NAPSNet Daily Report Tuesday, December 21, 2004

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report Tuesday, December 21, 2004", NAPSNet Daily Report, December 21, 2004, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-tuesday-december-21-2004/

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I. United States

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Christian Science Monitor ("NORTH KOREA'S NUKES: ADVANCED, BUT HIDDEN", 2004-12-21) reported that scientists charged with international nuclear safeguards now assume that the DPRK has a cache of weapons-grade plutonium slightly larger than a basketball, or enough for about nine bombs - since DPRK, for technical reasons, had to reprocess the plutonium or lose it. Moreover, they say, any credible future deal with the regime run in absolute secrecy by leader Kim Jong Il will require a minimum of seven or eight months of nearly unlimited access to the DPRK - to uranium mines, dismantled plants, research and development, active or retired scientists, all records, and any sites deemed relevant.

(return to top) Kyodo News ("N. KOREA HAS PLUTONIUM FOR 9 NUKE BOMBS, U.S. PAPER SAYS", 2004-12-21) reported that the DPRK has a cache of weapons-grade plutonium bigger than a basketball, or enough for about nine nuclear bombs, a US daily reported Tuesday. "Scientists charged with international nuclear safeguards now assume that North Korea has a cache of weapons-grade plutonium slightly larger than a basketball, or enough for about nine bombs -since North Korea, for technical reasons, had to reprocess the plutonium or lose it," the paper said in a dispatch from Vienna. (return to top)

2. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. REPORT QUESTIONS UTILITY OF TALKS WITH NORTH KOREA", None) reported that in its "Performance and Accountability Report" for the financial year 2004, the US State Department said that if no progress is made on the DPRK nuclear issue and the stalemate continues, it could call into question the purpose of bilateral or multilateral negotiations with Pyongyang. The report evaluated progress on the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs as "below target," and noted that while the six-party talks were underway, there has been almost no progress in getting an agreement besides scheduling an endless chain of negotiations.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("BUSH STICKS BY DIPLOMACY ON IRAN, NORTH KOREA", 2004-12-21) reported that US President George W. Bush said Monday that he would continue to use multilateral diplomacy to convince surviving "axis of evil" members DPRK and Iran to give up their

nuclear programs. "I stand on continuing the six-party talks with North Korea to convince Kim Jong-Il to give up his weapons systems," Bush said at a White House press conference. (return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. IS '100 PERCENT' BEHIND DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH WITH N.K.", 2004-12-21) reported that US Ambassador in Seoul Christopher Hill said Tuesday, "The goal of the six-party process is to seek a negotiated, diplomatic solution" to the DPRK nuclear issue, "and we are 100 percent behind the goal, not 99 percent." In an end-of-year press conference, the American envoy added that his country wishes to see the six-party talks resume at an early date, and that the US is prepared to seek a solution to the DPRK's nuclear standoff when talks restart. (return to top) Korea Times ("US STATE DEPARTMENT DOUBTS 6-WAY TALKS", 2004-12-21) reported that the six-party talks aimed at resolving the standoff over the DPRK's nuclear weapons programs could lose effectiveness if they stall further, a report released Tuesday by the US State Department said. The State Department report said the failure to verify the DPRK's nuclear dismantlement may lead to the destabilization of not only the international treaty on nuclear nonproliferation, but also other nonproliferation regimes. (return to top)

3. DPRK on Relations with the US

Korean Central News Agency of the DPRK ("U.S. ACCUSED OF TRYING TO BRING DOWN DPRK SYSTEM", 2004-12-21) reported that the US is reportedly planning to designate even the post of "a special envoy in charge of North Korean human rights" and going to appoint one in the wake of the adoption and effectuation of the "North Korean Human Rights Act" which is aimed to bring down the "system in the DPRK." Looking back on its history, the US faked "human rights issues" to use them as pretexts for interfering in the internal affairs of anti-US, independent countries and justifying its aggression and war against the sovereign states. The "North Korean Human Rights Act" is an example of this.

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4. US on DPRK Regime Transformation

Joongang Ilbo ("U.S. IS SEEKING BEHAVIORAL CHANGE IN NORTH", 2004-12-21) reported that warning that Washington's patience with the DPRK was not limitless, Christopher Hill, the US ambassador to the ROK, said yesterday that when the US government calls for "regime transformation" in Pyeongyang, it means a "behavioral change." At a press conference, Mr. Hill said that changed behavior in Pyeongyang, such as the dismantling of its nuclear weapons programs, would be part of the transformation.

(return to top) Kyodo News ("BUSH SAYS HE IS NOT SEEKING N. KOREA REGIME CHANGE", 2004-12-21) reported that US President George W. Bush said Monday he is not seeking regime change in the DPRK and that his administration remains committed to continuing the six-party dialogue on the DPRK's nuclear arms programs. Bush spelled out his policy in a year-end news conference, apparently to emphasize his intention to seek a peaceful resolution by encouraging the DPRK to return to the six-way talks, which have been stalled after a third round was held in June. (return to top)

5. Russia on DPRK Nuclear Talks

The Associated Press ("RUSSIA WANTS RESUMPTION OF 6-NATION TALKS ON N KOREA", 2004-12-21) reported that Russia on Monday called for swift resumption of six-nation talks aimed at persuading the DPRK to give up its nuclear ambitions, Russian news reports said. Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Alexeyev said after meeting with DPRK Ambassador Pak Ui Chun that Russia

"finds it counterproductive to drag out the negotiating process and hopes that it will be resumed as soon as possible."

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6. ROK on PRC Role in DPRK Nuclear Issue

Donga Ilbo ("UNIFICATION MINISTER CHUNG: “SIX-WAY TALKS DEADLOCKED BY U.S., NORTH KOREAN ANIMOSITY”", 2004-12-21) reported that the unification minister and the head of the standing committee of the National Security Council Chung Dong-young, who is visiting the PRC, made a courtesy call on Wu Bangguo, and delivered a private letter from President Roh Moo-hyun. "I appreciate the efforts of the Chinese government to try and peacefully solve the nuclear problem of North Korea through the six-way talks," and urged, "As China has more opportunities to visit North Korea as well as contact them, I hope that China cooperates much more aggressively in the future."

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7. ROK on Unification

Chosun Ilbo ("GNP UNVEILS 'NORTH KOREAN MARSHALL PLAN'", None) reported that the Grand National Party (GNP) presented a unification policy on Tuesday that has been dubbed the "National Development Commonwealth Unification Plan." The basic structure calls for reconciliation and cooperation, followed by a North-South commonwealth, and finally the establishment of a unified nation. The GNP plan included an alternative measure should the DPRK abandon its nuclear weapons program. This calls for supporting economic reconstruction in the development-retarded state through a "North Korean Marshall Plan" and the establishment of a "special financial institution" jointly funded by ROK, surrounding nations and international financial institutions - on the provision that the DPRK gives up its nuclear programs.

(return to top) Korea Herald ("GNP UNVEILS UNIFICATION POLICY", 2004-12-21) reported that the main opposition Grand National Party yesterday announced a tentative plan loooking to eventual unification of the two Koreas, but calling first for an open two-sided relationship and a peaceful end to the DPRK nuclear standoff. "We must help North Korea normalize its relationship with the United States, and Japan in order to bring it out of its shell and to entice giving up the nuclear weapons," said Rep. Park Jin of the GNP. "When North Korea does give up nuclear weapons, we should look into various ways to support the North, such as building steam or water power plants there for alternative energy." (return to top)

8. DPRK on Unification

Korean Central News Agency of the DPRK ("NORTH KOREA NAMES PREPARATORY UNIFICATION COMMITTEE", 2004-12-21) reported that the DPRK's Preparatory Committee for Joint Functions of the North, the South and Overseas Koreans to Implement the 15 June Joint Declaration was formed here Monday (20 December) in accordance with an agreement of the representatives of the three sides. The formation of the committee has made it possible to discuss and push ahead with the nationwide reunification movement, nation's joint reunification functions and reunification functions of different strata in the basic spirit of the joint declaration in close solidarity with the ROK and overseas sides.

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9. US - DPRK Relations

Donga Ilbo ("U.S. CONSERVATIVES PUSH AHEAD WITH EDAD BILL", 2004-12-21) reported that a few US conservatives are planning to push ahead with an EDAD (End Dictatorship, Assist Democracy) bill in an attempt to break down autocratic states including the DPRK. Since the bill is being promoted by US Senator Sam Brownback and Michael Horowitz, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute in the US who drafted the North Korea Human Rights Act, its potential legalization is drawing a great deal of attention. This bill is not targeting the DPRK alone, but the concerned people said that that state would be the priority.

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10. DPRK Military

Korean Central News Agency of the DPRK ("FORUM HELD ON DPRK LEADER KIM JONG-IL'S MILITARY COMMAND", 2004-12-21) reported that a forum of the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces on the greatness of Songun (military-first) politics was held at the 25 April House of Culture Monday (20 December) on the occasion of the 13th anniversary of leader Kim Jong-il's assumption of the supreme commandership of the Korean People's Army and the 10th anniversary of the start of Songun politics by him.

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11. DPRK Economic Reforms

Korea Times ("30 PERCENT OF NORTH KOREANS JOBLESS", 2004-12-21) reported that the DPRK is facing growing unemployment as economic reforms force factories and businesses to shut up shop, according to a report by two UN agencies. The joint report by the World Food Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that 30 percent of DPRK citizens are under- or unemployed. The Rome-based agencies said that economic reforms introduced since July 2002 have required factories to make profits, forcing many into closure and resulting in job losses and reduced working hours.

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12. DPRK - Mongolian Relations

Korean Central News Agency of the DPRK ("NORTH KOREA, MONGOLIA SIGN TRADE AGREEMENT", 2004-12-21) reported that a trade agreement between the governments of the DPRK and Mongolia and an agreement on setting up the Inter-governmental Economic, Trade and Scientific and Technological Consultative Committee were signed at the Mansudae Assembly Hall Tuesday (21 December). The agreements were inked by Vice-Minister of Foreign Trade Ri Ryong-nam on behalf of the DPRK government and Vice-Minister of Industry and Commerce Tsagaandari Enhtuvshin on behalf of the Mongolian government.

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13. Inter - Korean Aid

Korea Times ("FERTILIZER DELIVERY ACCOMPLISHED", 2004-12-21) reported that the ROK

finished delivering a total of 300,000 tons of fertilizer to the DPRK this year, the Korean National Red Cross said Tuesday. "By shipping out 15,000 tons of fertilizer from Yosu port, we've finished sending the 100,000 tons of fertilizer we had promised to the North during the second half of the year," the Red Cross said in a press release.

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14. Japan on DPRK Abductees

The Associated Press ("JAPAN WANTS INFO ON N. KOREA DETAINEES", 2004-12-21) reported that the DPRK should immediately provide information on Japanese citizens it kidnapped in the 1970s and '80s, rather than waiting for Tokyo to set a deadline, the prime minister said Tuesday. "We are reviewing the materials now, and as soon as the review is over, we will clarify what the problems are and urge sincere response from North Korea," Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told reporters.

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15. Japan on DPRK Sanctions

Asahi Shimbun ("63% BACK N. KOREA SANCTIONS", 2004-12-21) reported that an Asahi Shimbun survey over the weekend found that about 63 percent of respondents support economic sanctions against DPRK because of continuing problems over the abduction issue. However, 25 percent said they were against such measures.

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16. DPRK on DPRK-Japanese Relations

Bloomberg ("NORTH KOREA CRITICIZES JAPAN'S NEW DEFENSE POLICY AS AGGRESSIVE", 2004-12-21) reported that the DPRK's government said the new defense policy adopted by Japan is a change to a strategy of aggression toward Japan's neighbors. "This is a move as dangerous as whipping up a war chariot of militarism toward overseas aggression," the official Korean Central News Agency said today, citing a commentary in the Rodong Sinmun newspaper. "The Japanese militarist forces seek to swallow up" the DPRK and PRC as in the past.

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17. DPRK Defectors

Chosun Ilbo ("ETHNIC KOREANS TO RALLY AGAINST CHINA'S STANCE ON REFUGEES", 2004-1--21) reported that ethnic Korean groups and DPRK human rights activists in the US are planning to stage international protests against the PRC's forced repatriation of DPRK defectors in major American cities including Washington DC on Dec. 22. In the US administrative capital, a protest will be held outside the PRC Embassy by DPRK human rights groups including the Defense Forum, with Sen. Sam Brownback attending. More protests will also take place in front of the PRC consulates in San Francisco, New York and Chicago.

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18. Defector on ROK Pastor's Abduction

Joongang Ilbo ("DEFECTOR SAYS KIM ALIVE IN NORTH", 2004-12-21) reported that a DPRK defector said yesterday a ROK pastor is likely alive and in custody of the DPRK government, contradicting claims earlier this week by a National Assembly lawmaker. In an exclusive interview with the JoongAng Ilbo, the DPRK defector said that he met with Kim Dong-shik before he defected to the ROK.

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19. US on Freedom in the Koreas

Chosun Ilbo ("REPORT SHOWS KOREAS POLARIZED IN TERMS OF CIVIL, POLITICAL LIBERTIES", 2004-12-21) reported that in its annual "Freedom in the World: 2005" report released Monday, the US civilian human rights group Freedom House described the ROK as a "free" nation where citizens enjoy the highest level of political rights in the world and the second highest level of civil liberties. The DPRK was designated "not free" and ranked lowest as a result of citizens' lack of political and civil rights. The DPRK received the lowest measure of seven on both counts, sharing this disreputable status with nine other nations -- Myanmar, Cuba, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Turkmenistan.

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20. USFK Troop Realignment

Korea Times ("NO CHANGE IN USFK ROLE WITHOUT CONSENSUS: HILL", 2004-12-21) reported that US Ambassador to the ROK Christopher Hill said Tuesday there would be no change in the duties for American troops stationed here without a consensus between the two traditional allies. "These forces are here in Korea for reasons that have been absolutely mutually agreed, that is, the defense of the Korean peninsula," he told a press conference at the US Embassy's Information Resource Center in Yongsan, Seoul. "Any use of these forces has to be mutually agreed."

(return to top) United Press International ("YONGSAN GARRISON GIVEN TO S. KOREA 'AS IS'", 2004-12-21) reported that the main US military base in the ROK will shrink from 635 acres to only 20 acres as US forces centralize operations on the peninsula. The base commissary, 121st General Hospital, driving range, post exchange and bowling alley will be returned to the ROK "as is," Stars and Stripes reported Monday. (return to top)

21. ROK Energy Supply

Joongang Ilbo ("GOVERNMENT TO TRIM NUCLEAR POWER OVERALL", 2004-12-21) reported that yielding to pressures from environmental groups, the government said yesterday it would reduce the planned percentage of power generation from nuclear plants after 2010. Although the government said yesterday it would maintain its plan to build eight more atomic power plants by 2015, efforts to establish other sources of power would be expanded rapidly, thus cutting the overall reliance on nuclear energy. Currently, 20 atomic power plants are operating.

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22. Koguryo Historical Revisionism

Joongang Ilbo ("GOGURYEO CONFERENCE UNDER WAY IN BEIJING", 2004-12-21) reported that the first joint ROK-PRC academic conference on the history of Goguryeo, an ancient kingdom that existed in Northeast Asia from 37 BC to AD 668, opened in Beijing yesterday. The event, hosted by the ROK's Goguryeo Foundation and the PRC Institute of Social Sciences, includes a series of closed-door seminars, which will be held through tommorow.

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23. Japan Spent Fuel Reprocessing

Aomori ("URANIUM ARRIVES AT NEW PLANT", 2004-12-21) reported that about 31 tons of depleted uranium was delivered to a spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in Rokkashomura, Aomori Prefecture, on Monday. The radioactive material will be used from Tuesday to produce a depleted uranium solution, according to Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd. (JNFL), which operates the reprocessing plant currently under construction. The plant is the first commercial installation of its kind that can separate and extract plutonium and uranium from spent nuclear fuel.

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24. Japan and US Troop Realignment

Agence France Presse ("TOKYO, WASHINGTON PLAN TALKS ON US MILITARY SHIFT IN JAPAN", 2004-12-21) reported that Japan plans to hold ministerial-level security talks with the US in February, focusing on a realignment of US forces on its soil, a senior Japanese official said. There has been reluctance here to accept a US proposal to move from the US state of Washington to Camp Zama outside Tokyo a major US army command which covers the "arch of instability" stretching from the Middle East to East Asia.

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25. Japanese Historical Revisionism

Donga Ilbo ("JAPAN MAY ADOPT DISTORTED HISTORY TEXTBOOKS", None) reported that in Japan, many of the middle school textbooks that distort history might be adopted for the 2006 to 2009 period. The assembly of Saitama Prefecture in Japan approved Meisei University Professor Takahashi Shiro, who was a former vice president of the right-wing nationalist group “Society for Creating New History Textbooks,” as a member of the Saitama Board of Education. This group was harshly criticized by people of conscience in Japan and people in neighboring nations including the ROK and PRC for publishing a textbook that glamorizes Japan’s aggressive wars. The textbook was authorized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2001.

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26. Sino - Japanese Relations

Reuters ("TAIWANESE TO VISIT JAPAN", 2004-12-21) reported that Japan said Monday that it would issue a visa as scheduled for Lee Teng-hui, the former Taiwan president, to visit for sightseeing despite angry protests from the PRC. "We plan to issue a visa as scheduled," said the chief cabinet

secretary, Hiroyuki Hosoda. He did not say when Mr. Lee would get his visa.

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27. Sino - US Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINA DEFENDS `ONE CHILD' BIRTH LIMITS AGAINST U.S. CRITICISM", 2004-12-21) reported that the PRC on Tuesday rejected US complaints that its strict birth controls encourage forced abortions, saying the regulations that limit most urban couples to one child are necessary for the country's economic health. "Our immense population has exerted great pressure on us and our economic development and I think everyone understands the necessity and inevitability of our adopting the one-child policy," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao.

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28. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINA SAYS ANTI-SECESSION LAW AIMED AT TAIWAN BUT DENIES IT WILL LEAD TO MILITARY ACTION", 2004-12-21) reported that the PRC said Tuesday that a proposed anti-secession law announced last week is aimed at promoting self-ruled Taiwan's unification with the mainland but rejected suggestions that it would lead to military action by Beijing. The law announced Friday was proposed with "the sole purpose of containing Taiwan's splittist activities," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao. He said it was meant to promote "the peace and stability of the Taiwan Straits and at some point the peaceful reunification" of the two sides.

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29. US on Cross Strait Relations

Agence France Presse ("US CONFIRMS IT IS POSTING MILITARY OFFICERS TO TAIWAN MISSION", 2004-12-21) reported that the US will assign serving military officers to its de facto embassy in Taiwan for the first time since 1979 in a reversal of a longstanding policy, a spokeswoman said. The American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), which handles civil exchanges with the island in the absence of diplomatic ties, confirmed an article to be published Wednesday by Jane's Defense Weekly. The AIT said it will use serving military officers -- instead of retired officers working as contractors -- to coordinate defense assistance to Taiwan.

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30. ROK, Japan and Cross Strait Relations

Asia Pulse ("TAIWAN, JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA MUST UNITE AGAINST CHINA: VP LU", 2004-12-21) reported that Vice President Annette Lu called for the formation Monday of an alliance of Japan, ROK and Taiwan to stand up to the PRC's nefarious schemes. Meeting Japanese business leader Uichiro Niwa, chairman of ITOCHU Corporation, Lu said the world, attracted by the PRC's large market, has invested huge amounts in the PRC without realizing that it is developing into a military power with designs on other countries' territory. To contain the PRC's expansion, Lu said Japan, the ROK and Taiwan -- the three democracies sharing Confucianism in East Asia -- should form a triangle to check the PRC's power.

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31. PRC Economy

Agence France Presse ("CHINA TO REMAIN MAJOR ENGINE OF GROWTH", 2004-12-21) reported that some economists are calling it a "soft landing." Others, no landing at all. The PRC expects to record economic growth of at least 9 percent this year and, according to many forecasts, will see only a slightly lower rate in 2005. The government in Beijing is attempting to rein in the expansion of the world's fastest-growing major economy to more sustainable levels by boosting interest rates and changing other policies. But booming trade, investment and domestic spending ensure that the PRC will remain a major engine of growth.

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32. PRC on Intellectual Property Law

Kyodo News ("CHINA SPELLS OUT PUNISHMENT FOR COPYRIGHT, PIRACY OFFENSES", 2004-12-21) reported that the PRC said Tuesday it is lowering its criteria for intellectual property rights violations and spelling out punishment for offenders. But diplomats pushing for better rights protection still plan to study the new rules to see if they have any teeth.

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