

NAPSNet Daily Report Thursday, January 18, 2007

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report Thursday, January 18, 2007", NAPSNet Daily Report, January 18, 2007, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-thursday-january-18-2007/>

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I. NAPSNet

1. US - DPRK Dialogue

Washington Post ("U.S. OPEN TO BILATERAL TALKS ON TIES WITH N. KOREA", 2007-01-17) reported that if the DPRK gives up its nuclear programs, the United States is willing to engage in "a bilateral process" to establish "a normal relationship." "We are prepared to go on that road and to really offer North Korea a hand as it moves along the road," Assistant Secretary of State Christopher R. Hill said in a speech here in the midst of his talks, the first time he has met with senior DPRK officials outside Asia. He said he has been trying to "make sure they understand very clearly what we are intending to do, what our intentions are." Hill's comments mark the first time a U.S. official has publicly emphasized the possibility of such bilateral discussions, something the Pyongyang government has long sought. The Bush administration has resisted such negotiations. Hill also noted the September 2005 agreement in his speech. But the final draft of the agreement is vague about the process of normalization. The key sentence said, "The DPRK and the United States undertook to respect each other's sovereignty, exist peacefully together, and take steps to normalize their relations subject to their respective bilateral policies." That sentence was crafted after the United States balked at a version referring to "bilateral policies and dialogue." Hill said that "we have an adequate bilateral mechanism within the six-party talks to exchange our views with the North Koreans." The comment appeared to refer to the increasingly frequent meetings he has held with his counterpart, Kim Gye Gwan, when the six-party sessions were not taking place.

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2. DPRK - Iran Relations

Associated Press ("HIGH-LEVEL IRAN DELEGATION VISITS N KOREA", 2007-01-18) reported that a high-level Iranian delegation arrived in the DPRK as both nations face international pressure to give up their nuclear weapons programs. The Iranian Foreign Ministry delegation, led by Vice Minister Mahdi Safari, arrived in Pyongyang, the Korean Central News Agency reported in a one-sentence dispatch without giving any further details. The DPRK is believed to have sold missiles to Iran. Although the DPRK's nuclear weapons program uses plutonium, Iran's is based on uranium.

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3. DMZ Fences

Associated Press ("SOUTH KOREA TO DISMANTLE PARTS OF FENCES GUARDING AGAINST NORTH KOREAN INFILTRATION", 2007-01-18) reported that the ROK plans to dismantle parts of a wire fence built in the 1950s to prevent infiltration by DPRK agents. The decision to take down sections of the fence that lines a river connecting the capital of Seoul to the DPRK came after years of petitioning by local governments wanting the military to open up the area for civilian use. One section of the fence lines a major riverside highway linking Seoul to one of its satellite cities and has been seen as a reminder of the cease-fire status between the two Koreas, and how close the South's capital is to the nuclear-armed North. The South's capital is only about 30miles away from the border. The ministry declined to give the total length of the fences, saying it was a military secret. But looking at a map, the fence likely stretches well over 60miles. "Would secret agents come over to the South via the Han River in the 21st century?" asked Chang Yoon-seok, an official of the Gimpo city government. "The fences aren't necessary. ... They have only restricted our regional development efforts." To maintain security, Chang said the military wants to install closed circuit cameras, infrared cameras and other surveillance equipment after dismantling the fences. He said it wasn't clear when the dismantlement could happen. But local media, including Yonhap news agency,

reported that it could take place next year.

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4. DPRK Labor

U.S. Department of State Press Release ("FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE", 2007-01-17) reported that DPR Korean labor live and work under conditions so dire that this activity runs afoul of a UN protocol on trafficking in persons." The report, written by Jay Lefkovitz, U.S. special envoy for human rights in DPRK, criticizes Russia which provides the largest market for DPR Korean labor. In camps near Khabarovsk in Siberia, for instance, DPR Korean labor harvests Russian timber. This work force used to be populated by DPR Korean "prisoners and others viewed by the North Korean government as disloyal. It filled a labor gap in Siberia that coincided with the decline of the gulag. Today, conditions are so harsh in North Korea that workers actually volunteer for such labor assignments. However, because these workers are not paid directly, much of the capital generated ends up in the coffers of Mr. Kim's regime." There are approximately 10,000 to 15,000 DPR Koreans working abroad. Labor arrangements reportedly exist with entities in Russia, Czech Republic, Mongolia, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Angola. "Some argue that labor arrangements like those in Russia and Kaesong are positive developments. They see these activities as a way to open North Korean eyes to the outside world. To date, however, those benefits seem more theoretical than real," says Lefkovitz.

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5. Korean POWs

JoongAng Ilbo ("9 DEFECTORS, POW KIN, SENT BACK TO NORTH", 2007-01-19) reported that despite diplomatic efforts by Seoul, nine family members of ROK prisoners of war in the DPRK who tried to escape to Seoul via the PRC were repatriated to the DPRK by PRC authorities last October. The Chosun Monthly Magazine, which broke the story, reported that the group was arrested at their temporary living quarters in Shenyang, an industrial city in northeastern PRC, after having sought sanctuary at Seoul's consular office there. A Foreign Ministry official confirmed that report yesterday, saying the ministry regretted that they had not been able to save the defectors from their fate. He said Foreign Minister Song Min-soon would raise the issue with Chinese authorities when he visits Beijing next week and seek assurances that such incidents will not recur. Another ministry official said that DPRK defectors with links to RO Korean prisoners of war in the North are generally given more lenient treatment by Chinese authorities under a mechanism arranged by Seoul and Beijing. In this case, the JoongAng Daily and other reporters have learned, those arrangements broke down. Apparently there had been an incident earlier in the day in which a group of DPR Koreans successfully entered another consulate in the city. Later in the day, Chinese police scoured the area for other potential defectors and discovered the nine in their temporary lodgings. The security forces were evidently not aware of the group's special status. RO Korean officials reportedly alerted the Chinese to the problem, but the group had, it seems, been repatriated too quickly for those efforts to be successful.

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6. US-ROK Security Alliance

The Associated Press ("U.S. GENERAL IN S.KOREA WARNS OF CHANGES ", 2007-01-18) reported that the top US general in the ROK warned that changes to the command structure on the peninsula

could damage the ability of allied forces to maintain the more than half-century-old armistice with the DPRK. US Army Gen. B.B. Bell cautioned that changes to alliance structures must not harm the U.N. commander's ability to quickly mobilize forces to protect the cease-fire between the DPRK and ROK. "Unless addressed, this situation will make it impossible to credibly maintain the armistice," Bell told a news conference.

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7. US-ROK Trade Relations

Yonhap ("LAWMAKERS VISIT NORTH KOREA TO INCLUDE KAESONG PRODUCTS IN KOREA-U.S. FTA", 2007-01-18) reported that a free trade panel of ROK lawmakers visited an inter-Korean joint industrial complex in the DPRK to promote the inclusion of the inter-Korean made products manufactured in the DPRK into the free trade deal between Seoul and Washington, National Assembly officials said. Eleven ruling and opposition party lawmakers travelled to the DPRK's border city of Kaesong to make a first-hand assessment of the first inter-Korean industrial complex. Panel members of the main opposition Grand National Party decided not travel together to the complex, saying "Including the Kaesong made products is not a decisive matter regarding the FTA."

[\(return to top\)](#) Agence France-Presse ("EU, CHINA CAN REPLACE US IN FREE TRADE TALKS", 2007-01-18) reported that the ROK's chief negotiator has said Seoul could open free trade talks with the PRC and the EU if negotiations with the US broke down. "If talks with the United States on forging a free trade agreement (FTA) break down, we can open discussions with the European Union and China," Kim Jong-Hoon told reporters. The remarks followed local media reports that the ROK has almost retracted its demand for the US to change anti-dumping laws in an effort to bring free trade talks to a successful end. [\(return to top\)](#) Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. DEMOCRATS WANT FTA DEAL CHANGES", 2007-01-18) reported that it seems that ROK-US negotiations on free trade agreement are now seeing the effects of the Democratic Party taking the helm of the US Congress. The party's lean toward protectionism has brought changes in US demands to the on-going negotiations. In the second day of the sixth round of the negotiations, the US demanded to make it mandatory for non-governmental organizations to participate in formulating laws on the environment. This is contrary to what the two sides had agreed on in the previous round of talks. [\(return to top\)](#) Joongang Ilbo ("U.S. ASKS KOREA TO STOP BANK SUBSIDIES AT TRADE TALKS", 2007-01-18) reported that the US negotiators accepted post office insurance as an exception, but they want the free trade deal to end government subsidies for Korea Development Bank and other state-run banks. They also wanted the ROK government to allow credit rating companies to operate in the ROK, which would give firms like Moody's Investors Services and Standard and Poor's direct access to the ROK market. [\(return to top\)](#)

8. Sino-Japanese Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA HOPES JAPAN DOES MORE TO IMPROVE BILATERAL TIES", 2007-01-18) reported that the PRC government hopes Japan can be more helpful in improving and developing bilateral relations, PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said. Liu said Japan's recent military measures and moves had caused undeniable concern among its neighbors, including the PRC.

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9. PRC Arms Embargo

Bloomberg ("ABE'S SUPPORT FOR EU ARMS EMBARGO 'PROVOCATIVE', CHINA SAYS ", 2007-0-18) reported that Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made "provocative" comments on a European arms embargo, PRC foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said. Abe, wrapping up a European visit in Paris on Jan. 13, said lifting the embargo could threaten Asia's security. "The arms embargo is a matter between China and the EU," Liu said at a regular briefing in Beijing today. "It has nothing to do with Japan. We have told Japanese officials that we are not happy with these comments. Japan should take more positive, not provocative actions."

[\(return to top\)](#) BBC News ("EU STANDS BY CHINA ARMS EMBARGO ", 2007-01-18) reported that the European Union has not changed its conditions for lifting an arms embargo on the PRC, the EU head of foreign relations has said at bilateral talks. Benita Ferrero-Waldner said lifting the embargo was dependent on conditions such as the PRC ratifying a UN convention on civil and political rights. [\(return to top\)](#)

10. US on PRC Anti-Satellite Weapon Test

Reuters ("U.S. VOICES CONCERN OVER CHINA SATELLITE-KILLER TEST", 2007-01-18) reported that the US, Australia and Canada have voiced concerns to the PRC over a test in space of a satellite-killing weapon last week, the White House said. "The U.S. believes China's development and testing of such weapons is inconsistent with the spirit of cooperation that both countries aspire to in the civil space area," National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe said. Using a ground-based medium-range ballistic missile, the test knocked out an aging PRC weather satellite about 537 miles above the earth.

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11. Sino-Canadian Relations

The Associated Press ("CANADA LOOKS TO MEND FENCES WITH CHINA ", 2007-01-18) reported that Canada's finance minister arrived in the PRC to boost trade ties and mend fences amid a series of diplomatic spats with Beijing, but said he would also raise human rights concerns during his talks with PRC officials. Finance Minister Jim Flaherty said it was his "duty to be frank" about Canada's concerns and said he planned to raise the issue of Huseyin Celil, a Chinese-Canadian being held in a PRC jail for alleged terrorism links.

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12. PRC Energy Supply

The Associated Press ("TURKMENISTAN REAFFIRMS CHINA PIPELINE", 2007-01-18) reported that Turkmenistan's acting president has pledged that his resource-rich ex-Soviet state would stick to its gas pipeline deal with the PRC, according to remarks televised Thursday. Gurbanguli Berdymukhamedov said Wednesday at a meeting with voters in the eastern city of Turkmenabat that the pipeline contract would be completed as planned by 2009.

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13. PRC Secrecy Law

China Media Project ("CHINA'S STATE COUNCIL PASSES NATIONAL ORDINANCE ON DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION "IN PRINCIPLE"", 2007-01-18) reported that the PRC's top administrative authority, the State Council, passed "in principle" yesterday the long-awaited ordinance on information disclosure, which some experts believe could give the public and media better access to a whole range of government information. The ordinance, which could pave the way for a more powerful law on information disclosure, has been in the works since the National People's Congress submitted a proposal for creation of a draft in March 2006.

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