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I. NAPSNet

- 1. [DPRK Nuclear Threat](#)
- 2. [ROK on DPRK Nuclear Accord](#)
- 3. [ROK-US Relations over DPRK](#)
- 4. [Inter-Korean Military Talks](#)
- 5. [DPRK-Japanese Bilateral Talks](#)
- 6. [DPRK Corruption](#)
- 7. [DPRK Defectors](#)
- 8. [Return of Kim Jong-il's Brother in Law](#)
- 9. [US-ROK Security Alliance](#)
- 10. [US on WMD Transfer](#)
- 11. [Japan on Yasukuni Issue](#)
- 12. [ROK on Yasukuni Issue](#)
- 13. [US-Japan Security Alliance](#)
- 14. [Pacific Oil Pipeline Project](#)
- 15. [Cross Strait Relations](#)
- 16. [PRC Military](#)
- 17. [PRC Poverty](#)
- 18. [PRC Environment](#)
- 19. [PRC Fireworks Blast](#)

[Preceding NAPSNet Report](#)

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Threat

Los Angeles Times ("GOVERNMENT SEES 'DARK CLOUDS OF NUCLEAR WAR'", 2006-01-30) reported that the DPRK warned of nuclear war and vowed to strengthen its deterrent forces. "Dark clouds of a nuclear war are hanging low over the Korean Peninsula," said a commentary carried by state-run Korean Central News Agency. "The ever-more frantic moves of the U.S. to ignite a new war against [North Korea] would only compel it ... to bolster its deterrent."

[\(return to top\)](#)

2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Accord

Yonhap News ("BETTER FOR U.S. TO SEEK PHASED THAN COMPLETE ACCORD WITH N.K. ", 2006-01-30) reported that the US should seek a multi-phased, incremental agreement with the DPRK rather than a perfect, complete nuclear accord, a ROK analyst said Monday. Jun Bong-geun, director-general for national security and unification at the Institute for Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS), said until Pyongyang becomes a more responsible member of the international community, chances of reaching an airtight and complete agreement with its regime are very low.

[\(return to top\)](#)

3. ROK-US Relations over DPRK

Reuters ("CRACKDOWN ON NORTH KOREA STRAINS US-SOUTH TIES", 2006-01-28) reported that a US crackdown on DPR Korean finances has not only hit Pyongyang hard but also exposed a divide between Washington and Seoul that the two governments may have trouble bridging, analysts said. Washington and Pyongyang are digging in their heels over the financial crackdown, and Seoul is looking for compromise. Analysts said the financial crackdown problem is difficult to resolve because it strikes at the heart of fundamental differences between Seoul and Washington. "Much of the problem comes from the fact there is a clear mismatch of the top priorities of South Korea and the United States," said Paik Hak-soon, head of DPRK studies at Sejong Institute south of Seoul. South Korea's priorities under President Roh Moo-hyun have been regional peace, regional prosperity, engagement and eventual long-term unification with the DPRK, Paik said. While, the Bush administration has been interested in fighting both terrorism and military

[\(return to top\)](#)

4. Inter-Korean Military Talks

The Korea Times ("SOUTH, NORTH PLAN MILITARY TALKS", 2006-01-30) reported that working-level military officials from the ROK and the DPRK will meet in the border village of Panmujom on Friday to discuss the possible resumption of high-level military talks, according to the Defense Ministry.

[\(return to top\)](#) Donga Ilbo ("SOUTH, NORTH MILITARY OFFICIALS TO MEET ", 2006-01-30)

reported that military officials from the ROK and the DPRK will meet at Tongilgak, the North Korea-controlled part of Panmunjom, on February 3. The meeting has been organized to prepare for the third round of inter-Korean general-level military talks. "The working-level meeting will determine the schedule, venue, agenda and procedure of the general-level talks. Our ministry would like to have the talks sooner rather than later. We will hold the meeting as early as February," the Ministry of National Defense said yesterday. The prospective items on the agenda for the general-level talks include the implementation of detailed plans to prevent accidental military conflicts between the two Koreas on the Yellow Sea, the designation of shared fishery zones on the Yellow Sea, the construction of a Kyung-eui east coast railroad across the inter-Korean border, and security measures for a joint flood-control project around the Imjin River. [\(return to top\)](#)

5. DPRK-Japanese Bilateral Talks

The Korea Times ("NK, JAPAN TO RESUME TALKS", 2006-01-30) reported that the DPRK and Japan will resume talks in Beijing on Saturday to discuss normalizing diplomatic ties, according to Japan's top government spokesman. The working-level talks will also deal with Pyongyang's abductions of Japanese citizens and the DPRK's nuclear weapons program, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

6. DPRK Corruption

Donga Ilbo ("CORRUPTION RAPIDLY SPREADING IN NORTH KOREA", 2006-01-30) reported that recently the DPRK is becoming rapidly corrupt due to the collusion of the "power class that wants to earn money" and the "merchant class that needs power." According to Kim Chul Kwon, a DPRK trader, There are countless satires on such North Korean power class. "Party officials proudly, military officials silently, security officers safely, and secret police officers invisibly bilk." Nevertheless, with the advent of the newly rich class, it has become difficult to be opulent only by taking bribes and ripping people off. The trend is, even without graduating from a top university or not being a member of the party, if a man is rich, he is the most sought-after groom. The main interest of party officials also has shifted from power to money.

[\(return to top\)](#)

7. DPRK Defectors

Donga Ilbo ("DEFECTORS HAVE DIFFICULTY IN SCHOOL ", 2006-01-30) reported that teenage defectors from the DPRK are dropping out of school in the ROK. According to the Ministry of Unification, as of 2005, the number of defectors aged six to 24 who escaped the DPRK was 1,887. In 1999, only 33 juveniles came to the ROK, but that number increased to 531 in 2004 and 368 in 2005. Among 987 DPR Korean defectors of elementary school age, only 432, or 43.7 percent, were actually going to school as of last August. From 2001 to August 2005, 14.1 percent of junior high schoolers and 15.2 percent of high school students left school. This is a stark contrast to the dropout rates of RO Korean students in 2004, who dropped out at a 0.7 percent and 1.3 percent rate, respectively. Civic organizations focusing on the issue of DPRK defectors think that they fail to socialize adequately and drop out of school because of rampant social prejudices.

[\(return to top\)](#)

8. Return of Kim Jong-il's Brother in Law

The Korea Times ("DEAR LEADER'S IN-LAW REAPPEARS: REPORT", 2006-01-30) reported that Chang Song-taek, DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's brother-in-law, has made a political comeback after a two-year absence, the state's official news media reported Sunday. Chang, husband of Kim's younger sister, Kim Kyong-hee, appeared at a dinner gala hosted on Saturday by the top DPRK leader, according to the (North) Korean Central News Agency and the (North) Korean Central Broadcasting Station. Kim has reportedly put Chang, who had been believed to be one of the DPRK leader's closest confidants, under house arrest along with 80 other officials and their family members in early 2004 for their ``factionalism."

[\(return to top\)](#)

9. US-ROK Security Alliance

Chosun Ilbo ("OUTGOING USFK CHIEF REFLECTS ON FORCES COMMAND", 2006-01-30) reported that Gen. Leon LaPorte, the commander of Combined Forces Command and United Nations Command in his capacity as head of the US Forces Korea said goodbye to the local press on Thursday. He took the opportunity to reflect about the process that could eventually separate the three roles as the ROK hopes to take back wartime control of its troops from the US "Wartime operational control can be transferred only once the Korean military has the capacity," he said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

10. US on WMD Transfer

Washington Times ("STRATEGY TARGETS TERROR WMDS", 2006-01-30) reported that the Pentagon's latest four-year strategy report calls for setting up a special military task force to prevent weapons of mass destruction from being transferred to terrorist groups, The Washington Times has learned. The task force will employ special operations forces, other troops and intelligence personnel to prevent states such as the DPRK and Iran from supplying nuclear, chemical and biological weapons to terror groups.

[\(return to top\)](#)

11. Japan on Yasukuni Issue

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN PLAYS DOWN FM'S CALL FOR EMPEROR TO VISIT WAR SHRINE ", 2006-01-30) reported that the Japanese government signalled that Emperor Akihito was unlikely to visit a war shrine, playing down a call by the foreign minister that risks inflaming tensions with other Asian countries. Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said the Imperial Household Agency continued to "carefully" consider whether the emperor should visit the Yasukuni shrine, which honors Japanese war dead including top war criminals.

[\(return to top\)](#)

12. ROK on Yasukuni Issue

Kyodo News ("S. KOREA VOICES 'DEEP REGRET' OVER ASO'S YASUKUNI REMARKS ", 2006-0-30) reported that the ROK's foreign ministry on Monday expressed "deep regret" over Japanese

Foreign Minister Taro Aso's call for Japanese Emperor Akihito to visit the controversial Yasukuni Shrine and urged him to "immediately withdraw" that remark. "We urge the Japanese foreign minister to immediately withdraw the remark that shuns neighboring nations," the ministry said in a statement.

[\(return to top\)](#)

13. US-Japan Security Alliance

Kyodo News ("OKINAWA ASSEMBLY CALLS FOR U.S. TO SUSPEND F-15 FLIGHT DRILLS ", 2006-01-30) reported that the Okinawa prefectural assembly adopted a resolution Monday calling for the US military to suspend air drills involving F-15 fighters after an F-15 crashed into fishing grounds in the Pacific off Okinawa earlier this month.

[\(return to top\)](#)

14. Pacific Oil Pipeline Project

The Vladivostok News ("PACIFIC PIPE PROJECT TO BE RECONSIDERED ", 2006-01-30) reported that on Tuesday the expert commission of Russia's Technical Inspectorate (Rostekhnadzor) announced the project of the Pacific oil pipeline as ecologically unacceptable in the part where it stretches near Lake Baikal. Forty out of 52 commission's experts agreed that the feasibility study submitted by Russia's oil transporting monopoly Transneft does not fully meet Russian and international laws. The part of the pipeline to be stretched 800 meters near Baikal may negatively affect the lake and should be built outside its basin, a press statement from WWF Russia reported at <http://www.wwf.ru>.

[\(return to top\)](#)

15. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINESE NAME PANDAS OFFERED TO TAIWAN ", 2006-01-30) reported that the PRC said Sunday that 100 million people had voted in a contest to name two pandas offered to rival Taiwan in an effort to build support for uniting the island with the communist mainland. The pandas were named "Tuan Tuan" and "Yuan Yuan" — from the Chinese word tuanyuan, or "reunion" — after a vote on 10 pairs of names with ballots cast by phone and Internet, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

16. PRC Military

International Herald Tribune ("AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER FOR CHINA? ", 2006-01-30) reported that as the PRC builds a military to match its growing economic power, its neighbors and potential rivals including the US have puzzled over a key question: When will the PRC Navy launch an aircraft carrier? For decades, senior PRC military and political officials have argued that for the country to become a great power, the People's Liberation Army Navy needs to add these potent warships to its fleet.

[\(return to top\)](#)

17. PRC Poverty

The Associated Press ("CHINA'S TOP LEADERS VOW TO TACKLE POVERTY ", 2006-01-30) reported that the PRC's leaders spent the Lunar New Year holiday with locals in the impoverished countryside, where growing discontent has spilled over into violent protests, and pledged Sunday to do more to improve living standards. The PRC's communist leadership has made tackling poverty in the countryside a key priority, as it acknowledges that three decades of economic and social reforms have left great swaths of the population behind.

[\(return to top\)](#)

18. PRC Environment

The Associated Press ("RESEARCHER: POLLUTION LIMITS SUN IN CHINA ", 2006-01-30) reported that the PRC's skies have darkened over the past 50 years, possibly due to haze resulting from a nine-fold increase in fossil fuel emissions, according to researchers from the US Department of Energy. The researchers, writing in this month's edition of Geophysical Research Letters, found that the amount of solar radiation measured at more than 500 stations in the PRC fell from 1954 to 2001 despite a decrease in cloud cover.

[\(return to top\)](#)

19. PRC Fireworks Blast

BBC News ("CHINESE FIREWORKS BLAST KILLS 36", 2006-01-30) reported that the number of people killed in an explosion at a fireworks warehouse in central PRC has risen to 36, Chinese media said. Many of the victims were praying at a nearby Buddhist temple. Up to 48 others were injured - some of them critically.

[\(return to top\)](#)

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