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I. NAPSNet

- 1. DPRK-Iran Missile Sales
2. Inter-Korean Mining Cooperation
3. Inter-Korean Reunions
4. DPRK Abductions
5. PRC on DPRK Financial Sanctions
6. US on Kaesong Industrial Complex
7. Analysts on DPRK-PRC Relations
8. PRC-Vietnam Relations
9. PRC-Africa Relations
10. PRC Military
11. PRC Terrorism Drills
12. PRC Space Development
13. PRC Media Control
14. PRC Economy
15. PRC-Japan Trade
16. Japan Economy
17. Japan Demographics
18. USFJ Realignment
19. Yasukuni Shrine Issue
20. Japan SDF Iraq Mission

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK-Iran Missile Sales

Associated Press ("IRAN GETS FIRST NORTH KOREAN-MADE MISSILES ", 2006-04-27) reported that Iran has received its first batch of DPRK-made surface-to-surface missiles that put European countries within firing range, Israel's military intelligence chief said in an interview published Thursday. The BM-25 missiles have a range of 1,550 miles and are capable of carrying nuclear warheads, the Haaretz daily reported.

(return to top)

2. Inter-Korean Mining Cooperation

Yonhap ("S. KOREA OPENS JOINT GRAPHITE MINE IN N. KOREA ", 2006-04-27) reported that the ROK's state-run resources development corporation on Thursday announced the opening of a joint graphite mine in the DPRK. The 50-50 joint venture between the Korea Resources Corp. (KORES) and a DPRK firm can produce 3,000 tons of graphite per year. Of that, the ROK will import 1,830 tons every year for the next 15 years.

(return to top)

3. Inter-Korean Reunions

Yonhap ("KOREAS TO HOLD LARGEST ROUND OF SEPARATED FAMILY REUNIONS IN JUNE", 2006-04-27) reported that the DPRK and the ROK have agreed to hold a new round of Red Cross-sponsored reunions in June for families separated decades ago when the peninsula was divided, the Unification Ministry said Thursday. The special round of reunions will be held in the DPRK's scenic resort of Mount Geumgang from June 19-30. Some 200 families from each side will be involved, the largest number yet, Vice Unification Minister Shin Un-sang told a regular press briefing.

(return to top)

4. DPRK Abductions

Chosun Ilbo ("BUSH TO MEET WITH MOTHER OF JAPANESE ABDUCTEE", 2006-04-27) reported that US President George W. Bush will on Friday meet the mother of Megumi Yokota, who was abducted by the DPRK at the age of 13 in 1977. According to the White House spokesman, Bush will meet Sakie Yokota at 11 a.m. on Friday in the Oval Office. Also present will be Ryozo Kato, Japanese ambassador to the US, and the special envoy on human rights in the DPRK, Jay Lefkowitz, as well as the families of other abductees and DPRK refugees staying in Japanese official residences abroad, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("FIVE KIDNAPPED S.KOREANS CONFIRMED ALIVE IN NORTH ", 2006-04-27) reported Kim Young-nam, a RO Korean Pyongyang says was the husband of Japanese abductee Megumi Yokota, and four other RO Koreans kidnapped in 1977-8, are alive in the DPRK, the National Intelligence Service said Thursday. NIS Director Kim Seung-kyu made the statement in

a closed-doors meeting of the National Assembly Intelligence Committee, according to lawmakers in attendance. At the time of their abduction, the five were all in high school. Kim Young-nam (then 16), Lee Min-gyo (18), Choi Seung-min (16), Lee Myeong-woo (17) and Hong Geon-pyo (17) were kidnapped from beaches in Kunsan and Shinan in 1977-8, and their fate was never confirmed. (return to top) Kyodo News ("JAPAN PLACES N. KOREAN EX-AGENT ON INT'L WANTED LIST OVER ABDUCTION ", 2006-04-27) reported that Japan on Thursday placed former DPRK spy Sin Guang Su and a suspected accomplice on an international wanted list through Interpol on a charge of abducting Japanese national Tadaaki Hara, officials said. The Japanese police have obtained arrest warrants for Sin, 76, and Kim Gil Uk, a former school principal, on suspicion of abducting Hara with the intent of transferring him abroad, the officials said. (return to top) Yonhap ("N.K. KIDNAPPED OVER 500 FOREIGN NATIONALS: JAPANESE GROUP", 2006-04-27) reported that testifying before a House hearing, Prof. Yoichi Shimada, vice chairman of the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea, said the DPRK has abducted 485 RO Koreans since the end of the 1950-1953 Korean War. The association's tally said there were also four Lebanese, one Thai, one Romanian and two PRC residents from Macau who were kidnapped into the DPRK. Four Malaysians, one Singaporean, three French, three Italians, two Hollanders and one Jordanian have also been witnessed in the DPRK, it said. (return to top)

5. PRC on DPRK Financial Sanctions

Chosun Ilbo ("CHINA WILL ASK U.S. TO RELAX SANCTIONS ON N.KOREA ", 2006-04-27) reported that the PRC's chief negotiator in six-way talks on the DPRK's nuclear program, Wu Dawei, has unveiled plans to travel to the US and ask Washington to relax financial sanctions on the DPRK, the Japanese press reported Thursday. The former vice president of the Liberal Democratic Party, Taku Yamasaki, who is in the midst of a PRC visit, quoted Wu as saying that "a relaxation of the financial sanctions is a must."

(return to top)

6. US on Kaesong Industrial Complex

Yonhap ("U.S. ENVOY REASSERTS CONCERNS ABOUT KAESONG, UNMONITORED N.K. AID", 2006-04-27) reported that the US envoy on DPRK human rights reasserted his concerns Thursday about an inter-Korean economic project he said lacks transparency in wage and labor practices. Jay Lefkowitz, testifying before a House subcommittee, also expressed discontent at countries, apparently including the ROK and the PRC, that provide assistance to the DPRK without proper conditions attached.

(return to top)

7. Analysts on DPRK-PRC Relations

United Press International ("ANALYSIS: NORTH KOREA'S CHINA CARD", 2006-04-27) reported that in the face of the Bush administration's tough stance, the DPRK has shifted its survival strategy from seeking a breakthrough in relations with the US to deepening ties with its ally, the PRC, officials and analysts say. "(The) United States' unilateral stance toward North Korea has lead to closer ties between Pyongyang and Beijing," a senior presidential official said, on condition of anonymity. "It may trigger East Asia's return to the Cold War era." Koh Yu-hwan, a DPRK specialist at Dongguk University in Seoul, said the PRC has also changed its policy toward the DPRK, from limited economic cooperation to protecting its political system, in response to the Bush administration's hard-line stance against the Kim Jong Il regime.

(return to top)

8. PRC-Vietnam Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, VIETNAM HOLD JOINT NAVY PATROLLING", 2006-04-27) reported that PRC navy and the navy of Vietnam started a joint patrol in the Beibu Gulf in the South China Sea. This is an action that implements the agreement that signed by PRC Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan and his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Van Tra Oct. 26, 2005. It is also the first time for the PRC navy to patrol jointly with a foreign counterpart.

(return to top)

9. PRC-Africa Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, NIGERIA SIGN JOINT COMMUNIQUE", 2006-04-27) reported that the PRC and Nigeria signed a joint communique on bilateral relations during President Hu Jintao's visit to the West African country.

(return to top)

10. PRC Military

The Associated Press ("CHINA SPY PLANE INTRUSIONS HIT RECORD", 2006-04-21) reported that Japan scrambled fighter jets a record 107 times in the year ending in March to intercept what appeared to be PRC spy planes approaching Japanese air space. That number was a dramatic increase from the previous year, when jets scrambled only 13 times against suspected PRC planes, said Gen. Hajime Massaki, chairman of the Joint Staff Committee.

(return to top)

11. PRC Terrorism Drills

Xinhua ("JOINT MILITARY DRILLS TARGET TERRORISM", 2006-04-27) reported that the six-nation Shanghai Co-operation Organization (SCO), which includes the PRC, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, yesterday agreed to hold joint anti-terrorism military exercises next year in Russia as their defence ministers vowed to improve regional security.

(return to top)

12. PRC Space Development

Xinhua ("CHINA SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES REMOTE SENSING SATELLITE", 2006-04-27) reported that the PRC successfully launched a remote sensing satellite and put it into preset orbit, the first of a series of space launches planned by the PRC this year.

(return to top)

13. PRC Media Control

The International Herald Tribune ("HONG KONG PUBLIC BROADCASTER FACES ADDED

SCRUTINY", 2006-04-26) reported that the Hong Kong government said it would create an audit team to monitor Hong Kong's public broadcaster, which has come under increasing criticism for its critical reporting on government policies, especially the government's stance on broader democracy.

(return to top)

14. PRC Economy

Xinhua ("CHINESE GOVT MOVES TO COOL ECONOMIC GROWTH", 2006-04-27) reported that the PRC's economic watchdog, The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), is moving to slow economic growth after recording a rise in fixed assets investment of almost 30 percent in the first quarter.

(return to top)

15. PRC-Japan Trade

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(return to top)

16. Japan Economy

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("CHINA SET TO OVERTAKE JAPAN IN CAR OUTPUT", 2006-04-26) reported that the PRC is expected to surpass Japan in terms of automobile output in 2010 by manufacturing more than 10 million vehicles, the second-largest output in the world after the US.

(return to top)

17. Japan Demographics

The International Herald Tribune ("AGING OF JAPAN CARRIES A VILLAGE TO EXTINCTION", 2006-04-26) reported that Ogama a mountain village on the West Coast of Japan, withered to eight aging residents, concluded recently that it could no longer go on. So, after months of anguish, the villagers settled on a drastic solution: selling all of Ogama to an industrial waste company from Tokyo, which will turn it into a landfill. With the proceeds, the villagers plan to pack up everything, including their family graves, and move in the next few years to yet uncertain destinations, most likely becoming the first community in Japan to cease to exist voluntarily.

(return to top)

18. USFJ Realignment

The Japan Times ("DEFENSE SPENDING FACES CUT TO COVER US REALIGNMENT", 2006-04-27) reported that the Japanese government plans to slash defense spending to come up with the 2.71 trillion yen that Japan will need to shoulder the cost of realigning the US military presence. It also plans to ask the US for an overhaul of Japan's payments to support hosting US forces, including abolishing the practice of Tokyo paying the utility bills for bases.

(return to top)

19. Yasukuni Shrine Issue

The Japan Times ("96 DIET MEMBERS TO VISIT YASUKUNI SHRINE", 2006-04-22) reported that ninety-six Diet members from various parties jointly paid a visit Friday to Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. No Cabinet ministers or senior vice ministers were among them. Former LDP Secretary General Makoto Koga, a Lower House member, told a news conference after his shrine visit that no foreign leaders have the right to call for halting visits to the shrine by Japan's political leaders.

(return to top)

20. Japan SDF Iraq Mission

The Japan Times ("10TH GSDF UNIT IRAQ-BOUND APRIL 28", 2006-04-28) reported that the Japanese government said Friday it plans to issue an order April 28 to send the 10th Ground Self-Defense Force contingent to the southern Iraq city of Samawah as part of the ongoing humanitarian mission. The 10th unit will replace the ninth contingent under a three-month rotation, but its main mission is to prepare for a pullout of GSDF troops from Iraq.

(return to top)

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