the Fifth and Seventh Fleets -- the Gulf region for the former and, for the latter, from the western Pacific to the Indian Ocean as far as the east coast of Africa. About 10 aircraft -- P-3C patrol planes and EP-3 electronic surveillance aircraft -- will be deployed to Misawa from Hawaii and the US West Coast.

The Japan Times ("U.S. WITHDRAWS BULK OF REALIGNMENT OF ARMED FORCES PROPOSALS", 2004-07-28) reported that the US has withdrawn most of its specific proposals for the realignment of

US forces in Japan, Japanese government officials said. They said the US government informed Japan of the withdrawal through its embassy in Tokyo on July 26, along with its plan to renegotiate the realignment. But a Defense Agency official said the withdrawal represents only a postponement of conclusions on the realignment. At a bilateral meeting in San Francisco in mid-July, the US proposed moving some of its Marine troops in Okinawa Prefecture to Camp Fuji in Shizuoka Prefecture and Camp Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture. It also presented a plan to relocate the night-landing practices of aircraft aboard the USS Kitty Hawk carrier from Atsugi Base in Kanagawa Prefecture to Iwakuni Base in Yamaguchi Prefecture. The US government has withdrawn these plans, which have come under fire from local governments, the officials said. However, it still plans to integrate the 13th Air Force Command in Guam into the Yokota Air Force Base in suburban Tokyo and relocate a US Army command from Washington State to Camp Zama. These plans do not involve any large-scale movement of troops or weapons, they said.

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41. Japan-PRC Abandoned Chemical Weapon

Kyodo ("JAPANESE CHEMICAL WEAPON INJURES CHILDREN IN CHINA", 2004-07-28) reported that a leaking mustard gas bomb discarded by the Japanese military before or during World War II injured two children in northeastern China, the Japanese Embassy in Beijing said. Leakage from the sealed 75mm shell injured two of four children playing in a river in Dunhua, Jilin Province, on July 23, the embassy said in a statement. Japanese and Chinese officials have reported two other cases of dumped weapons in northeast China over the past year. One incident killed a construction worker and injured 43 others in August in Qiqihar, Heilongjiang Province, giving rise to anti-Japan sentiment.

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42. Japan Nuclear Cycle Cost Estimation Scandal

Japan Times ("NUCLEAR FUEL REPORT JUST ANOTHER COVERUP?", 2004-07-28) reported that revelations that the Japanese government apparently buried for a decade a report that says reprocessing spent atomic fuel is much more expensive than burying it is causing a political furor that industry analysts say may pull the plug on the nation's nuclear recycling policy. An irate member of the Atomic Energy Commission, an advisory body to the prime minister, charged that 20 years had been wasted. "Since the 1980s, officials involved have been aware of the fact that reprocessing is not economical, but the Science and Technology Agency stuck to (the idea of) reprocessing," the member said. Officials of the Natural Resources and Energy Agency and the Federation of Electric Power Companies were also on the defensive at a July 12 meeting of the prefectural assembly in Aomori, which is home to nuclear fuel recycling facilities. "People in the prefecture are increasingly distrustful of the government's nuclear policy," one legislator said. Another said, "We cannot promise cooperation."

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43. Overseas A-Bomb Survivors

The Japan Times ("OFFSPRING OF A-BOMB VICTIMS SEEK MORE AID", 2004-07-26) reported that a group of Japanese and Koreans born to victims of the 1945 US atomic bombings agreed at a Tokyo symposium to step up cooperation in urging the Japanese government to improve their medical and welfare measures. The government "should work to grasp more accurately the situation surrounding

us, the second generation of radiation victims," said Nobuto Hirano, who heads a nationwide group of second-generation victims in Japan. In their fourth annual forum, Hirano and others, including Lee Seung Deok, a representative of the South Korean group, expressed hope that Japan will amend an existing law for supporting A-bomb victims. The law compensates only Japanese radiation victims and babies in the womb of mothers who were pregnant at the time of the bombings. It does not extend to newborns or mothers who became pregnant after the attacks, or foreign nationals.

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44. CanKor # 175

This week's full-edition FOCUS presents two articles by visitors to Pyongyang who seek to understand the contradictory impressions they gained during their sojourn. Benjamin Bauman is a Canadian currently living in Kyoto, Japan, where he teaches English for the JET program. With three other English teachers, he spent twelve days in Pyongyang last May, training some 70 teachers from Elementary School to University in methodology and new teaching ideas. His article describes his interaction with his students, as he wrestles with a mix of positive and negative emotions, trying to find the "heart of the people." Although he comes away with more questions than answers, he is convinced that it is possible to develop what he calls a "grassroots understanding" of the people of the DPRK. Lutz Drescher is a German church worker with fluency in the Korean language, gained from eight years of work in South Korea. In his essay, translated from the German original, he attempts to answer some of the same questions raised by Bauman, but with an eye to the cultural and historical roots of the Korean people: Why does almost every visitor have the feeling they are in a staged reality? What is the root of the god-like veneration accorded the "great leader" and his son? How can we interpret the seemingly irrational actions that have led to the current nuclear crisis? Drescher's answers draw attention to lesser-known facets of the DPRK's past and present, which are often obscured by the prevailing images projected by the media. As usual, CanKor welcomes feedback, which will be conveyed to the respective authors.

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