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I. United States

- 1. [US on DPRK Nuclear Talks](#)
- 2. [ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks](#)
- 3. [ROK on DPRK Nuclear Issue](#)
- 4. [DPRK on Inter - Korean Relations](#)
- 5. [ROK on Sino - DPRK Relations](#)
- 6. [Russia, US on DPRK Nuclear Issue](#)
- 7. [Japan on DPRK Abductees](#)
- 8. [Japan on DPRK Sanctions](#)
- 9. [DPRK on Abductees](#)
- 10. [US Military Action Against the DPRK](#)
- 11. [ROK on Unification](#)
- 12. [ROK Air Defense Training](#)
- 13. [Russo - DPRK Relations](#)
- 14. [DPRK Online Education](#)
- 15. [DPRK Defectors](#)
- 16. [Inter - Korean Athletics](#)
- 17. [ROK - US Military Alliance](#)
- 18. [US - ROK Military Relations](#)
- 19. [US Arms Sales to the ROK](#)
- 20. [ROK - Japanese Relations](#)
- 21. [Bird Flu Issue](#)

22. [Yukos Auction](#)
23. [Japan on Lee Visa Issue](#)
24. [PRC on Lee Visa Issue](#)
25. [Sino - Japanese Relations](#)
26. [Japanese Constitutional Amendment](#)
27. [US on Cross Strait Relations](#)
28. [ROK and Cross Strait Relations](#)
29. [Grenada and Cross Strait Relations](#)
30. [PRC Military](#)
31. [PRC Freedom of the Press](#)
32. [Hong Kong Privatization Plan](#)

II. Japan

- 33. [Japan Antiwar Activists Acquittal](#)
- 34. [DPRK Defectors](#)

[Preceding NAPSNet Report](#)

I. United States

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Korea Times ("US STATE DEPARTMENT DOUBTS 6-WAY TALKS", 2004-12-22) 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's Performance and Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 2004 said its goal of winning the DPRK's agreement to verifiable dismantlement of its nuclear programs has failed so far, with Pyongyang refusing to engage in substantive discussions. "Continuing stalemate could call into question utility of either bilateral or multilateral negotiations as a means to resolve crisis, and has inhibited progress on the ballistic missile issue," it said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Financial Times ("S KOREA APPEALS FOR PATIENCE TOWARDS PYONGYANG", 2004-12-22) reported that the ROK on Wednesday appealed to its neighbors to persevere with a softly-softly approach towards the DPRK, amid increasing frustration that Pyongyang is not just stalling over nuclear negotiations but actively antagonizing the other parties. As the impasse over dismantling the DPRK's nuclear programs drags on, prompting discussion of alternative ways to force Kim Jong-il's regime to address the nuclear issue, Seoul has insisted the six-party talks remain the right approach.

[\(return to top\)](#)

3. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Yonhap ("MINISTER URGES US, NK TO MAKE 'HISTORIC CHOICE' OVER NUKES", 2004-12-22) reported that a ROK presidential envoy called on the DPRK and the US Wednesday to compromise to end the ongoing global standoff over the DPRK's nuclear weapons program. The envoy, Unification Minister Chung Dong-young, discussed the tension over the DPRK's nuclear program in a speech at Beijing University. "We expect North Korea, the United States and other participants in six-way talks to make a historic choice and decision."

[\(return to top\)](#) Agence France Presse ("SOUTH KOREA SAYS 2005 A CROSSROAD FOR NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR STAND-OFF", 2004-12-22) reported that the ROK acknowledged that little had been achieved in three rounds of talks to end the impasse over the DPRK's nuclear drive and said 2005 would prove a crossroads year for the issue. "Unfortunately real negotiations to settle the North Korea nuclear issue have not begun yet," ROK Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young said in a speech at Beijing University. "In 2005 we will be at a crossroad: we can either find a breakthrough in resolving the matter or we can face a crisis situation." [\(return to top\)](#) Kyodo ("S. KOREA MINISTER SAYS 6-NATION NUKE TALKS LACK 'REAL NEGOTIATION'", 2004-12-22) reported that the ROK, a participant in the stalled six-party talks over the DPRK's nuclear ambitions, believes "real negotiation" has not started despite three formal rounds of discussion since August 2003, ROK Reunification Minister Chung Dong Young said Wednesday. To break the impasse, Chung said the US should agree to a security guarantee for the DPRK and lift economic sanctions. And the DPRK should abandon its weapons and accept international inspectors, Chung said. [\(return to top\)](#)

4. DPRK on Inter - Korean Relations

Yonhap ("N. KOREA SAYS SOUTH KOREA AGGRAVATES INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS", 2004-1-22) reported that the DPRK accused the ROK of worsening inter-Korean relations by strengthening its alliance with the US instead of joining hands with the DPRK, a pro-DPRK newspaper said Wednesday. Choson Sinbo, run by a Pyongyang-aligned organization of ethnic Korean residents of Japan, said inter-Korean relations were improving as recently as summer when the ROK delivered relief goods to Ryongchon.

[\(return to top\)](#)

5. ROK on Sino - DPRK Relations

Kyodo News ("S. KOREA ASKS CHINA TO URGE N. KOREA TO RETURN TO 6-PARTY TALKS", 2004-12-22) reported that the ROK on Tuesday sought the PRC's help in pressing the DPRK to return to the six-nation talks on its nuclear arms program, ROK government officials said. ROK President Roh Moo Hyun made the request in his personal letter to PRC President Hu Jintao that was delivered by ROK Unification Minister Chung Dong Young as Roh's special envoy.

[\(return to top\)](#)

6. Russia, US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

TASS ("RUSSIA, US NOTE IMPORTANCE OF KOREAN PENINSULA NUCLEAR FREE STATUS", 2004-12-22) reported that Russia and the US noted the importance of preventing the appearance of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula, a Foreign Ministry official told Itar-Tass after the talks on Tuesday between Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Alexeyev and US Ambassador to Russia Alexander Vershbow. Russia "consistently calls for a political settlement of the nuclear problem of the peninsula in the course of six-party talks by providing safety guarantees to North Korea," Alexeyev said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

7. Japan on DPRK Abductees

Kyodo ("JAPAN TO CALL ON N. KOREA FOR ANOTHER PROBE ON 10 JAPANESE CITIZENS", 2004-12-22) reported that Japan plans to ask the DPRK to conduct another investigation into the fates of 10 Japanese citizens the Japanese government recognizes as victims of abductions by the DPRK, because there are many questionable points in the results of its latest probe, a Foreign Ministry source said Wednesday. However, Japan is unlikely to set a deadline for DPRK to conclude another round of investigations, but will ask the DPRK to conduct it promptly and sincerely, the source said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

8. Japan on DPRK Sanctions

Kyodo News ("82% OF LAWMAKERS FAVOR ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON N. KOREA: POLL", 2004-12-22) reported that eighty-two percent of Diet members in Japan favor the imposition of economic sanctions against the DPRK as soon as possible, according to a survey released Wednesday by a group representing families and supporters of people kidnapped by the DPRK. The survey was sent to all 721 members of the House of Representatives and House of Councillors on Dec. 13. Of them, 381, or 52.8 percent, responded.

[\(return to top\)](#)

9. DPRK on Abductees

The Associated Press ("N KOREA THREATENS TO STOP SEARCH FOR JAPANESE ABDUCTEES", 2004-12-22) reported that the DPRK threatened on Wednesday to halt an investigation into Japanese citizens kidnapped by the DPRK decades ago, escalating a dispute over the alleged remains of a Japanese abductee. On Wednesday, the DPRK accused "ultra-right conservative forces" in Japan of faking the test results to "drive the (North)-Japan hostile relations into an extreme phase," said Rodong Sinmun, the DPRK's main state-run newspaper. As a result, "it is impossible for the fact-finding committee to perform its duty," the newspaper's commentary, carried by the DPRK's official news agency, KCNA, said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

10. US Military Action Against the DPRK

Yonhap ("CHANCES OF U.S. MILITARY ACTION AGAINST NORTH KOREA SLIM: OFFICIAL", 2004-12-22) reported that chances are slim that the US will take military action against the DPRK as neighboring countries won't agree to such a step, the head of a state-run think tank said Wednesday. "Without consent from neighboring countries, it is impossible for the US to take military action on the Korean Peninsula and neighboring countries do not want it," said Han Tae-kyu, head of the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security.

[\(return to top\)](#)

11. ROK on Unification

Korea Herald ("GNP UNVEILS UNIFICATION POLICY: CALLS FOR ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN N.K. NUKE AND RIGHTS ISSUES", 2004-12-22) reported that the main opposition Grand National Party yesterday announced a tentative plan looking 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. The GNP's new unification plan includes various practical measures to support the DPRK and to urge it to give up its nuclear program, referring to its proposals as a "North Korean version of the Marshall Plan."

[\(return to top\)](#)

12. ROK Air Defense Training

Korea Herald ("AIR DEFENSE TRAINING IN SEOUL TODAY", 2004-12-22) reported that ROK military will conduct a simulated air defense training exercise against possible enemy air infiltration between 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. today in Seoul and neighboring cities, officials at the Joint Chiefs of Staff said yesterday. A ROK F-4E Phantom fighter will chase and simulate firing at and bringing down two UH-1H helicopters pretending to be DPRK AN-2 aircraft in the southern airfield.

[\(return to top\)](#)

13. Russo - DPRK Relations

ITAR-TASS ("RUSSIA-DPRK FISHERIES PANEL GOES INTO SESSION IN VLADIVOSTOK", 2004-1-22) reported that the Commission for Cooperation between Russia and the DPRK has gone into session here on Wednesday. The commission members are to work out a joint plan of measures for cooperation between Russia and the DPRK in the fishing industry in 2005. The commission will be at work for one week.

[\(return to top\)](#)

14. DPRK Online Education

Joongang Ilbo ("THE 'GREAT EDUCATOR' POPS UP ONLINE, AGAIN", 2004-12-22) reported that the Web site of Kim Il Sung Open University, a distance learning program operated by the DPRK, was found to be accessible "again" by the ROK. The Ministry of Information and Communication blocked the site last month, as well as 30 other sites that the government considers to be spreading "pro-DPRK" ideas. "This is the Web site that we blocked on Nov. 17, but it is available again because the Internet protocol address changed," said a spokesman for the ministry. The spokesman said that the National Intelligence Service and police are working to discover how the site became available to ROK citizens again.

[\(return to top\)](#)

15. DPRK Defectors

The Associated Press ("TWO NORTH KOREANS ENTER SWEDEN'S EMBASSY IN VIETNAM", 2004-12-22) reported that two people claiming to be from the DPRK have taken refuge in the Swedish Embassy in Vietnam, the Foreign Ministry said Wednesday. "They entered the embassy late Monday night local time," Foreign Ministry spokesman Jesper Liedholm said, adding he wasn't sure if the

pair were seeking political asylum or trying to escape from the DPRK via Vietnam.

[\(return to top\)](#) Donga Ilbo ("PROTESTS AGAINST FORCIBLY SENDING BACK NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS OCCUR IN SIX NATIONS", 2004-12-22) reported that about 50 members of DPRK supportive organizations of Dooru Hana Mission, DPRK Defectors' Human Rights Alliance, and others held a protest at Sejongro in Seoul on December 22. Their slogans protested against the PRC's forcibly sending back of DPRK defectors to the DPRK. The protest took place simultaneously in 12 other cities in six nations: the US, Japan, Canada, England, Australia, and the ROK. [\(return to top\)](#)

16. Inter - Korean Athletics

Joongang Ilbo ("TWO KOREAS AND CHINA MEETING FOR PING-PONG", 2004-12-22) reported that for two days, starting on Dec. 29, 15 table tennis athletes, five each from both Koreas and the PRC will compete in Beijing in a three-way tournament, the first time such an event has been held. The tournament is expected to act as a catalyst that could lead to further sports exchanges between the ROK and the DPRK.

[\(return to top\)](#)

17. ROK - US Military Alliance

Korea Herald ("HILL STRESSES AGREEMENT ON USFK ROLE", 2004-12-22) reported that moving to calm growing concerns here, US Ambassador Christopher Hill stressed yesterday that US forces stationed in the ROK will not be deployed unilaterally to handle regional conflicts outside the peninsula. He said ROK and the US need to reach agreement on a US plan to transform US forces here into units that can be deployed quickly in regional conflicts. "I cannot foresee use of these forces when there is not a consensus for how they should be used," Hill said at a luncheon meeting with reporters.

[\(return to top\)](#)

18. US - ROK Military Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("URI LEADERS GET TO KNOW LAPORTE", 2004-12-22) reported that General Leon LaPorte, commander of the US Forces Korea, said yesterday in a meeting with Lee Bu-young, chairman of the governing Uri Party, and 10 Uri Party lawmakers that anti-US sentiment in the ROK did not bother him because he was proud defending a democracy where such freedom of expression is possible.

[\(return to top\)](#)

19. US Arms Sales to the ROK

Yonhap ("S. KOREA BIGGEST ASIAN IMPORTER OF US ARMS", 2004-12-22) reported that the ROK purchased \$3.7 billion of US defense products and services in 2000-2003, becoming the biggest Asian purchaser of American arms, a US Congressional report showed Wednesday. During the calendar years 1996-1999, the ROK imported \$2.5 billion in US arms and services, according to the report by the Congressional Research Service. During the period, the ROK also topped other Asian nations, such as Taiwan, Japan and Singapore, the report said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

20. ROK - Japanese Relations

Kyodo News ("S. KOREAN OFFICIAL HINTS AT NEED FOR APOLOGY FROM JAPAN", 2004-12-22) reported that a senior ROK official visiting the PRC this week said Wednesday that northeast Asia needs a "deep apology" for historical problems, and he hinted it should come from Japan. "As reconciliation in Europe was made possible by Germany's reflection of its past deeds, northeast Asia also needs a reflection and a deep apology for the history of the 20th century, which was marked by invasions and outside rule," ROK Reunification Minister Chung Dong Young said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

21. Bird Flu Issue

Agence France Presse ("DUCKS CULLED AFTER SUSPECTED BIRD FLU OUTBREAK IN SOUTH KOREA", 2004-12-22) reported that thousands of ducks have been culled at a ROK livestock farm which reported a suspected outbreak of bird flu, officials said. The culling took place in Gwangju, 320 kilometers (200 miles) south of Seoul, where ducks showed symptoms similar to the avian disease, the agriculture ministry said. About 9,000 ducks have been destroyed at the farm since quarantine officials detected the suspected H5N2 strain of avian influenza on December 1, it said, adding an isolation zone had been set up around the farm.

[\(return to top\)](#) The Associated Press ("JAPAN HAS FIRST CASE OF BIRD FLU IN HUMAN", 2004-12-22) reported that Japan reported its first case of bird flu in a human on Wednesday - a man who got the disease from birds. Bird flu has swept through farms across Asia this year, forcing officials to cull more than 100 million birds. The man caught the bird flu virus while disinfecting a contaminated poultry farm in western Kyoto during an outbreak in Japan earlier this year, the Health Ministry said. [\(return to top\)](#) Yonhap ("JAPAN BANS POULTRY IMPORTS FROM S. KOREA", 2004-12-22) reported that the Japanese government on Wednesday decided to ban poultry imports from the ROK following a new outbreak of bird flu in its neighboring country, a Japanese media reported. The announcement follows the ROK's report of a suspected case of a mild variant of the bird influenza at a duck farm in Gwangju, 329 kilometers south of Seoul. [\(return to top\)](#)

22. Yukos Auction

The Associated Press ("PUTIN: YUKOS AUCTION COMPLIED WITH LAW", 2004-12-22) reported that President Vladimir Putin affirmed the legality of the \$9.3 billion sale of the crown jewel of the Yukos oil empire to a mysterious company, suggesting Tuesday that the subsidiary's new owners could eventually link up with another Russian energy company - or even a PRC conglomerate. Putin's comments, his first since little-known bidder BaikalFinansGroup snapped up Yukos' Yuganskneftegaz unit in an auction Sunday, appeared to confirm market expectations that the heart of Yukos would ultimately wind up in the hands of state-controlled natural gas giant Gazprom.

[\(return to top\)](#) Los Angeles Times ("PUTIN HINTS STATE UTILITY MAY GET YUKOS UNIT", 2004-12-22) reported that the previously unknown firm that made the winning bid for beleaguered Yukos Oil Co.'s core production facility will probably make it available to the state-controlled Gazprom natural gas company, Russian President Vladimir V. Putin indicated Tuesday. Speaking at a news conference in Germany, Putin endorsed the forced auction. He also revealed that he had detailed knowledge of the buyers and the property's probable future, placing himself in the middle of an international controversy over the sale. [\(return to top\)](#)

23. Japan on Lee Visa Issue

Los Angeles Times ("JAPAN ISSUES VISA TO TAIWAN'S LEE", 2004-12-22) reported that an aging politician's desire to visit his alma mater has turned into a diplomatic confrontation between Japan and the PRC, adding one more irritant to an already strained relationship between Asia's biggest powers. The PRC government had warned Japan that it faced a "fierce reaction" if it allowed Lee to visit, saying he would use the occasion to promote Taiwanese separatism.

[\(return to top\)](#)

24. PRC on Lee Visa Issue

Kyodo ("CHINA CONVEYS 'STRONG DISSATISFACTION' TO JAPAN OVER VISA", 2004-12-22) reported that PRC Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei summoned Japanese Ambassador to the PRC Koreshige Anami on Wednesday to convey the PRC's "strong dissatisfaction and protest" over Japan's issuance of a visa to former Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui, the Japanese Embassy said. But the PRC did not demand the canceling of the entry visa, and called on Japan to prevent Lee from engaging in political activities during his visit, in a move indicating it will no longer try to prevent the trip from taking place, according to embassy officials.

[\(return to top\)](#)

25. Sino - Japanese Relations

Agence France Presse ("JAPAN, CHINA IN NEW TUG OF WAR FOR DOMINANCE OF ASIA", 2004-12-22) reported that Japan and the PRC have entered a new phase in their fight to be Asia's dominant power, with a row over Japan's visa for Taiwan's veteran leader indicating Tokyo will no longer back down to its neighbor, analysts said Wednesday. "Through the visa issue, Japan appears to be showing it is an independent country and sticks to its policies without asking about a third country's wishes," said Hidekazu Kawai, a professor of international politics at Gakushuin University in Tokyo.

[\(return to top\)](#)

26. Japanese Constitutional Amendment

Donga Ilbo ("KOIZUMI PUSHES AHEAD WITH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT", 2004-12-22) reported that as the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) launched a draft committee for constitutional amendment on December 21, the move for a constitutional amendment in Japanese political circles is gathering pace. The coming amendment is expected to include provisions reflecting the changes of the times, such as allowing women emperors, rights for good environment, and equal rights for men and women. However, the crux of the issue is the amendment of Article Nine of Japanese constitution.

[\(return to top\)](#)

27. US on Cross Strait Relations

Agence France Presse ("US SIGNS 99-YEAR LEASE FOR SITE OF NEW DE FACTO EMBASSY IN TAIWAN", 2004-12-22) reported that the US signed a 99-year lease on a site for its new de facto

embassy in Taiwan, an event described as a milestone in relations. "This is an important milestone in relations between the peoples of Taiwan and the United States, one that has been in the making for over 10 years," Douglas Pall, head of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), said at the signing ceremony with Taiwanese authorities.

[\(return to top\)](#) Asia Pulse ("CONGRESS WILL CALL SHOTS IN WAR AGAINST CHINA FOR TAIWAN: US", 2004-12-22) reported that the US Congress will decide whether the US should go to war with the PRC should it attack Taiwan, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said here Monday. In an interview with the PBS television station, the number two man at the State Department said the Taiwan Relations Act requires the US to maintain sufficient force in the Pacific to be able to deter attack but does not require the country to defend Taiwan should it come under attack from the mainland. He added that the power to declare war rests with the Congress. [\(return to top\)](#) Kyodo ("'LAND MINE' COMMENT ON SINO-U.S. TIES WORRIES TAIWAN", 2004-12-22) reported that a recent comment by US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage likening Taiwan to a "land mine" in US-PRC ties has caused Taiwan to register official concern with the US, a government spokesman said Wednesday. "We have shown our concern over the comment to the US government through our representative in Washington," Cabinet spokesman Chen Chih-mai said at a regular press conference. "We are seeking clarification." [\(return to top\)](#)

28. ROK and Cross Strait Relations

Kyodo News ("CHINA ASKS S. KOREA TO SUPPORT POSITION ON TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE", 2004-12-22) reported that a senior PRC official sought the ROK's support for the PRC's position on Taiwan on Tuesday, saying that the PRC will never tolerate the island's move toward independence, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. Wu Bangguo, head of the National People's Congress, made the remarks in a meeting with ROK Unification Minister Chung Dong Young, who is visiting Beijing as President Roh Moo Hyun's special envoy. Chung expressed the ROK's understanding of and support for the PRC's position, Xinhua said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

29. Grenada and Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN SAYS IT WON'T PLAY MONEY GAMES WITH CHINA OVER ITS ALLY GRENADA", 2004-12-22) reported that Taiwan said Wednesday it wasn't willing to play money games with rival PRC to keep diplomatic relations with Grenada, and wouldn't give in to what it called extortion-like behavior by the leader of its Caribbean ally. The PRC and Taiwan regularly accuse each other of "dollar diplomacy" as both pour money into some of the world's smallest and poorest countries to win official recognition. Grenada is one of just 27 African and Latin American nations that recognize Taiwan diplomatically instead of the RPC.

[\(return to top\)](#)

30. PRC Military

Donga Ilbo ("HU JINTAO TAKES STEPS TO GRASP MILITARY", 2004-12-22) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao for the first time took decisive action on military personnel after three months of holding the military power. Considering the fact that there are many officers leaving next year from the General Logistics Department, Navy, Air Force, armed policemen, and Guangzhou military district, observers say that President Hu will use this opportunity to consolidate his power in the military.

[\(return to top\)](#)

31. PRC Freedom of the Press

The Associated Press ("CHINESE EDITOR LEADS WAVE OF CHANGE", 2004-12-22) reported that on Wednesday, the Youth Daily - the PRC's second-biggest urban newspaper - plans to make history as the first state media outfit to sell shares to foreign investors, with an initial public offering in Hong Kong. The Youth Daily walks a fine line, staying within official censorship that still restricts what PRC media can report on politics, corruption and other sensitive topics. "As long as we follow the laws, we can report what appeals to people," Zhang said.

[\(return to top\)](#) Los Angeles Times ("MAGAZINE EDITORIAL WRITER ARRESTED", 2004-12-22) reported that the PRC has arrested the chief editorial writer at China Reform magazine, the latest move by PRC authorities against liberal intellectuals, sources familiar with the case said. Journalist Chen Min, who wrote under the name Xiao Shu, was detained for unknown reasons, the sources said. In September, Zhao Yan, a former reporter for the magazine who then worked as a news assistant for the New York Times in Beijing, was arrested. [\(return to top\)](#)

32. Hong Kong Privatization Plan

Agence France Presse ("HONG KONG GOVT MAY RELAUNCH PROPERTY PRIVATIZATION SCHEME IN LATE FEBRUARY", 2004-12-22) reported that Hong Kong's Housing Authority plans to relaunch in late February the major privatization scheme of public property assets after all legal hitches that may hinder the listing are resolved, a source with the authority said. The government had wanted to privatize 180 public housing estate shopping malls and 79,000 associated car parks through the property trust but Lo and her supporters claimed the deal undervalued the public assets. They also feared the sale would lead to a rise in public housing rents.

[\(return to top\)](#)

II. Japan

33. Japan Antiwar Activists Acquittal

The Japan Times ("ACTIVISTS ACQUITTED OF TRESPASSING", 2004-12-17) reported that the Tokyo District Court acquitted three peace activists of trespassing at a Self-Defense Forces housing facility in western Tokyo and inserting in mailboxes leaflets opposing the SDF deployment in Iraq. Prosecutors had demanded that the woman and two men be sentenced to six months in prison. The peace activists pleaded not guilty, arguing that prosecuting them for making a political statement would violate their right to freedom of expression. Presiding Judge Kenichi Hasegawa of the Hachioji branch of the district court said there was nothing criminally illegal about their actions. "The distribution of leaflets is an act of political expression that is guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution," the judge said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

34. DPRK Defectors

The Asahi Shimbun ("NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS: 7 SEEK ASYLUM AT SCHOOL IN BEIJING", 2004-12-18) reported that seven people believed to be North Koreans entered the Japanese School in Beijing early Friday to seek asylum. The seven -- two men, four women and a girl -- were later transferred to the Japanese Embassy in the Chinese capital.

[\(return to top\)](#)

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