NAPSNet Daily Report Monday, May 28, 2007

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report Monday, May 28, 2007", NAPSNet Daily Report, May 28, 2007, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-monday-may-28-2007/

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I. NAPSNet

- 1. US on BDA Issue
  2. Russia on DPRK Nuclear Program
  3. ROK Military
  4. DPRK Missile Program
  5. ROK, US on DPRK Missile Program
  6. ROK Military Exercises
  7. ROK-Mongolian Relations
  8. PRC-Japan East Sea Territorial Dispute
  9. US Report on PRC Military
  10. US on Cross Strait Relations
  11. US, India, Japan, Australia Security Talks
  12. Sino-Indian Relations
  13. Tiananmen Commemoration in Hong Kong

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US on BDA Issue

Agence France-Presse ("US SEES NKOREA FUNDS DEAL WITHIN WEEKS", 2007-05-28) reported that the United States' top negotiator with the DPRK said he is optimistic of a deal within a month

over frozen funds that have blocked an agreement to end the DPRK's nuclear weapons programme. US envoy Christopher Hill told reporters he had "exchanged notes" on the issue with Jong Song-Il, the DPRK vice foreign minister attending a meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Manila.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("US PRESSES NKOREA TO DISARM IN RETURN FOR PLEDGE: REPORT", 2007-05-28) reported that the US believes a banking dispute blocking a nuclear disarmament accord will drag on and has pressed the DPRK to start shutting its reactor in return for a firm US promise of a solution, a report said. The ROK's Yonhap news agency said Washington had suggested to Pyongyang that the nuclear deal should be implemented first as it is taking "significant time" to settle the banking row. The US offer, made through diplomatic channels, promises the DPRK a "tangible commitment" to settling the dispute exactly as Pyongyang desires and as quickly as possible, Yonhap quoted a source as saying. (return to top)

2. Russia on DPRK Nuclear Program

Chosun Ilbo ("RUSSIA DOUBTS N.KOREA WILL GIVE UP NUKE DEVELOPMENT", 2007-05-28) reported that Russia does not expect the DPRK to give up on nuclear development unless relations between Pyongyang and Washington are normalized, The ROK's National Intelligence Service said. The NIS said in a report presented to the parliamentary Intelligence Committee that Russia thinks despite a Feb. 13 six-nation denuclearization agreement, the DPRK will go ahead with nuclear development unless its ties with the US are restored or neighboring countries change their hostile policies toward Pyongyang.

(return to top)

3. ROK Military

Agence France-Presse ("SKOREA LAUNCHES AEGIS DESTROYER TO COMBAT 'ARMS RACE'", 2007-05-28) reported that the ROK on Friday launched its first Aegis destroyer equipped with advanced air and sea weaponry. President Roh Moo-Hyun, speaking at the launch of the one-billio--dollar 7,600-tonne KDX-III destroyer, said the ROK must be mindful of what he called a regional arms race. "We have to secure our ability to defend ourselves not only in terms of naval power but in all kinds of combat capabilities," he said, adding the ROK will push on with a programme to create an ocean-going navy.

(return to top)

4. DPRK Missile Program

The Associated Press ("N. KOREA TEST FIRES SHORT-RANGE MISSILES", 2007-05-28) reported that the DPRK test fired several short-range guided missiles into the sea that separates it from Japan, ROK officials and media reports said. Analysts and media reports said the DPRK's test was in response to ROK's launch of its first destroyer equipped with high-tech Aegis radar technology developed by the US. Kyodo News agency said the missiles were launched from Hamgyong Namdo on the east coast of the Korean Peninsula and are considered modified silkworm or miniaturized Scuds with a range of 60-125 miles.

(return to top)

5. ROK, US on DPRK Missile Program

Agence France-Presse ("SEOUL SILENT ON FURTHER NKOREA MISSILE TESTS", 2007-05-28) reported that the ROK's military and intelligence agencies refused to comment Sunday on a report that the DPRK may be planning another missile test. Quoting unnamed intelligence sources, Seoul's Yonhap news agency reported that the DPRK test-fired only one short-range missile off its east coast on Friday and may follow up from its west. "All we can say is that the firing is part of the military training that North Korea has been annually carrying out in the West Sea (Yellow Sea) and the East Sea (Sea of Japan)," a National Intelligence Service (NIS) spokesman said.

(return to top) Yonhap ("U.S. DOWNPLAYS N. KOREA'S MISSILE TESTS, SAYS NO IMPACT ON SIX-PARTY TALKS", 2007-05-28) reported that the US downplayed the DPRK's short-range missile tests as "routine" and said they will not affect six-nation denuclearization talks. "It appears to be a routine exercise," said Gordon Johndroe at the White House. (return to top)

6. ROK Military Exercises

Yonhap ("S. KOREAN MILITARY BEGINS ANNUAL WAR TRAINING", 2007-05-28) reported that the ROK military kicked off a war simulation exercise on Monday, only three days after the DPRK test-launched at least one short-range missile. The eight-day event, named "Taegeuk Exercise," is aimed at developing war planning capabilities, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The exercise has been held annually since 1995, a year after the ROK took back peacetime control of its own troops from the US.

(return to top)

7. ROK-Mongolian Relations

Korea Times ("KOREA, MONGOLIA AGREE TO WIDEN TIES", 2007-05-28) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun yesterday agreed to widen cooperative ties with Mongolia at a summit with President Nambaryn Enkhbayar. Enkhbayar arrived in Seoul yesterday for a three-day visit. He is scheduled to meet with National Assembly Chairman Lim Chae-jung and local business representatives. He will also participate in the opening ceremony of the ROK-Mongolia economic cooperative committee meeting.

(return to top)

8. PRC-Japan East Sea Territorial Dispute

Kyodo ("JAPAN, CHINA FOREIGN MINISTERS AGREE TO ACCELERATE GAS TALKS ", 2007-05-28) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso and his PRC counterpart Yang Jiechi agreed to speed up talks on a dispute over gas exploration rights in the East China Sea so as to compile a joint development plan by fall, the Japanese minister said. Japan and the PRC held the eighth round of senior working-level negotiations in Beijing but remained apart with the PRC side stopping short of offering an anticipated proposal on joint development.

(return to top)

9. US Report on PRC Military

The Los Angeles Times ("PENTAGON SAYS CHINA EXPANDING MILITARY REACH", 2007-05-28) reported that the PRC's ongoing military buildup remains focused on preventing Taiwan's independence but is expanding to include other regional military goals, including securing the flow of oil from overseas, according to an annual Pentagon study issued Friday. The 42-page report, required by Congress, found that Beijing's investment in military modernization — which may have reached $125 billion last year, according to the US Defense Intelligence Agency, or nearly triple the official $45 billion declared by Beijing — has produced military systems that enable the PRC to project force well beyond its shores.

(return to top) The New York Times ("CHINA DISPUTES DEFENSE ASSESSMENT", 2007-05-28) reported that a Pentagon report that voiced concerns about the PRC's buildup of land- and sea-based ballistic missiles "misleads international opinion" and tries to spread false fears of a PRC threat, PRC state news media said. A sharply worded commentary in The People's Daily said the Defense Department's annual report to Congress on the PRC's military capacity had exaggerated the extent and sophistication of the PRC's military modernization. (return to top)

10. US on Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("U.S.: CHINA LACKS POWER FOR TAIWAN FIGHT ", 2007-05-28) reported that the Pentagon is warning the PRC in blunt language that despite Beijing's massive military buildup, it lacks the power for a successful attack against rival Taiwan. In the report, the Defense Department explicitly describes what would happen if the PRC should attack Taiwan. It says the PRC does not yet have "the military capability to accomplish with confidence its political objectives on the island, particularly when confronted with the prospect of US intervention." An attack could severely damage the PRC's economy and lead to international sanctions, spur a Taiwan insurgency, and possibly cause Beijing to lose its coveted hosting rights for the 2008 Olympics, the report said.

(return to top)

11. US, India, Japan, Australia Security Talks

Reuters ("AUSTRALIA SEEKS TO CALM A RUFFLED CHINA", 2007-05-28) reported that Australia tried to reassure the PRC that India's request to join Australia, Japan and the US for annual talks was not a security threat to Beijing Recently, officials from all four countries met informally to discuss a new four-country bloc, Australian officials said at parliamentary budget hearings in Canberra.

(return to top)

12. Sino-Indian Relations

IANS ("INDIA, CHINA TO BOOST MILITARY COOPERATION ", 2007-05-28) reported that India and the PRC have decided to boost their military cooperation by holding joint drills between their armies and promoting visits of senior offices to each other's defence establishments. "The visit marked a decision in the engagement and mutual confidence building mechanism by seeking to hold periodic joint military training exercises between the two armies," a defence ministry statement said.

(return to top)

13. Tiananmen Commemoration in Hong Kong

The Associated Press ("HUNDREDS JOIN HONG KONG TIANANMEN MARCH ", 2007-05-28) reported that hundreds of people marched through the streets of Hong Kong to commemorate the Tiananmen Square protests 18 years ago, angry over comments from a lawmaker who appeared to take the PRC's side in the crackdown. Walking through heavy rain, the demonstrators chanted slogans condemning the lawmaker, Ma Lik, who disputed witness accounts of the June 4, 1989, crackdown, saying the PRC troops did not fire indiscriminately at protesters.

(return to top)

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