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I. United States

1. DPRK Nuclear and Iran

Yonhap ("N. KOREA DENIES SALES OF NUCLEAR-RELATED MATERIALS TO IRAN ", 2004-11-23) reported that DPRK on Tuesday dismissed as "misinformation" recent media reports that it allegedly sold fluorine gas to Iran, and claimed the reports were to provide justification for a preemptive attack against it. A commentary carried by the DPRK Central News Agency claimed news reports about the secret sale of fluorine gas, a key ingredient in nuclear weapons, to Iran is "another farce orchestrated to tarnish the image" of the North in the international arena.

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2. DPRK Regime

Reuters ("EXPERTS SAY N.KOREA'S KIM NOT LOSING HIS GRIP", 2004-11-23) reported that anecdotal evidence of public criticism of DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il's rule may point to less control over society after market reforms began but does not mean Kim is losing his grip, DPRK experts said Tuesday. The North Tuesday repeated its demand for the withdrawal of what it called a hostile policy by the United States as a condition for resuming six-party talks on its nuclear programs, continuing a campaign that is believed to be orchestrated by Kim and mounted by an elite corps of loyal bureaucrats and diplomats.

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3. DPRK-ROK Border

Joon-Ang Ilbo ("CHINESE TROOPS SET UP CAMP ON NORTH'S BORDER", 2004-11-23) reported that satellite surveillance photos indicate that a 10,000-man PRC army division is making preparations for a prolonged deployment along the PRC-DPRK border, sources in Washington said. The sources said on Monday that the photos show that the PRC division, which in September moved from the interior to the border area close to DPRK, was in the process of building winter barracks. "These forces are elite combat soldiers and are now being positioned along the Chinese-North Korean border," the sources said.

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4. DRPK Refugees

Yonhap ("S. KOREAN ACTIVIST HELD IN CHINA FOR AIDING N. KOREAN REFUGEES ", 2004-1-23) reported that a ROK human rights activist working for DPRK refugees in PRC has been placed in PRC custody, an official at a civic organization here claimed Tuesday. Hong Jin-hee, 36, was arrested last Monday while organizing an attempt by a group of DPRK refugees to seek asylum at a foreign diplomatic mission in PRC, according the official at the Democracy Network Against North Korean Gulag.

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5. DPRK Economic Reforms

BBC News ("N KOREA REFORMS HIT FOOD PRICES", 2004-11-23) reported that a UN report says that economic reforms in DPRK have led to skyrocketing food prices, leaving most families unable to get enough to eat. The report concludes that despite the best harvest in 10 years, DPRK will still need major help from abroad. Issued by the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the report said that the price of rice has increased five-fold in the past year. A single kilo now costs 30% the average monthly wage.

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6. DPRK on US Election

Yonhap ("N. KOREA SAYS U.S. AIRED BIN LADEN TAPE TO HELP BUSH CAMPAIGN ", 2004-11-23) reported that the United States deliberately aired a video of Osama bin Laden just days before the Nov. 2 U.S. presidential election to help George W. Bush win, DPRK said on Tuesday, citing comments from Cuban President Fidel Castro. In an interview on Nov. 16 with the Korean Central Broadcasting Station, the Cuban president "disclosed that the video of the al Qaeda leader, aired on Oct. 29, was a deliberate broadcast to help the reelection of Bush," the television, monitored in Seoul, said.

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7. DPRK Human Rights Allegations

Associated Press ("GROUP URGES INVESTIGATION INTO NORTH KOREA GAS CHAMBER ALLEGATIONS", 2004-11-23) reported that a U.S.-based Jewish human rights group on Tuesday called for investigations into claims that DPRK conducted gas chamber experiments on political prisoners. In a news conference in Seoul, Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, relayed summaries of his interviews with three DPRK defectors who allegedly provided first-person accounts of the gassing of political prisoners beginning in the 1970s and continuing until 2002.

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8. US on DRPK Human Rights

Yonhap ("U.S. CONGRESS MULLS PUNISHING N.K. ON HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE: LAWMAKER ", 2004-11-23) reported that the U.S. Congress is taking DPRK's human rights abuse seriously and is

considering legislation for additional economic sanctions on the communist regime, a ROK opposition lawmaker claimed Tuesday. A number of U.S. congressmen also believe that DPRK has 8,000 reprocessed fuel rods, Rep. Park Jin of the main opposition Grand National Party said.

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9. US on DPRK Nuclear Programs

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. WON'T INSIST ON TERM 'CVID'", 2004-11-23) reported that citing a top U.S. government official, Japan's Asahi Shimbun reported Tuesday that the United States would not insist on using the phrase, "Complete, Verifiable and Irreversible Dismantlement (CVID)," which it has used when urging DPRK to abandon its nuclear development programs. The official, however, reportedly said that this did not mean the U.S. would give up the CVID principle, but just that it would not stick to the phrase in the future.

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10. ROK on DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("ROH IMPLIES FATE OF SIX-WAY TALKS RESTS ON N.K.", 2004-11-23) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun expressed his hope on Tuesday that DPRK would assume a more sincere stance to build trust in the six-party talks that were conceived to resolve its nuclear dispute. President Roh said during a meeting with Korean residents living in Hawaii that U.S President George W. Bush had made it clear during their bilateral discussions on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum that if the North were to give up its nuclear ambitions, it would be able to gain security guarantees and be fully embraced by the international community.

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11. ROK on DPRK Border

Yonhap ("MILITARY IMPOSES 'LIGHT' PUNISHMENT ON ARMY OFFICERS OVER BORDER FENCE CUTS ", 2004-11-23) reported that the ROK military "lightly" disciplined Army officers over last month's breach of wire fences along the border with DPRK, an official said Tuesday. On Oct. 26, three holes were found in barbed-wire fences in the midsection of the 248-kilometer land border, initially prompting fears of infiltration by DPRK agents.

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12. ROK, US on DPRK

Pacific Rim Bureau ("SEOUL-WASHINGTON DIFFERENCES OVER NORTH KOREA PERSIST", 2004-11-23) reported that fresh from an Asia-Pacific gathering and leaders' meetings with President Bush, the Japanese and ROK governments urged DPRK to seize the opportunity to return to talks aimed at resolving the crisis over its nuclear weapons program. Although it appears that the two U.S. allies in Northeast Asia are working in unison with the Bush administration to tackle the standoff, there are growing signs of division between Washington and Seoul.

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13. Japan on DPRK

The Associated Press ("KOIZUMI URGES N. KOREA TO RESUME TALKS", 2004-11-23) reported that Japan's prime minister called on DPRK Monday to quickly resume negotiations on ending its nuclear weapons program, as support grew for Japan to take a tougher line against the communist country. "Through the six-party talks, we are trying to convince North Korea that there's no reason to possess nuclear weapons, but every reason to get rid of them," Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told a press conference after concluding a brief state visit to Chile.

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14. Russia on DPRK

Yonhap ("N. KOREA MUST REJOIN IAEA: RUSSIAN ENVOY ", 2004-11-23) reported that Russia's top envoy to ROK Tuesday urged DPRK to rejoin the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Speaking at a "political academy" meeting at the National Assembly in Seoul, Ambassador Teymuraz Ramishvili said that "half measures" were not the answer to Pyongyang's alleged nuclear program.

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15. Mongolia on DPRK Refugees

The Korea Times ("MONGOLIAN ENVOY DOUBTS REPORT ON NK REFUGEES", 2004-11-23) reported that Mongolia's top envoy to ROK on Tuesday questioned a recent New York Times report that his country intends to continue receiving DPRK refugees, saying there is a ``considerable" difference between the article and his government's position on the issue. In the article last week, The New York Times quoted Mongolia's Foreign Minister Tsend Munh-Orgil as saying that his government would continue its policy of receiving DPRK refugees at border crossings.

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16. UN Official in ROK, DPRK

Yonhap ("TOP U.N. OFFICIAL DUE IN SEOUL AFTER TRIP TO NORTH KOREA SEOUL", 2004-11-23) reported that United Nations General Assembly President Jean Ping was to arrive in Seoul on Tuesday after a trip to DPRK. Ping, who is also Gabon's foreign minister, flew back to Beijing on Saturday after a five-day visit to Pyongyang that included meetings with DPRK's No. 2 leader, Kim Yong-nam, and Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun.

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17. ROK-DPRK Athletics

Dong-A Ilbo ("KOREA AND JAPAN RECEIVE TOP SEEDS AND 50-50 CHANCE FOR SOUTH KOREA TO PLAY NORTH KOREA", 2004-11-23) reported that the ROK may play against DPRK in the final round of 2006 World Cup Germany. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced on November 23 that ROK and Japan received the top seeds, based on the results of preliminary matches and the final round of the 2002 World Cup. Saudi Arabia and Iran received the second seeds. Bahrain and Uzbekistan received the third seeds, and DPRK and Kuwait the fourth.

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18. ROK Troops in Iraq

Agence France-Presse ("SOUTH KOREAN GOVERNMENT AGREES TO EXTEND IRAQ TROOP DEPLOYMENT BY YEAR", 2004-11-23) reported that the ROK government agreed to extend the deployment of thousands of its troops in Iraq by one year until the end of 2005, officials said. The decision to extend the mission, due to expire at the end of this year, was made at a cabinet meeting led by Prime Minister Lee Hae-Chan, the prime minister's office said. Some 2,800 ROK troops are based in Arbil, a Kurdish-controlled town in northern Iraq, on a rehabilitation and humanitarian mission. Another contingent of more than 700 is set to join them soon.

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19. ROK Mini Radar

The Korea Times ("NATION'S FIRST MINI RADAR DEVELOPED", 2004-11-23) reported that a state-run defense research center has succeeded in developing a small-sized synthetic aperture radar (SAR) for the first time in Korean history. The device enables high image resolution of military aircraft day and night, the Defense Ministry said Tuesday. The Agency for Defense Development (ADD) began developing the Korean Miniature SAR (KOMSAR) in 2002 with purely domestic technology and materials to overcome the shortcomings of current radar equipment, which doesn't operate well at night and during rainy seasons.

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20. ROK on US Election

Yonhap ("EXPERTS PREDICT WORSE INTER-KOREAN TIES AFTER BUSH'S REELECTION ", 2004-11-23) reported that about 36 percent of ROK experts think U.S. President George W. Bush's reelection will have a negative effect on inter-Korean relations, a survey showed Tuesday. The Advisory Council on Democratic and Peaceful Unification said it polled 229 experts at colleges and research institutes as well as journalists and civic activists. It found that 35.9 percent of them were negative about the prospects for inter-Korean ties after Bush's reelection.

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21. ROK Students on US

Yonhap ("STUDENTS SEE U.S. BAD FOR S-N UNIFICATION, GOOD FOR SECURITY: POLL ", 2004-11-23) reported that ROK youth tend to see the United States as the biggest obstacle for their nation's approach toward DPRK, but when security is concerned they turn to the U.S. as a safeguard against the communist country, a civic poll found Tuesday. The survey of 1,161 students in Seoul's 12 universities demonstrates that they have contradictory sentiments toward the U.S., Young Korean Academy, a progressive civic organization that conducted the survey, said.

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22. ROK-PRC Relations

Asia Pulse ("CHINA, S.KOREA SET TO LAUNCH ANOTHER ROUND OF RICE TALKS", 2004-11-23)

reported that in order to resolve the dispute concerning ROK's rice import system, PRC and ROK are expected to launch another round of talks, which will focus on whether ROK will open up its rice market according to World Trade Organization regulations. PRC officials hope that ROK will gradually open its rice market.

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23. ROK on Chinese Language

Joon-Ang Ilbo ("UNIVERSITY CITES NEED FOR CHINESE SKILLS", 2004-11-23) reported that Korea University said yesterday that a test on Chinese characters will become a graduation requirement for students entering this year. The students can take the test at any time during their stay at the school. "China has become an economic giant, but our students are less and less competent in the language," Kim Chang-bae, education support manager of Korea University, said. "Proficiency in Chinese characters is essential for understanding the Korean language." He said large business groups, such as Samsung and SK, have recently begun looking at Chinese character proficiency in their employment criteria.

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24. PRC in Cuba

Agence France Presse ("CHINA PRESIDENT IN CASH-STRAPPED CUBA TO MEET CASTRO", 2004-11-23) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao arrived in Havana to meet his Cuban counterpart, Fidel Castro for talks expected to bring badly needed investments to the financially strapped island. "We sincerely wish that the Cuban people march without surrender on the road to building socialism," the PRC leader said. Despite differences on economic policies between the reformist PRC president and his staunchly communist Cuban counterpart, the two sides are expected to sign crucial investment deals.

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25. PRC Union in Wal-Mart

The Associated Press ("WAL-MART CONCEDES CHINA CAN MAKE UNIONS", 2004-11-23) reported that under pressure from the PRC labor federation, the world's biggest retailer, Wal-Mart Stores Inc., said Tuesday it would permit branches of the official Communist Party-controlled union in its PRC stores if employees requested it. "Should associates request formation of a union, Wal-Mart China would respect their wishes and honor its obligation under PRC's Trade Union Law," said the Bentonville, Ark.-based company in a statement faxed to news media.

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26. US on Japanese Missiles

Agence France-Presse ("US AGREES TO JAPAN'S LICENSED PRODUCTION OF PAC-3 MISSILES", 2004-11-23) reported that the United States has agreed in principle to Japan's licensed production of US-developed surface-to-air missiles which will become the core of a joint missile defense system, a report said. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd., the top Japanese defense contractor, is expected to start building Patriot Advanced Capability 3 (PAC-3) missiles on license from US Lockheed Martin Corp. in the year to March 2006, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun said.

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27. Japanese-US-Russian Relations

Agence France-Presse ("KOIZUMI WINDS UP SOUTH AMERICAN TRIP WITHOUT DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH", 2004-11-23) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has wound up his four-day trip to Chile, failing to bridge the gap with PRC over their war history or make progress in a territorial dispute with Russia. Koizumi attended the two-day Asia-Pacific summit over the weekend and held talks with key regional partners, including US President George W. Bush, Russian President Vladimir Putin and PRC President Hu Jintao.

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28. NE Asia Joint Oil Purchasing

The Korea Herald ("KOREA, JAPAN, CHINA PUSH FOR JOINT OIL PURCHASING", 2004-11-23) reported that it will not be long before Asia's top oil importers join forces to eliminate the premium added to their purchases from the Middle East, the head of the presidential committee on Northeast Asian affairs said yesterday. Moon Chung-in, chairman of the Committee on Northeast Asian Cooperative Initiative said that Korea, Japan and PRC were getting closer to striking a deal that would allow them to make joint purchases of crude oil by the three countries that rely on overseas natural resources.

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29. APEC Forum

Korea Herald ("APEC PROMISES TO BOOST FREE TRADE, ANTITERRORISM", 2004-11-23) reported that APEC leaders wrapped up their annual summit promising to strengthen trade liberalization and fight terrorism and corruption but excluded any reference to the DPRK nuclear standoff even though five participants of the six-party talks were present. The 21 members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum concluded their two-day summit in this Chilean capital on Sunday by adopting a joint statement in which they agreed to launch the "Santiago Initiative for Expanded Trade in APEC" aimed at liberalizing and facilitating trade and investment.

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