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In an annual New Year’s message delivered live on the North’s television and radio, Kim Jong-un called for improved ties with South Korea and pledged to rebuild the North’s moribund economy in 2014 with emphasis on food production. “We will make aggressive efforts to improve relations between the North and the South,” Kim said in the speech which lasted 25 minutes. “The South side should also come forward to improve relations between the North and the South.” (Kim Kwang-tae, “N. Korea Extends Olive Branch to S. Korea,” Yonhap, January 1, 2014)

Excerpts: “Last year we consolidated our capabilities for self-defense and achieved a brilliant victory in the acute showdown with the imperialists. The scientists, technicians and workers in the sector of defense industry, by going beyond the cutting edge of military science with steadfast faith and mettle, demonstrated the strength of Songun Korea and rendered great services to consolidating the national defense capabilities. The officers and men of the Korean People's Army and the Korean People’s Internal Security Forces, cherishing the spirit of defending their leader and motherland unto death, defended their Party and leader, country and people at the risk of their lives and smashed the reckless moves of the enemy for igniting a nuclear war and their rackets of confrontation with the DPRK at every step, thus highly exalting the dignity and might of their country. Though the circumstances were harsh and complicated last year, our service personnel and people, by pooling their efforts, achieved great successes in the struggle to build their country into an economic giant and improve the people’s standard of living. …We should clearly prove the validity and vitality of the theses by waging the ideological, technological and cultural revolutions dynamically in the rural
areas and bringing about a decisive turn in agricultural production. This year we
should keep up agriculture as a major thrust of our effort in the struggle for economic
construction and improving the people’s standard of living, and concentrate all our
efforts on farming. The agricultural sector should proactively introduce scientific
farming methods and do farm work in a responsible manner so as to hit without fail the
target of agricultural production set by the Party. It should improve animal husbandry
and do greenhouse vegetable and mushroom farming on an extensive scale so as to
to ensure that larger quantities of meat, vegetables and mushrooms are supplied to the
people. …The metallurgical and chemical industries are twin buttresses of an
economic giant. Developing these industries is a major guarantee for economic
construction and improving the people’s standard of living. These industrial sectors
should hold high the slogan of making them Juche-oriented and modern and launch a
vigorous campaign for boosting production by relying on our own raw materials and
fuels and on the latest science and technology. In this way they should supply sufficient
amounts of steel and various kinds of chemical goods that are needed to reenergize
the national economy as a whole and improve the people’s standard of living. We
should give definite priority to electric-power and coal-mining industries. While taking
measures for generating electricity to the maximum at the existing power stations, we
should draw up correct prospective plans for radically easing the strain on electricity
supply and exert ourselves to carry them out. It is important to produce more electricity
with priority given to hydraulic resources and by using wind, geothermal, solar and
other kinds of natural energy. We should proactively increase production in coal mines
and drastically solve the problem of rail and other types of transport. The electric-
power and coal-mining industries and the rail transport sector should make
coordinated innovations and thus give strong impetus to the development of the
national economy. We should direct great efforts to developing light industry which
plays a major part in improving the people’s standard of living. By stepping up
modernization of and introduction of CNC technology into their production lines and
increasing the proportion of locally-available raw and other materials, light-industry
factories should put production on a normal footing. And all cities and counties should
produce various kinds of quality consumer goods in larger amounts by developing
local industry in conformity with their specific conditions. The state should take
measures to bolster up the fishing sector. The sector should follow the example of
the fishing sector of the People’s Army that landed a huge haul of fishes by
hitting out the order of the Supreme Commander unto death. By modernizing
fishing vessels and implements and launching a dynamic fishing campaign by scientific
methods, it should ensure that all ports resound with whistles of vessels returning with
full loads. It should also conduct shallow-sea farming on an extensive scale. We should
protect and increase the country’s priceless natural resources including underground,
forest and marine resources, and conduct an energetic mass-based tree-planting drive
to cover all the mountains with thick forests. All the sectors of the national economy
should increase production by tapping all potentials and latent reserves, and at the
same time launch a brisk economization campaign. Economizing is precisely
production and a manifestation of patriotism. We should intensify the economization
campaign throughout society so as to make economical use of every watt of electricity,
every gramme of coal and every drop of water. All the people should establish a habit
of meticulously managing the country’s economy with a high sense of patriotism and
attitude as befitting masters. We should decisively improve the guidance and management of the economy. We should tighten the unified guidance of the economy by the state under the leadership of the Party, enhance the sense of responsibility and creativity of enterprises and encourage all the working people to discharge their responsibility and role as masters of production and management. …We should continue to channel great efforts into building up the country’s defense capabilities. Strengthening defense capabilities is the most important of all state affairs, and the country’s dignity, people’s happiness and peace rest on powerful arms. We should further develop the People’s Army into the powerful revolutionary army of Paektusan that is unfailingly faithful to the Party, the leader, the country and the people. The main link in the whole chain of developing the People’s Army is strengthening the company which is the basic combat unit of the army and base of soldiers’ life. We should make all the companies elite combat ranks fully prepared politically and ideologically, militarily and technologically and their dear homes overflowing with brotherly affection. By stepping up political and ideological education among service personnel, we should train them to be strong in ideology and faith and ready to defend the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun and the Party Central Committee unto death. They should intensify combat training and launch a brisk movement for becoming crackshots so as to prepare themselves to be a-match-for-a-hundred combatants with excellent marksmanship, strong physique and a high sense of discipline. The Korean People’s Internal Security Forces should creditably discharge its noble mission and duty of defending the leader, system and people by thoroughly establishing the Party’s command system and revolutionary military climate in it, and the Worker-Peasant Red Guards should intensify combat training and remain fully ready for action at all times. The sector of defense industry should manufacture larger numbers of modern military hardware of our own style that are light, unmanned, intelligent and of high precision to solidify the self-defense capabilities. We should further consolidate the political and ideological position of our revolution. … It is imperative to establish the monolithic leadership system in the Party, definitely ensure the purity of Party ranks and improve the militant functions and role of Party organizations. We should intensify ideological education among officials, Party members and other working people to ensure that they think and act at all times and in all places in line with the Party’s ideas and intentions with the steadfast faith that they know only the great Comrades Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il and our Party. We should ensure that they approach with political awareness even the slightest phenomenon and element that infringe on the unity of the Party and revolutionary ranks and undermine their single-hearted unity, and eliminate them in a thoroughgoing way. They should wage a vigorous struggle to stamp out any sort of alien ideology and decadent lifestyle which may undermine our system and thus resolutely smash the enemy’s schemes for ideological and cultural infiltration. … It is necessary to establish stringent revolutionary discipline and order in all domains of the revolutionary struggle and construction work. This is an important factor in demonstrating the advantages of collectivism of our society and making a success of all undertakings. All sectors and all units should carry out to the letter the policies of the Party and the laws, decisions and directives of the state, and encourage the officials and working people alike to observe laws, regulations and order with full awareness of being masters of our society and citizens of the DPRK. Officials should make redoubled efforts to fulfill their duty as
leading members of the revolution and faithful servants of the people. They should organize undertakings in a big way with absolute loyalty to the Party, a high sense of responsibility for their work and fervent zeal, and strive with unflinching perseverance to implement the Party’s plans and intentions without fail. … This year marks the 20th anniversary of the date when President Kim Il Sung wrote his last signature on a historic document concerning the country’s reunification. True to the behests of President Kim Il Sung and General Kim Jong Il, we should make fresh headway in the national reunification movement for this year. To resolve the reunification issue in keeping with the aspirations and desires of our fellow countrymen, we should reject foreign forces and hold fast to the standpoint of By Our Nation Itself. The driving force for national reunification is all the members of the Korean nation in the north, in the south and abroad; only when we remain steadfast in this standpoint can we reunify the country independently in line with our nation’s interests and demands. To go on a tour around foreign countries touting for “international cooperation” in resolving the inter-Korean relations issue, the one related with our nation, is a humiliating treachery of leaving its destiny in the hands of outside forces. The north and the south should uphold the principle of independence which is one of the three principles for national reunification and has been confirmed in the north-south joint declarations, hold fast to the standpoint of By Our Nation Itself, and respect and implement the declarations with sincerity. We should make positive efforts to defend national security and peace.

The US and south Korean war maniacs have deployed legions of equipment for a nuclear war in and around the Korean peninsula and are going frantic in their military exercises for a nuclear war against the north; this precipitates a critical situation where any accidental military skirmish may lead to an all-out war. Should another war break out on this land, it will result in a deadly nuclear catastrophe and the United States will never be safe. All the Korean people must not tolerate the manoeuvres for war and confrontation by the bellicose forces at home and abroad but stoutly resist and frustrate them. A favorable climate should be established for improved relations between the north and the south. It is heartrending to see our nation partitioned by foreign forces, and it is more intolerable to see one side sling ing mud at and showing hostility to the other. This will serve merely as an occasion for the forces who are undesirous of seeing one Korea to fish in troubled waters. It is high time to put an end to such slander and calumny that bring no good to both sides, and they should desist from doing anything detrimental to national unity and reconciliation. The south Korean authorities should discontinue the reckless confrontation with their compatriots and the racket against the “followers of the north,” and choose to promote inter-Korean relations in response to the call of the nation for independence, democracy and national reunification. We will join hands with anyone who opts to give priority to the nation and wishes for its reunification, regardless of his or her past, and continue to strive for better inter-Korean relations. All the Korean people in the north, in the south and abroad should achieve solid unity under the truly patriotic banner, the principle of By Our Nation Itself, and turn out in the nationwide struggle for the reunification of the country. By doing so, they should open up a new phase for independent reunification, peace and prosperity this year. Last year, in the international arena, the imperialists persisted in interference and war moves threatening the independence of other sovereign states and the right of mankind to existence. Especially the Korean
peninsula, the hottest spot in the world, was in a hair-trigger situation due to the hostile forces' manoeuvres for a nuclear war against the DPRK, which posed a serious threat to peace and security in the region and the rest of the world.

Nothing is more precious for our people than peace, but it is not something that can be achieved if we simply crave and beg for it. We can never just sit back with folded arms and see the dark clouds of a nuclear war against us hovering over the Korean peninsula. We will defend our country's sovereignty, peace and dignity by relying on our powerful self-defensive strength. Holding fast to the ideals of our foreign policy—Independence, peace and friendship—our Party and the government of the DPRK will, in the future, too, strive to expand and develop relations of friendship and cooperation with all the countries that respect our sovereignty and are friendly to us, and safeguard global peace and security and promote common prosperity of mankind. (KCNA, “Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un’s New Year Address,” January 1, 2014)

Carlin: "While initial reaction to Kim Jong Un’s relatively positive remarks about inter-Korean dialogue in his New Year’s address has been mixed, Seoul has apparently decided to return the volley. In her January 6, 2014 news conference, President Park Geun-hye “welcomed” Kim Jong Un’s New Year’s speech, and said a summit meeting with Kim could occur at any time “if it were required to prepare for unification and a peaceful peninsula.” At the same time, she said that what was important was not words but “action and sincerity,” and in that regard, proposed a resumption of North-South family reunions. What is going on here? First, it’s important to understand that a New Year’s speech by North Korea’s leader is in many respects like a State of the Union address—i.e., much of it, at least to outsiders, is cotton candy, but occasionally there is something of real substance to which attention must be paid. In New Year’s speeches (or more recently, joint editorials) rarely have sections on inter-Korean relations signaled very much that is new. Rarely, but not never. When something about inter-Korean relations in the New Year’s speech is new, or at least noteworthy, it needs to be read as a signal, not as a proposal. It would be unusual for a North Korean leader to use the vehicle of a New Year’s speech to lay out a full-scale initiative toward Seoul. The real purpose is most likely, depending on the current situation, to prepare the ground, reinforce behind-the-scenes discussions, test the waters, or gauge the wind direction. Signals left unanswered by the other side, or rejected outright, usually end up leading nowhere. This is a game both sides understand. They’ve played it often in the past. They know a signal when they see it, and they know how to respond if they want to move ahead to the next step. … The immediate point about what Kim Jong Un said in his 2014 New Year’s address has nothing to do with where contacts might lead or what dialogue might produce. It has to do with the possibility that this was to signal an opening, and if it was, whether or not—from Seoul’s vantage point—it was worth exploring. … We’re not talking about the matured process, much less the outcome, of a dialogue. Later stages develop—or not—depending on a number of variables. We’re talking here, in January 2014, about the possibility of introductory steps, of starting the necessary minuet that needs to be carefully choreographed before anything substantive can even begin. Then what about these “signals” in Kim Jong Un’s New Year’s address? … Often, a signal comes in the form of the resurrection of a formula used in the past at a time of a thaw. Put another way, a signal is potent not in what it literally says, but because of what its use recalls. There were two such signals that were
woven into Kim’s New Year’s address. First was his reference to stopping slander. Analysts in the ROK Unification Ministry and the National Intelligence Service know perfectly well the historical significance of the reference; they know that one side or the other has often proposed as an early step the cessation of high-level invective aimed at the other’s leadership or system. One of the early signs that dialogue, once launched, has run into headwinds has been when one side or the other accuses the other of breaking the taboo on slander. Here, it is important to pay attention to what Kim said, and did not say. Though he criticized the South, he did not say that the South Koreans alone must stop slander. The observation of many analysts that the North has used harsh language against President Park Geun-hye is hardly something Pyongyang would dispute. In fact, what Kim said appears to have been carefully formulated implicitly to acknowledge that both sides had engaged in the practice, and that both sides should stop. (As a separate issue, exactly how the North has personally criticized Park, when, at what level, and how frequently is worth close analysis, and deserves more than the passing observations and tut-tutting it usually gets.) The second formula Kim used from the past—as rendered by KCNA—was that the North “will join hands with anyone who opts to give priority to the nation . . . regardless of his or her past and continue to strive for better inter-Korean relations.” This does not have quite the unambiguous pedigree as Kim’s reference to the issue of slander, but there are certainly instances over the years when Pyongyang used “regardless of his past” formulation to indicate it was prepared to deal with the ROK authorities. My own impression over the years is that it has not always been used as a crucial signal, but it is often part of the mix when the moment seems ripe for dialogue. The observation that Kim’s remarks contained nothing new misses the point entirely. The real question is, when was the last time Pyongyang used a particular formula, what was the context, and what was the history? These things are never going to be cut and dried; they will never arrive with flashing neon lights attached.” (Robert Carlin, “A Little Dance Music,” 38North, January 6, 2014)

Newly manufactured Canadian snowmobiles, Swedish snow blowers and Italian and German snow cats have all been spotted at North Korea’s recently opened Masik Ski resort, raising concerns that UN Security Council resolutions banning Pyongyang from purchasing “luxury goods” have been broken. The equipment, clearly visible in pictures released by North Korean state media, has appeared just months after ski equipment manufacturer Bartholet Maschinenbau AG Flums was blocked from completing a $7.5 million ski lift deal with North Korea. While Switzerland’s Federal Council blocked the ski-lift company from providing Pyongyang with “infrastructure and equipment for sports facilities with a luxury character,” it appears that North Korea was able to evade UN sanctions blocking the acquisition of luxury goods by obtaining ski-resort equipment from other international providers. A “Ski-Doo” Snowmobile manufactured by Canadian owned Bombardier Recreational Products & Vehicles was visible in pictures circulated by AFP, while at least seven snow blowers produced by Sweden’s Areco and at two snow ploughs produced by Italy’s Prinoth were visible in pictures released Thursday. A further snow plough produced by Germany’s Pisten Bully was also visible. “On the face of it snowmobiles are clearly luxury goods and so their sale to the DPRK is banned by the UN Security Council. If they are not on the banned list of the relevant exporting country, they should be,” one UN sanctions
expert who requested anonymity told NK News. “Switzerland determined that equipment for a ski resort was banned, so this would include snow ploughs too,” the expert added. Although UN sanctions prohibit member states from providing “luxury goods” to North Korea, no list of proscribed goods has ever been published by the international body, making international implementation of the rules particularly difficult, the expert underscored. But following North Korea’s 2006 nuclear test the European Union published a list of “luxury goods” that were banned from transfer to Pyongyang. This list specifically included “Articles and equipment for skiing, golf, diving and water sports” and “Luxury vehicles for the transport of persons on earth, air or sea, as well as their accessories and spare parts.” The EU list would mean that Sweden’s Areco, Italy’s Prinoth and Germany’s Pisten Bully may have broken regional and UN regulations on the provision of luxury goods to North Korea. (Chad O’Carroll, “Equipment at N. Korean Ski Resort May Breach UN Luxury Goods Sanctions,” NKNews, January 2, 2014)

Lankov: “…The North Korean government has at last begun to implement modest but real economic reforms. The new policy is very similar to Chinese experiments of the late 1970s. It might be too early to say but it appears that these policies may be as suitable as they were for China. The changes began with instructions issued by the Supreme Leader Marshal Kim Jong Un on June 28th 2012. These instructions have never been published and probably technically remain classified. Nonetheless, the content of the “6.28 instructions”, as they are usually called, became widely known last year. …For a time it even seemed that the instructions had been discarded and forgotten altogether. It has subsequently turned out however, that the “6.28 instructions” have been quietly implemented, though the new model has yet to become universal in its application- many North Korean farmers still continue to toil under the hyper-Stalinist North Korean model of ‘socialist agriculture.’ In essence, the “6.28 instructions” envision two radical changes. First, the work teams that toil North Korea’s cooperative state-run farms are to be reduced from 15 to smaller groups of 5 or 6. This is not a mere technicality, the smaller teams are equal in size to the normal farming household, and it is widely understood that under the new system, most of the teams will be family-centered. In other words, North Korean farmers have been given the right to thinly disguise their family as a production team. This makes much sense in light of the second radical change. Since the late 1950s until now, North Korean farmers have been compelled to surrender the entire harvest to the state. In exchange, they were issued with rations of grain and other daily necessities. This meant that they worked for fixed rations and relatively small, essentially token pay. Under the new system however, things are set to be very different. Production teams will be allowed to keep some 30% of the harvest for themselves. It is assumed that they will be able to sell whatever they do not consume on the private market, and/or use it in any other way that they see fit, like rearing animals for sale and/or personal consumption. The new system has many potential issues and is fraught with uncertainties. For example, it is not clear how the North Korean state will pay those agricultural workers who are not directly engaged in crop cultivation – like drivers, vets and agronomists. Given the rather primitive nature of North Korean agriculture however, such issues are of lesser importance compared to other countries. North Korean agriculture is still largely based on ploughmen who guide oxen while tilling the earth. The average field produces
cereals like rice and corn, and does not have much in the way of supporting infrastructure. It seems that first results of the reforms are quite encouraging. Chinese experts who recently visited North Korea told this author that the reforms have produced an immediate 30% increase in output. This year's harvest in North Korea is significantly better than usual, and it is possible, but by no means certain that the introduction of the new system has contributed to the palpable increase in food production. There is therefore good reason to expect that the reforms will be rolled out nationwide and will become standard in the next year or two. As stated above, these reforms are reminiscent of similar changes that began in China in the late 1970s. ... One wonders why the North Korean leadership is so late in implementing a set of reforms that have been so successful when tried elsewhere. ... The North Korean state understood that by maintaining the existing economic system it was able to maintain to some extent the state’s waning control over its people. Given Kim Jong Il’s overriding political concerns, and his desire to maintain stability at all costs, this choice is not surprising. There is good reason however to believe that Kim Jong Un has a different agenda. Objectively speaking, agricultural reforms are the least risky of all economic experimentation. Farmers have been known to rebel, but generally speaking they are the most conservative and least well organized, not to say politically apathetic, of social groups in most societies. ... The risks are therefore small and the prospective gains are considerable. One should not expect that in a predominantly urban country like North Korea, the reforms will be as successful as they were in China 30 years ago. Nonetheless, things are beginning to change and this is to be welcomed. It seems that changes in agriculture, if successful, may encourage reforms in other sectors including industry. This seems to be what the North Korean government is going to do. Such reforms however, are likely to be far more risky than the current experiments with agricultural management.” (Andrei Lankov, “How Economic Reforms Are Changing N. Korea’s Farming Industry,” NKNews, January 2, 2014)

1/3/14 South Korea expressed doubt over the North Korean leader’s rare peace offensive as it urged Pyongyang to make serious efforts to denuclearize itself. “We have no choice but to question the sincerity” of Kim’s conciliatory gesture, unification ministry spokesperson Kim Eui-do said in a comment. The comment came two days after leader Kim Jong-un called for “a favorable climate” to improve ties with South Korea and pledged to make aggressive efforts to strive for better relations in his New Year’s message. Last year, the North also issued a similar charm offensive before taking a series of provocative actions, including a third nuclear test, threats of nuclear war and unilateral closure of an inter-Korean factory park. The ministry said the North is to blame for worsening the inter-Korean ties. “North Korea should show sincere attitude to build trust and take sincere efforts for denuclearization,” the ministry said. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Doubts Sincerity of North’s Peace Offensive,” January 3, 2014)

1/4/14 The international Red Cross has earmarked US$5.6 billion to aid North Korea, down some 15 percent from a year earlier, a media report said. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies allocated the budget for 2014 to launch diverse projects on disaster management and sanitation for people in the impoverished communist country, according to the Voice of America. Last year, the IFRC set aside $6.63 million for its projects in North Korea, and had expected to
increase the amount by some 8 percent in 2014. Most of the resources will go to activities aimed at some 8.25 residents in the North's Pyeongan and Hamgyeong provinces, according to the report, with $1.96 million, or the largest share, to be earmarked for disaster management, $1.89 million for public health and $950,000 for providing clean drinking water. (Yonhap, “Red Cross Cuts 2014 Budget for N. Korea Aid, Korea Herald, January 4, 2014)

In her first New Year press conference, President Park Geun-hye said that she is prepared to meet with North Korean ruler Kim Jong-un and Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. However, she came up with conditions to be met in advance before she would get together with the heads of the two estranged neighbors for the first time since her inauguration last February. “To achieve peace on the Korean Peninsula or prepare for reunification, I will stick to my previous stance that I am willing to meet with the North Korean leader at any time,” Park said. “However, I am against talks for the sake of just talks. The environment should come first, where tangible results can be produced for peace on the Korean Peninsula.” As the first step to improve the inter-Korean relationship, Park proposed a reunion of family members separated by the Korean War (1950-53) timed for Lunar New Year’s Day later this month. The two Koreas agreed to hold a reunion last September for the first time in three years, but Pyongyang cancelled the humanitarian event just four days before for dubious reasons. The country’s first female chief executive also did not rule out a meeting with Abe, whose provocative remarks and activities have dampened ties between Seoul and Tokyo. “Since taking office, I have wished to improve the relationship between Korea and Japan. And to build mutual trust, I have stressed an appropriate historic view and a sincere attitude,” Park said. “It is regrettable that the atmosphere has been broken repeatedly at this important time when cooperation between the two nations must be expanded.” Park added that, “I never said that I will not meet the Japanese leader.” But she said that stringent preparations were necessary to enable win-win results for both countries. She was apparently referring to Abe’s recent visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, which honors the dead from World War II and houses the remains of 14 Class-A war criminals. The visit angered not only Korea and China, victims of imperialist Japan during World War II, but representatives of other countries around the world. (Kim Tae-gyu, “I am Willing to Meet Abe, Kim,” Korea Times, January 6, 2014) President Park Geun-hye called on North Korea to give up its nuclear program. “The most crucial barrier that blocks preparation for unification is North Korea’s nuclear problem,” Park said during a news conference marking the New Year. “As long as the North’s nuclear threat exists, there can’t be any inter-Korean economic cooperation or exchanges taking place.” Park further added that the South will work closely with neighboring nations to prevent Pyongyang from making more sophisticated nuclear weapons, and to get the reclusive nation to dismantle its nuclear programs. The comments show Park is still sticking to her “Korean Peninsula Trust-building Process” policy that calls for the North to abandon its nuclear programs “sincerely via action” before any development in inter-Korean cooperation can take place. The government sees no change in the current security condition surrounding North Korea’s nuclear provocations, insiders said. Pyongyang conducted its third nuclear test in February last year, right before Park’s official inauguration, and has recently reactivated a reactor at its Yongbyon nuclear complex, signaling a possible
fourth test. “If North Korea intends to give up its nuclear programs and become a responsible member of the international community, we plan to work together with the international community to provide active support to it,” Park said. Against this backdrop, experts say they are negative about an improvement in inter-Korean relations any time soon. “The government is saying that Pyongyang first demonstrate its sincerity by making concrete steps toward denuclearization before cooperation,” said Chung Young-chul, a professor of Sogang University. “The stance is the same as before and so I don’t think ties will get any better.” In an article published in Rodong Sinmun today, Pyongyang criticized the South saying the current confrontational atmosphere on the Korean Peninsula was because of South Korea’s “anti-unification” policy represented by President Park’s “principled” stance on denuclearization. “The future of the North-South relationship is in the South’s hands,” the article stated, referring to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s New Year’s message where he pledged to “make aggressive efforts” to improve relations with the South without mentioning any moves for denuclearization. (Chung Min-uck, “North Korea Should Drop Nuclear Programs,” Korea Times, January 6, 2014) In her New Year’s press conference on Monday, President Park Geun-hye presented the establishment of foundation for a reunified Korean Peninsula era as a key goal of state administration for her second year in office. Unification is the Korean people’s cherished aspiration and the surest way to secure peace on the Korean Peninsula. Chances are high that unification could come through sudden collapse of the North Korean regime like the case of Germany, rather than through compromise between the two Koreas. For this reason, South Korea should steadfastly make preparations from now, although it is impossible to predict when reunification will come. The two Koreas have been separated for the 69th year. Since most South Koreans were born after the separation, there is an emerging tendency that South Koreans accept divided Koreas as a reality. In a survey conducted late last year by the youth policy research center at the Yeouido Institute under the ruling Saenuri Party, 47.3 percent of college students replied “unification is not necessary.” College students who replied “unification is necessary” were slightly more at 52.4 percent. North Korea claims “Between the Korean People” in its rhetoric, but has brainwashed the North Koreans as “Kim Il Sung people” in reality, dampening the homogeneity of the Korean people. President Park said, “I think unification is a big bonanza,” in expressing her commitment to unification. The Hyundai Economic Institute predicted last year that a reunified Korea will become the world’s ninth largest economy around 2050. International organizations and experts predict that with a population of 75 million, Korea will emerge as a leading nation in the world. Jim Rogers, a world renowned investment expert, said that if integration of the two Koreas begins, he would invest his entire wealth, amounting to at least 300 million U.S. dollars. Unification is needed not only for Korea to overcome separation but also for the country to take a leap forward. Some raise concern about costs for unification, but costs stemming from separation are bigger. Considering security concern arising from confrontation between the two Korea, and “Korea discount” of the national economy, the path we must take is too obvious. Only when the public and the government share recognition that happiness and benefits expected after unification are far larger than pain and costs from division, then will Korea come closer to unification. (Dong-A Ilbo, “Unification Will Become ‘Big Bonanza’ Only through Preparation,” January 7, 2014)
The United States is sending an additional Army combat force of 800 soldiers to South Korea with tanks and armored troop carriers, and pledged to continue to modernize its military capability to face any threat posed by North Korea. The 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment from the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas, will deploy to two locations in South Korea on February 1, the Pentagon said in a statement. The announced troop increase came as Secretary of State John Kerry met in Washington with his South Korean counterpart, Yun Byung-se. Kerry reiterated that the U.S. would maintain its nuclear defense for South Korea, a key Asian ally, and would not accept North Korea as a nuclear state. The U.S. already has about 28,500 troops in South Korea. “We remain fully committed to the defense of the Republic of Korea, including through extended deterrence and putting the full range of U.S. military capabilities in place. We will continue to modernize our capabilities so that we are prepared to face any threat,” Kerry said after meeting Yun at the State Department. A Pentagon spokesman, Army Col. Steve Warren, said the increase in troop strength and firepower had been in the planning stages for more than a year and is part of a “rebalance” of U.S. military power toward the Asia-Pacific region. (Robert Burns, “U.S. Sending Extra Combat Unit to South Korea,” Associated Press, January 8, 2014) The Defense Ministry denied that the battalion was dispatched in response to recent uncertainty in North Korea following the execution of Jang Song-thaek, the uncle of leader Kim Jong-un who was once considered to be the second-most powerful man in the regime, and his followers. “The U.S. already decided upon [the deployment] way before,” Korea’s Defense Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok told reporters, stating the decision was finalized last year. “It is unrelated to the recent purging of Jang Song-thaek by Kim Jong-un.” But “the U.S. Armed Forces in Korea has continuously cooperated in order to increase defense capabilities in the Korean Peninsula and with the goal of combined security,” he added. “Korea and the U.S. are cooperating in order to strengthen defense in the Korean Peninsula.” (Sarah Kim, “U.S. Deploys a Battalion to Korea,” JoongAng Ilbo, January 8, 2014) The U.S. is reinforcing its military strength on the Korean Peninsula in an apparent move to better cope with potential security threats from an unpredictable North Korea and a more militarily assertive China. The move comes as Washington is pushing for a strategic shift toward the Asia-Pacific, where an ascendant China is feared to be challenging the regional order through its growing military and economic clout. The U.S. plans to deploy a dozen F-16 warplanes and some 300 troops to Korea on a rotational basis later this month. Next month, it will rotationally deploy a mechanized infantry battalion to the first brigade of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division north of Seoul. The new deployments will be the latest addition to the 28,500-strong U.S. Forces Korea. The U.S. returned the 23rd Chemical Battalion to Camp Stanley in Uijeongbu last April, some nine years after its withdrawal. The 4th Squadron of the 6th Cavalry Regiment was also brought back to Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek last October, five years after their pullout. The U.S. military says that these deployments are part of its efforts to maintain a “prudent deterrent” against threats to regional security and stability. The primary purposes of the U.S. military moves are to better deter North Korea and prevent any inter-Korean conflict from escalating into a full-blown war, given that uncertainties have increased in the North due to the unpredictable leadership in Pyongyang, and its adherence to its nuclear programs. (Song Sang-ho, “U.S. Military Reinforcements Target North Korea, China,” Korea Herald, January 14, 2014) -- The U.S. Navy announced January 14 that it would deploy
a newer nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to Japan to replace USS George Washington. USS Ronald Reagan, commissioned in 2003 and currently based in San Diego, will be deployed at the Yokosuka Naval Base as part of the Pentagon’s efforts to bolster combat readiness in the region. It is known to carry more than 6,000 crew members. "The security environment in the Indo-Asia Pacific requires that the U.S. Navy station the most capable ships forward," the Navy said. "This posture allows the most rapid response times possible for maritime and joint forces, and brings our most capable ships with the greatest amount of striking power and operational capability to bear in the timeliest manner." (Lee Chi-dong, “U.S. to Replace Nuclear-Powered Aircraft Carrier near Korea,” Yonhap, January 15, 2014)

In talks in Washington, Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and Secretary of State John Kerry concurred on the need for more systematic and frequent discussions at various levels focusing on North Korea conditions, which would progress to involve China and other neighbors later on. "We decided to intensify our consultations to assess the North Korean situation and explore our policy options," Yun told a news conference after the meeting. "These efforts will ensure that our two countries remain very much on the same page in dealing with the uncertain North Korean situation. In the event of any North Korean provocation, South Korea and the United States will firmly respond based on our robust combined defense posture." The two top diplomats also recognized the growing uncertainty in Northeast Asia, Yun said, taking a swipe at Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo’s worship at the Yasukuni Shrine which triggered condemnation from Seoul and Beijing. "In particular, I pointed out that historical issues stand in the way of reconciliation and cooperation in this region, and I emphasized the need for sincere actions. The secretary and I agreed to strengthen our efforts to alleviate tension and promote peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia," Yun added. Kerry noted that the allies remain aligned in their resolve not to accept Pyongyang as a nuclear state, calling on it to abide by its previous denuclearization pledges and international resolutions. “The United States and the Republic of Korea stand very firmly united, without an inch of daylight between us — not a sliver of daylight — on the subject of opposition to North Korea’s destabilizing nuclear and ballistic missile programs and proliferation activities. And the international community stands with us,” he said. The two countries have been “more actively consulting than ever” since the December 12 execution of Jang Song-thaek, leader Kim Jong-un’s uncle who was once considered the communist state’s second-in-command, a top Seoul official said. “While the six-party talks are aimed at denuclearizing the North, what we’re trying to do is to look in depth into its uncertainty given the new circumstances. It would not work as a separate consultation body but we are seeking more frequent, intensive coordination,” the official told reporters on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter. “There was a consensus that at some point later on, the bilateral consultations could include China and become a five-way dialogue (also involving Japan and Russia).” Though any sudden change in Pyongyang has been a perennial concern on the peninsula, a recent string of moves and remarks by Seoul and Washington officials has been rekindling speculation over the stability and durability of the Kim dynasty. Yesterday, President Park Geun-hye called for preparations for reunification, which she called a “jackpot” that would bring the Korean economy to new heights. During his three-day stay, Yun also met with Secretary of
Defense Chuck Hagel and other former and incumbent officials from the administration, Congress and think tanks, including Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell and Robert Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. (Shin Hyon-hee, “U.S., S. Korea to Coordinate More Closely on N.K. Uncertainty,” Korea Herald, January 8, 2014) Kerry did not make a comment on Japan-Korea friction during a joint press conference with Yun, although Yun brought the subject up. Yun said in a press briefing following his one-hour talk with Kerry that he “pointed out that historical issues stand in the way of reconciliation and cooperation in this region” and “emphasized the need for sincere actions,” without mentioning Japan by name. Prior to the meeting, Yun said that he planned to raise concerns in regard to the increasingly nationalistic behavior of Japan, which seems to deny its violent role in the past, highlighted by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo’s December 26 visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. Kerry did not address the issue publicly despite anticipation that he may. A high-ranking diplomatic source said that while Kerry did not mention Japan, “most officials understand our government’s position.” He said, “There is talk that there needs to be reform in Korea-Japan relations.” But the United States has emphasized its close defense alliance with Japan and is not expected to jeopardize that relationship, the source said. (Sarah Kim, “Top Envoys Unite against North, But Not against Japan,” JoongAng Ilbo, November 9, 2014) South Korea and the US decided to irregularly have meetings among high-level to assess the situation in North Korea. The meetings are intended to provide a forum to intensely deliberate the situation in the North following the execution of Jang Song-thaek and to take preemptive action according to developments on the Korean peninsula. With reports suggesting that measures to speed up change in North Korea will also be discussed in these meetings, there is expected to be considerable controversy. At a press conference after the bilateral meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry at the US State Department building in Washington, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se said, “We decided to hold consultations about the situation in North Korea a little more often and with a little more intensity,” Yun said. “We also agreed to pursue various kinds of talks, including not only bilateral talks between US and South Korea but also other small group meetings with other countries.” “As far as what we mean by ‘in-depth discussions on the North Korean situation,’ it can be understood in connection with our policy approach of trying to elicit faster change from North Korea, based on an analysis of the situation as it unfolds,” said a senior government official to Washington correspondents on the same day. “There are a number of ways to respond to North Korean nuclear weapons, including the six-party talks and UN sanctions. Since there are limitations to dealing with the North Korean nuclear weapons issue by itself, we are making another effort to lead North Korea to change from the perspective of viewing this as a North Korean issue.” It is highly unusual for a senior government official to use the expression “lead North Korea to change” while explaining the establishment of a US-ROK consultative body to assess the situation in the North. It is not difficult to predict that the North Korean authorities, who are quite touchy in regard to their regime, will not react in a positive way. Even if US and American diplomats had engaged in such discussions, it would be customary for them to express this obliquely, such as by saying that they had agreed to work on maintaining the stability of the situation in North Korea. But that was not all. When Yun met with correspondents after his conference with Kerry in Washington on January 7, he said, “The execution of Jang
Song-thaek reflects how unpredictable the leader of North Korea is, and the situation inside the North is in a state of flux.” While the senior government official declined to answer a reporter who asked whether the question of a sudden change in the North had been discussed in the meeting between U.S. and South Korean diplomats, the official did say that such a topic couldn’t be ruled out. This is the kind of remark that North Korean officials could easily take as a provocation. Nevertheless, it is not certain if the South Korean government official’s remarks about “trying to elicit faster change in North Korea” are a direct reference to pushing for regime change in Pyongyang as Washington and Seoul did during the administration of George W. Bush. Instead, the remarks appear to be more closely connected to the context of the “formation of a foundation for unification of the Korean peninsula,” which South Korean President Park Geun-hye announced during her New Year press conference. Yun addressed this during the press conference. “The U.S. and South Korea agreed to strengthen strategic cooperation to bring about sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula that transcends the nuclear issue, and beyond that to create the foundation for peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula that President Park mentioned during her New Year’s press conference,” the minister said, explaining that this was why they had decided to hold the consultations to assess the situation in North Korea. The comments made by a senior government official on condition of anonymity are consistent with this. When asked what kind of policies could lead North Korea to change, this official said, “There could be the standard methods dealing with the North Korean government, there could be methods dealing with the North Korean people, and there could be a variety of formats for achieving those things.” The official also said that South Korea would not be applying these policies independently, but that they would be pursued in a way that would allow the participation of the international community, including the US, China, and the UN. However, it is very unlikely that China will agree with the approach outlined by the US and South Korea. The U.S. appears to have had slightly different reasons for agreeing to hold meetings of high-ranking officials on an irregular basis to assess the situation in North Korea. The Obama administration is reportedly paying close attention to the instability of the regime in North Korea following the execution of Jang Song-thaek around the end of 2013. During an interview with ABC on December 15, John Kerry said that Jang’s execution revealed the rashness and the instability of Kim Jong-un’s regime. “To have a nuclear weapon, potentially, in the hands of somebody like Kim Jong-un just becomes even more unacceptable,” Kerry said. “We need to factor that into the urgency of getting China, Russia, Japan, South Korea to stay on the same page and to put as much effort into the denuclearization as possible.” “The U.S. government already had some degree of anxiety about the new regime in North Korea,” a South Korean government official said. “When you add the execution of Jang Song-thaek to the mix, the US appears to be responding even more acutely than before to developments in the North.” But there are concerns that Seoul and Washington’s new policy direction may further weaken the framework of the six-party talks, which have not been held for more than five years. Not only could the North use this as an excuse to show less interest in the six-party talks, but it could also overlap with the channels of dialogue that already exist between the chief envoys to the six-party talks. While the government official said that it has not yet been decided what the format of the North Korean situational assessment meetings will be, the official noted that they could involve officials who are more senior than the six-party talks envoys.
"We will start out with the US and South Korea, and if necessary we can add China and other countries," the official added. (Park Hyun, “S. Korea and U.S. Discuss New Framework for Dealing with North Korea,” Hankyore, January 9, 2014)

South Korea and the United States will meet again in April for negotiations on renewing a bilateral nuclear energy pact, the foreign ministry said after the allies closed their two-day talks on the accord without progress. Seoul and Washington kicked off their ninth round of talks on the renewal of the accord, also known as the “123 agreement,” on Tuesday in South Korea’s central city of Daejeon, home to major nuclear research facilities. “The two sides agreed in the latest talks that their cooperation in key nuclear energy issues, including exporting nuclear plants and the management of spent fuel, is vital in promoting the peaceful use of atomic energy in both nations and strengthening the international nonproliferation system,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement after wrapping up the second day of the negotiations. “We partly had progress during Tuesday’s talks but still have a long way to go, as we are dealing with a lot of issues spanning from export competitiveness (in the commercial nuclear sector) as well as the management of spent nuclear fuel and the stable supply of fuel to nuclear plants,” a Seoul government official said. The two sides still remain divided over the key issues, the official added. (Yonhap, “Talks between S. Korea, U.S. on Nuclear Accord Close without Progress,” January 8, 2014)

KCNA: “A basketball game was played by the American basketball team of ex-NBA stars and Korean players of the Hwaebul team of the DPRK at Pyongyang Indoor Stadium. The American team is now on a visit to the DPRK for sports exchange. … Supreme leader Kim Jong Un came out to the stadium together with Ri Sol Ju to watch the game. He was warmly greeted by Dennis Rodman, American ex-NBA star. Kim Jong Un welcomed the American basketball players’ visit to the DPRK and said that the game served as a good occasion in promoting the understanding between the peoples of the two countries. Rodman presented Kim Jong Un with a gift he prepared with the deepest respect for him. In his speech made before the match, he said he felt the Korean people were respecting Kim Jong Un while staying in the DPRK. He sang a song [Happy Birthday] reflecting his reverence for Kim Jong Un, touching the spectators. The first two rounds of the match were held between Hwaebul Team of the DPRK and the team of ex-NBA stars and its last two rounds were played as a mixed game of players of the two countries. … At the end of the match, Kim Jong Un met the players of the two teams. Kim Jong Un said he watched a good match and wished the American basketball players pleasant days in the DPRK. He had a photo taken with the American basketball players. Pak Pong Ju, Choe Ryong Hae and Kang Sok Ju watched the match together with their wives.” (KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Watches Basketball Game of DPRK, American Players,” January 8, 2014)
by this purpose, we clarified an important principled stand on improving the relations between the north and the south on the occasion of the New Year and showed our will in practice. The south side, however, behaved from the outset of the New Year quite contrary to our sincere efforts; media, experts and even authorities were indiscreet in their speeches and behaviors. It staged war drills firing bullets and shells. What was worse, the south side at a New Year press conference argued even our internal matter pro and con, blaming us. As regards the principled questions raised by us, it gave incoherent answers to them under the pretext of the nuclear issue. The notice said with great regret that there is no fundamental change in the south side’s present stance of confrontation. It went on: The south side proposed arranging a reunion of separated families and relatives on the occasion of the Lunar New Year. This is a good offer if it was prompted by its sincere good will to alleviate the pain resulting from division and improve the inter-Korean relations. By origin, the issue of arranging the reunion of separated families and relatives was proposed by the DPRK and reached almost the phase of implementation last year but it was not realized due to the south Korean authorities’ improper attitude and hostile acts. Now we are glad that the south side proposed it. But in south Korea, one war drill is being followed by another saber-rattling and huge joint military exercises are slated soon, the notice said, querying can the separated families and relatives have reunions in peace amid gunfire. Moreover, the Lunar New Year’s Day should be taken into consideration in the light of the season and timing, the notice said, adding if there is no other thing happening in the south side and if the south side has intent to discuss the proposals of our side, too, both sides can sit together in a good season. The notice expressed the stand of our side to make efforts for the improvement of the north-south relations in the future, too.

On January 9, the South Korean government gave a positive interpretation of the CPRF’s message, declaring it to be not a rejection of the reunions but rather a delay. But the government remains opposed to resuming tourism to Mt. Kumgang, which is effectively the condition that the North has placed on holding divided family reunions. “North Korea’s telephone message rejected the working-level meeting that we proposed holding on January 10 to prepare for the divided family reunions,” said Kim Ui-do, spokesperson for the Unification Ministry. At the same time, Kim said, “We think that the North is not saying it will not participate in the reunions, but rather that it wants to delay them.” In support of this interpretation, Kim noted that the North did not explicitly state that it rejected the proposal to hold the reunions, instead saying that it could sit down with the South at an appropriate time. However, the South Korean government is placed in an awkward position by the fact that North Korea basically said that resuming tours to Mt. Kumgang is a condition for holding reunions for the divided families. In regard to North Korea’s suggestive statement that it could meet with the South “if the South is willing to discuss our proposals as well,” even Kim agreed that this was probably a reference to the issue of resuming tours to Mt. Kumgang. The problem is that the South Korean government has little intention of acceding to North Korea’s request to resume tourism to Mt. Kumgang. When the South Korean government was working toward holding divided family reunions in
October and September 2013, it delayed the date of talks about tourism to Mt. Kumgang that North Korea had requested on three occasions. The North responded to this by indefinitely delaying the divided family reunions. In other words, the general view is that it is unlikely that the divided family reunions will occur as long as the South Korean government refuses to accept North Korea’s request to resume tourism to Mt. Kumgang. But as of yet, the South Korean government’s position remains the same. This was made perfectly clear in the regular briefing on October 8 by Unification Ministry assistant spokesperson Park Su-jin. “Tourism to Mt. Kumgang and the reunions of divided families are separate issues,” Park said. “The government’s stance of dealing with these separately remains unchanged.” (Park Byong-su, “Family Reunions Delayed, But Not Rejected,” Hankyore, January 10, 2014)

Kim Kyung-hui, aunt of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and wife of recently purged Jang Song-thaek, is reportedly in a near vegetative state after undergoing brain surgery, a local newspaper said. “According to a reliable source, Kim Kyung-hui had surgery for a brain tumor in Paris last year,” an unnamed U.S. official was quoted as saying. Earlier yesteray, Yonhap reported that Kim’s health had deteriorated, citing a South Korean diplomatic source, mainly due to her alcohol addiction and heart problems. (Ock Hyun-ju, “Kim Kyung-hui in Near Vegetative State,” Korea Herald, January 9, 2014)

1/12/14 South Korea said it had agreed to pay about $866.6 million this year to keep on its soil US troops who help guard against threats from North Korea. Seoul’s foreign ministry, after months of negotiation with Washington, confirmed this year’s contribution of 920 billion won ($866.6 million), up 5.8 percent from last year. The two allies also agreed on a maximum 4 percent annual increase in the amount until 2018, the ministry spokesman Cho Tai-Young told reporters. (AFP, “S. Korea to Pay $866.6M to Host U.S. Troops,” January 12, 2014)

1/13/14 The chief of the main opposition Democratic Party (DP) vowed to establish a policy on North Korea that centers on national unity. Kim Han-gil made the pledge in a New Year’s press conference as he cited President Park Geun-hye’s recently announced goal of laying the groundwork for reunification. “Reunification without preparation will bring great chaos to the Korean Peninsula,” Kim said during the news conference at the National Assembly. “Therefore, the government should present the people with (a plan for) how it will build reunification as a process.” (Yonhap, “Opposition Leader Vows to Create N.K. Policy Centered on National Unity,” Korea Times, January 13, 2014) Democratic Party leader Kim Han-gill has thrown his support behind a law to protect the human rights of the people of North Korea, a significant U-turn in the opposition party’s stance on North Korean affairs. “The Democratic Party considers democracy and human rights as the utmost value and also acknowledges problems regarding human rights for the North Korean people,” Kim said in a New Year’s address at the National Assembly. “The party will arrange a law to improve human rights and the livelihoods of North Koreans.” In the past nine years, ruling party lawmakers have proposed five bills regarding human rights in North Korea. None were passed due to lack of cooperation from the DP. Ironically, the opposition party, which is very active on various human rights issues in South Korea, was reluctant to support
improving the lack of freedom and dire living conditions of North Koreans. The liberal politicians were worried about criticizing the North Korean government. In general, the ruling Saenuri Party and conservatives have condemned the DP’s silence on human rights in the North. The abrupt shift came a month after the brutal execution of Jang Song-thaek, uncle and former mentor of the country’s young leader, Kim Jong-un. The Saenuri’s bills suggest starting a three-year government plan to improve human rights for North Koreans, launching a government-controlled foundation to record violations of North Koreans’ human rights and supporting civic activists. Saenuri Party’s spokesman Yoo Il-ho said the ruling party “welcomes” the DP’s changed position on human rights for North Koreans. “We hope a law regarding human rights in North Korea is passed within this year,” Yoo said. “Policy making on North Korean issues should not be a source of conflict anymore.” Still, the two parties are expected to spar over any North Korean human rights bill. The DP wants to emphasize expanding humanitarian aid for North Korean people and disagrees with the ruling party’s idea of supporting human rights activists, who are often North Korean defectors critical of the regime. “The reason why we have opposed the Saenuri lawmakers’ bills was they were mainly aimed to support civic groups critical of North Korea,” Jun Byung-hun, the floor leader of the DP, said in a radio interview yesterday. “But there would be no reason for us to be against a bill if it is implemented in a way to improve inter-Korean relations.” (Kim Hee-jin, “DP Will Support Human Rights Bill about North,” JoongAng Ilbo, January 14, 2014)

Jeffrey Lewis: “In 2012, I attended a Track II meeting with some North Koreans where they mentioned a series of space launches. A series, I asked? They didn’t want to say more, but left me with the distinct impression that we’ll be seeing a lot more launches from the DPRK. After that meeting, North Korea tried twice—a failed launch in April and then succeeding in December 2012. Iran, too, has been launching satellites—and monkeys—into space. While I am sure most North Koreans and Iranians dream of the stars, it is understandable for those of us in the United States to wonder whether they have more earthly aims. One need not be a cynic to look askance at North Korean and Iranian aspirations regarding the peaceful use of outer space when Pyongyang publishes pictures of the now famous ‘Map of Death.’ …Can we reach an agreement with Iran to deal with its worrisome nuclear and ballistic missile programs if there are no constraints on North Korea? How about the other way around? We have known for a long time that North Korea and Iran cooperate on missiles—just look at the resemblance between Iran’s Shahab-3 and Pyongyang’s Nodong missile. But in recent months, there have been rumors about a relationship that go beyond the odd missile sale (or six). Last year, Western diplomatic sources told Kyodo’s Tomotaro Inoue that Iran now stations four missile experts at a facility in North Korea about 85 kilometers from the Chinese border. The source said the mission included experts from Iran’s Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics as well as the private sector. Subsequent stories linked the Iranian “engineering team” to the Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group. Although none of the stories say so, the rumor is that the Iranians are stashed in the Chongju area safely out of Pyongyang. …Then Bill Gertz at the Washington Times got into the act, claiming that a team of Iranians traveled to Pyongyang to work on a larger “super ICBM,” long suspected to be under development. Like all of his stories, this one seems to be a mixture of genuine
reporting, balderdash, and naked partisanship. Gertz wrote the story to discredit the interim nuclear deal with Iran, on the laughably flimsy premise that the Iranians were in North Korea at the same time Kerry was in Geneva. …The technical details are awfully confusing. Gertz refers to the “80 ton” “super ICBM or heavy-lift space launcher.” North Korea’s Unha space launch vehicle’s first stage is already about 80 tons. So, this is a “super ICBM or a heavy-lift space launcher” that is the same size? Definitely not, right? A real heavy ICBM, like the old Soviet SS-9 or SS-18s deployed during the Cold War, would have a first stage that is much, much larger than 80 tons. It’s hard to know, precisely, what sort of cooperation is going on between the Iranians and the North Koreans. First, we know they do cooperate when it comes to missiles. Pakistan and Iran both bought Nodongs from North Korea in 1990s. But while Pakistan deployed a clone called the Ghauri, Iran worked very hard to make the Shahab-3, based on the North Korean missile, its own. Robert Walpole, then-the National Intelligence Officer for Strategic Systems, told Congress “Iran procured No Dongs and then sought Russian assistance to modify that into the Shahab-3…” There are other indications, as well. Iran’s Simorgh SLV bears more than a passing resemblance to the first stage of the North Korean’s Unha. There are reports that, in 2004, North Korea probably sold Iran the same Soviet sea-launched ballistic missiles that are believed to be the basis for North Korea’s Musudan, the new road-mobile intermediate-range missile. Finally, the US intelligence community’s formerly annual 721 reports describe support from North Korean and Russian entities for Iran’s ballistic missile program. Second, there are rumors the Iranians and the North Koreans signed a secret annex to the recent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on scientific and technical cooperation. Both country’s official news agencies, KCNA and IRNA, reported that they signed an MOU, which the Iranians described as “conducting research studies, exchange of university students and researchers, setting up joint laboratories, sabbatical studies, exchange of technological know-how, Information Technology, energy, environment, sustainable development, agriculture and food stuff.” Inoue reports that the parties also exchanged a secret two-page document that provides for the permanent stationing of an Iranian mission in North Korea. Obviously, neither official news agency is going to report on a secret document, but KCNA’s description noted that Ahmad Vahidi, Minister of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics, attended the signing, as well as a welcome function and a banquet. It is not unreasonable to suspect that that the agreement has a defense component. That, or Vahidi just loves buckwheat noodles. Third, Shahid Hemmat Industrial is the manufacturer of the Shahab-3, and responsible for working with the North Koreans, Russians and others. It is also a US-sanctioned entity. If the Iranians sent experts from their defense industry to North Korea, this company would be the obvious choice. Some of the news stories even note that the engine test stand at Shahid Hemmat’s facility in Iran resembles one in North Korea, but engine test stands all look alike to me. Finally, both Iran and North Korea are probably working on larger space launch vehicles than the existing models. The North Koreans have said they want to place a satellite in geostationary orbit, which means a bigger rocket is needed. The Three Revolutions Museum’s space exhibit in Pyongyang shows an artist’s conception of a much larger rocket in a larger gantry tower that we’ll call the Unha-X. The North Koreans also have gantry towers at the Sohae launch pad that, as Nick Hansen has observed, suggests something larger than the Unha is in the works. Iran, too, wants to place satellites in geostationary orbit. We don’t know that they’ve
discussed the matter, but let’s assume it came up. This is where things get interesting. North Korea and Iran might choose to cooperate to make a larger SLV that could also serve as an ICBM, just as the US Titan II, built in the early 1960s, could put astronauts in orbit or, if the balloon went up, rain megatons of death and destruction down on the Soviet Union. But a large liquid-fueled ICBM would have significant military limitations—such a missile takes a long time to fuel and must be based in a vulnerable silo. (Although the North Korean’s road-mobile KN-08 is hardly a model of invulnerability, a workable mobile missile would offer North Korea far more survivability.) In fact, there have been stories in recent weeks suggesting that North Korea is building silos near Samjiyon in the shadow of Mount Baekdu but something stands out about them: the United States and South Korea reportedly identified the silos (if they exist, that is) during construction, before North Korea could have camouflaged them. Newly declassified documents demonstrate that the United States also watched China build silos and cave sites for its early large liquid-fueled rockets, before attempting to cover the sites with camouflage. (In fact, the act of camouflaging a mountain valley frequently drew the attention of satellite imagery analysts in the leafy Washington exurbs.) Given the vulnerability of their silos, Chinese designers took to describing this mode of basing as placing a missile in a ‘tomb.’ Why would North Korea want a “super heavy” (really, semi-heavy) ICBM anyway? There are basically two advantages to increasing the size. One is that it would allow the North to put multiple warheads on a single missile—but North Korea doesn’t seem to have enough plutonium (or even highly-enriched uranium) to do that. Moreover, given the vulnerability of silos, North Korea would be crazy to parcel a small stockpile of nuclear weapons out to an even smaller stockpile of missiles. The other possibility is that North Korea’s nuclear weapons are too large to place on a long-range rocket. Perhaps North Korean nuclear weapons are much too big for the Unha. Or maybe the North Koreans envision much heavier warheads—like thermonuclear warheads. Perish the thought. It’s a really interesting question what North Korea would even do with a sorta-super-ICBM (other than the stated purpose of putting a satellite into geostationary orbit). …In recent weeks, the Obama administration has made it clear that it isn’t interested in sitting down with the North Koreans, unless they do a lot of things first. The North Koreans themselves, haven’t been exactly cheery, referring to Barack Obama’s vision of a world without nuclear weapons as “a smokescreen and sophism to cover up the U.S. wild ambition to dominate the world by dint of nuclear superiority.” Once upon a time, we might have prevailed on the Chinese to intervene, but they tried that most of this year. It didn’t work, and now one of their preferred interlocutors is taking a dirt nap for anti-party factionalism. Frankly, things don’t look so hot if you think a missile deal would be helpful. It’s pretty hard to even find a plausible conference room to meet, let alone get the North Koreans into it. North Korea isn’t even a member of the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in Vienna—although Iran is. Say, there’s an idea. Perhaps we might imagine Iran’s cooperation with the DPRK as a source of access, rather than concern. Bill Burns might ask his new best friends in the Iranian backchannel [19] if we couldn’t extend an invitation to the DPRK to participate in an international meeting on access and use of geostationary orbit. We’re a long way off from reviving missile negotiations with the DPRK or extending the Geneva process with Iran, but it wouldn’t hurt to sit down and simply talk to the Iranians and the North Koreans about their plans
South Korea spent 296.4 billion won (US$280 million) last year, or 27 percent of the 1.09 trillion won earmarked, for the inter-Korean cooperation fund, according to the Unification Ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs. The figure represents the highest level in six years as the government paid insurance money to small South Korean companies that operate plants in the North’s border city of Kaesong. The South Korean companies received insurance money worth 177.7 billion won due to the months-long shutdown of the inter-Korean joint factory park in Kaesong last year. In 2008, the ministry spent 18.1 percent of the inter-Korean cooperation fund. The ratio dropped to 8.6 percent and 6.5 percent in 2009 and 2012, respectively, as inter-Korean relations soured. The factory park resumed operations in September, more than five months after the North unilaterally closed it in anger over joint annual military exercises between South Korea and the United States. More than 44,600 North Koreans work at 120 South Korean firms operating in the park to produce clothes, shoes, watches and other labor-intensive goods. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Uses Less Than One-Third of Its N. Korea Fund Last Year,” Korea Herald, January 14, 2014)

South Korea’s point man on North Korea has vowed not to link reunions of separated families to suspended tours to a scenic mountain resort in the North. North Korea may hope to stage reunions of families separated after the 1950-53 Korean War on the condition that South Korea agrees to resume the tour program to Mount Kumgang, a mountain resort on North Korea’s east coast, Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae said. Previous South Korean governments had provided humanitarian aid to the North in return for family reunions as if it were a condition, Ryoo said. “Didn’t we indulge in that too much? Let’s change that,” Ryoo said in a meeting with reporters. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Vows Not to Link Family Reunions to N.K. Tour Program,” January 15, 2014)

The United States and South Korea this week are reviewing their strategy for deterring North Korean nuclear attacks, Yonhap reported. Last fall, Seoul and Washington concluded a new bilateral extended-deterrence plan designed to enhance the U.S. nuclear umbrella over South Korea. The plan encompasses military, diplomatic and political responses that could be used to respond to a variety of unconventional threats coming from the North. The meetings this week will focus on plan implementation. Today and tomorrow at the U.S. Pacific Command in Hawaii, officials from the two allies’ Extended Deterrence Policy Committee will stage their third theoretical exercise on responding to North Korean threats. David Helvey, U.S. deputy assistant secretary of Defense for East Asia, and Elaine Bunn, deputy assistant secretary of Defense for nuclear and missile defense policy, will take part in the discussions with South Korean Deputy Defense Minister Ryu Se-seung. “At this exercise, the allies will discuss the tailored deterrence strategy and how to apply extended deterrence policy to handle [the] threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear program and weapons of mass destruction,” the South Korean Defense Ministry said in released comments. Pyongyang lashed out at Seoul for its “confrontational acts” and said it was up to the South to foster a climate for better bilateral relations. “The improvement of inter-Korean relations is crucial to deal with reunification matters from our perspective,” the
North Korean regime said in an editorial published by *Rodong Shinmun*. A former senior Obama administration official said it is time for Washington to hold talks with Beijing and Seoul on responding to various contingencies in North Korea. "My own view is that the U.S., South Korea and China need to be talking about future scenarios in the Korean Peninsula, including instability in North Korea," said Jeffrey Bader, a former National Security Council senior director for East Asian affairs, in an interview with Yonhap. (Global Security Network, “U.S., South Korea Confer on Preventing North’s Nuclear Attack,” January 14, 2014)

The World Peace Park in the demilitarized zone that President Park Geun-hye is promoting aggressively will likely be created into a nature-preserving ecological park. The government plans to make it into a park that traverses the demilitarized zone so that global visitors freely access South and North Korea within the place. The government will make the park into the bridge between South-North exchange and cooperation, and a place for preparing reunification. Multiple government officials said, "The peace park will traverse the DMZ between the South and North," adding, "We have recently formed a basic direction of the plan. The park will be opened not only to South and North Koreans but also to foreigners to enable them to freely pass between the two Koreas." A government official said, "When the park is realized, visitors to the park can feel the pain of divided nation and the need for peace."

Another official said, "Creating a park only in the South DMZ will enable a stable attraction of U.N. organizations and operations. But an eco-park under an agreement between South and North will be much meaningful." The Unification Ministry received 30.2 billion won (28.52 million U.S. dollars) budget for the creation of the peace park, and will come up with concrete construction plans. The government had initially planned to carry out negotiations with the North when the family reunion took place in September last year, which the North turned down at the last minute. At her New Year’s press conference last week, President Park said, "Unification will draw nearer by building a DMZ world peace park that will tear down barriers of mistrust and confrontation as well as linking Eurasia railroad to make the Korean Peninsula a channel for trust and peace." (Dong-A Ilbo, “Government to Materialize DMZ World Peace Park Plan,” January 15, 2014)

More than half of lawmakers of the main opposition Democratic Party polled said in a survey that they are in favor of updating the government’s North Korea policy and supplementing the late President Kim Dae-jung’s Sunshine Policy, South Korea’s engagement with Pyongyang. Kim Han-gil, chairman of the Democratic Party, said that while sticking to the broad principle of the Sunshine Policy, the party needs to “upgrade its North Korea policy to reflect the current situation and the change in the thoughts of the people.” In a two-day telephone survey conducted by *JoongAng Ilbo* yesterday and today, 82 of the 127 members of the Democratic Party were surveyed about their stance on North Korea policy. Of those surveyed, 65 DP lawmakers agreed that its North Korea policy should be upgraded to reflect the times and the changes in the public’s perspective. Nine lawmakers opposed the statement, while eight declined to answer. When asked whether the Sunshine Policy should be upheld, supplemented or discarded, 56.1 percent of those surveyed, or 46 lawmakers, responded that it should be supplemented. Thirty lawmakers, or 36.6 percent, favored keeping the
Sunshine Policy in its current form, while only one lawmaker said to discard the policy altogether. Five declined to answer. All those who chose to supplement the policy said that they were supportive of the Sunshine Policy’s basic principles of reconciliation and cooperation, but they said they favored overall reforms to the policy. “We cannot agree to North Korea’s terror policies,” said one DP lawmaker, who chose to remain anonymous and favored supplementing the Sunshine Policy. “The Sunshine Policy played a superb role during the [inter-Korean] cold war period, but while keeping with its fundamental principles, it needs to be upgraded to match today’s North Korea and the situation in neighboring countries.” Another DP representative responded that “while the Sunshine Policy is considered unnecessary, its principles should be adhered to. But the policy has to be adjusted to a suitable level so that it does not appear that we are simply giving everything to the North.” Additionally, 68 lawmakers, or 85 percent, said they were supportive of the passing of a North Korean human rights bill, while 10 were opposed and four declined to answer. But some DP lawmakers were less than welcoming of a change in the Sunshine Policy. “I am not sure why the subject of North Korea came up suddenly during [Chairman Kim Han-gill’s] New Year address,” one lawmaker said. “North Korea’s nuclear tests and the Sunshine Policy are unrelated to each other, so I am not sure what has to be changed,” added Park Ji-won, the DP floor leader. But many Democrats who supported a revision of the policy said it should be advanced to match the times or that there was a need for a policy that went beyond simply giving. Another lawmaker responded, “In reality, it is possible to supplement the policy to make it suitable for a nuclear-armed North Korea.” (Chae Byung-gun and Sarah Kim, “North Korea Policy Needs Update, DP Says,” JoongAng Ilbo, January 17, 2014)
and an outright challenge to the good faith of the DPRK and the public opinion at home and abroad. We take special note of the fact that the announcement of the saber-rattling is timed to coincide with the new year press conference given by the chief executive of south Korea. Outwardly, south Korea welcomed the New Year Address and said that it hopes for opening the first button through the reunions of separated families and relatives, providing a fresh occasion and shaping the framework for mending the south-north ties. But behind the scene it is planning to wage war exercises against its fellow countrymen. How can this be understood? The prevailing situation proves that the south Korean chief executive made a lie and has an axe to grind. The north-south ties have suffered greatly from the war drills that were repeatedly held in south Korea every year. By straining the situation through such war drills as Key Resolve, Foal Eagle and Ulji Freedom Guardian from the outset of each year, they wasted away time, preventing anything favorable for improving the north-south ties from being achieved. This is the history of the north-south ties. What was gained were only escalated tension, increased danger of a war and stalemate in the north-south ties and extreme discord, antagonism and hostility between the fellow countrymen. Such an evil cycle can never be allowed to go on any longer. The present situation shows who truly stands for detente and peace on the Korean Peninsula and who pursues confrontation and war and who is a hypocrite, provoker standing in the way of improving the north-south relations. The puppet forces are making extremely serious provocation like the DPRK-targeted war exercises together with outsiders. Yet, they are talking about “provocation” by someone. This is like a guilty party filing a suit first. The U.S. and the puppet group, much upset by the disclosure of their bellicose nature and increasing voices of criticism, are claiming that those are ‘annual exercises for defense.’ But they should know that such deceptive and shameless sophism will never work on anyone. The recent announcement of the huge DPRK-targeted war drills by the U.S. and puppet warmongers is a total denial of the improvement of the north-south ties and dialogue and is little short of the declaration of a total nuclear stand-off. We sternly warn the U.S. and the south Korean authorities to stop the dangerous military exercises which may push the situation on the peninsula and the north-south ties to a catastrophe. They should clearly understand that the north-south ties will plunge into a deadlock and unimaginable holocaust and that disaster will follow should they go ahead with the nuclear war drills and make military provocation, defying our warning.” (KCNA, ”CPRK Warns U.S., S. Korean Authorities to Stop Projected Joint Military Exercises,” January 15, 2014)

South Korea should adopt a multi-layered missile defense to complement the current system that is insufficient to counter growing missile threats from North Korea, a ruling party lawmaker said. Rep. Yoo Seong-min of the Saenuri Party, who chairs the parliamentary defense committee, said the indigenous missile program aimed at shooting down low-flying missiles is not enough to deal with North Korea's long-range missiles. South Korea currently operates 48 PAC-2 missiles imported from Germany, which have an interception rate of less than 40 percent. It is allocating a budget to upgrade the system to the "hit-to-kill" PAC-3 with improved accuracy as part of the indigenous Korea Missile Defense System (KAMD). Seoul is also seeking to develop indigenous medium- and long-range surface-to-air missiles as part of its mid-term defense plan. "I question whether the current missile defense system is enough to
The US House of Representatives passed 2014 spending bill with an amendment urging the US Secretary of State to encourage the Japanese government to address the issues contained in the House’s “comfort women resolution” from 2007. This is the first time that the comfort women issue has been officially addressed in legislation passed by the US Congress. The 2014 spending bill for the US government passed on Wednesday after being put to a vote before the entire house. The document about the comfort women is included in a report that addresses spending for the State Department. The section draws attention to the July 30, 2007 passage of House Resolution 121, which dealt with the comfort women issue, and strongly urges the Secretary of State to encourage the Japanese government to resolve the issues that are contained in that resolution. The comfort women resolution (H. Res. 121), which was adopted in 2007, was sponsored by Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA), who is of Japanese descent. The resolution calls on the Japanese government to acknowledge its responsibility for the past, on the Japanese prime minister to officially apologize, and on Japan to follow the recommendation of the international community by teaching the post-war generation about these issues. Along with Honda, Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY) also played an instrumental role in seeing that a document about the comfort women was attached to the bill. The comfort women document is likely to have a considerable political impact, pushing the executive branch to renew diplomatic efforts to bring about a change in the attitude of the Japanese government. The handbook to the bill states that the Federal Government must abide by the reports attached to the spending bill in its implementation of the bill. Since the executive branch must report to Congress at the end of the year about the extent to which it implemented the provisions of the spending bill, it will inevitably feel pressure to carry out Congress’s requests.. (Park Hyun, “Bill Related to Comfort Women Passed in U.S. Congress,” Hankyore, January 17, 2014)
"cooperation" with the U.S. are so precious and valuable, they had better hold the exercises in the secluded area or in the U.S. far away from the territorial land, sea and air of the DPRK. This is the stand of the DPRK. We specially propose stopping all acts provoking the other side on the ground and in the sea and air including five islands in the West Sea, hotspots where both sides are in acute showdown, leveling their guns at each other. The DPRK side will show its practical action first for the realization of this proposal. We propose taking a mutual practical measure to prevent a nuclear holocaust from being inflicted on this land. Our nuclear force serves as a means for deterring the U.S. from posing a nuclear threat. It will never be a means for blackmailing the fellow countrymen and doing harm to them. We courteously propose the south Korean authorities not to resort to reckless acts of bringing dangerous nuclear strike means of the U.S. to south Korea and to areas around it, taking this occasion as an opportunity. It is the stand of the DPRK that the south side should resolutely break with the double-dealing stand of tolerating nuclear weapons of outsiders which are harmful to the fellow countrymen while denying the nuclear weapons of fellow countrymen which protect the nation. If these proposals are put into practice, it will be possible to settle all issues, big or small, arising in the north-south relations including the reunion of separated families and relatives. We express the expectation that the south Korean authorities will positively respond to our principled crucial proposals.” (KCNA, “NDC of DPRK Advances Crucial Proposals to S. Korean Authorities,” January 16, 2014)

KCNA: ‘The bellicose forces of the United States and south Korea are bringing dark clouds of a war again to the Korean Peninsula at the beginning of the year, in disregard of the desire of the DPRK and the international community for peace and stability. With the U.S. deploying its aggression forces massively in areas close to the Military Demarcation Line, they announced that huge Key Resolve and Foal Eagle joint military exercises would be staged for months from the end of February. The projected exercises, involving the U.S. 3rd marine task force to deploy before all others on the Korean Peninsula in case of emergency, will be the biggest military rehearsal in scale after the 1989 Team Spirit. Its purpose is apparently to take control of nuclear facilities in the DPRK and occupy Pyongyang in case of ‘emergency in the north.’ This is another serious military provocation to the DPRK and an outright challenge to its good faith and the public opinion at home and abroad as it is aimed to drive the situation of the Korean Peninsula again to phase of confrontation. No matter how vociferously the U.S. may talk about other’s ‘threat’ and about its role in ‘defending peace,’ it can no longer cover up its nature of the very one who has continued aggravating the situation on the peninsula cyclically. Ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula is an important link in the chain for securing regional peace and stability and, furthermore, global peace. That is why the DPRK’s principled stand and sincere measures clarified in the New Year to ease tension, defend peace on the peninsula and improve the north-south relations have commanded full support and aroused a great response from peoples at home and abroad. The U.S. and south Korean bellicose forces have made provocative remarks from the beginning of the year only to come under criticism of the world community. They are describing the projected military exercises as ‘annual’ and ‘defensive,’ but it is no more than sophism to cover up the aggressive nature of the exercises and their insidious intention. It is a
bad habit of the U.S. imperialists and the south Korean puppet forces to annually stage large-scale war drills all the year round, extremely aggravating the situation. Such war moves of several decades have only engendered antagonism and hostility among the Korean nation, resulting in bedeviled north-south relations, escalated tension and increased war danger in the Korean Peninsula and the region. **The recent announcement of joint war exercises is tantamount to the total denial of improved relations and dialogue between the north and the south of Korea and a declaration of overall nuclear showdown.** The provokers had better ponder over the serious consequences to be entailed by the exercises." (KCNA, “KCNA Commentary Hits U.S.-S. Korea Joint Military Exercises,” January 16, 2014)

South Korea scoffed at North Korea’s proposal for a mutual moratorium on verbal mud-slinging, and rejected Pyongyang’s renewed calls to cancel planned military drills with the United States. "We don’t slander North Korea so there is nothing for us to stop,” Unification Ministry spokesman Kim Eui-Do told reporters. The Unification Ministry argued that the offer was moot, as the only provocation and slander came from North Korea. Despite North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un’s New Year speech urging greater cooperation, Pyongyang has "continued to slander and threaten us," spokesman Kim said. The NDC also renewed calls for South Korea to scrap its annual joint military exercises with the United States, which Pyongyang routinely condemns as provocative rehearsals for invasion. But Kim stressed that the drills -- slated to begin at the end of February -- would go ahead as planned. Analysts said both sides were jockeying for the moral high ground ahead of what is gearing up to be a re-run of last year’s display of military brinksmanship, which triggered global concerns of a full-scale conflict. "They both want to be able to accuse the other of bearing responsibility for any surge in tensions,” said Yang Moo-Jin a professor at the University of Korean Studies in Seoul. "This is a clear snapshot of the current confrontational situation on the Korean peninsula," Yang said. (Park Chan-Kyong, “S. Korea Brushes off North’s Calls to Halt Insults, Scrap Drills,” AFP, January 17, 2014)

China called on both South and North Korea to take steps to nurture better cross-border relations, with Pyongyang’s “peace offensive” raising fresh concerns that tension on the peninsula may rise sharply again ahead of joint military drills between Seoul and Washington. "The DPRK (North Korea) and the ROK (South Korea) are of the same ethnic group,” China’s foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei told reporters during a daily briefing, when asked about the North’s proposal. "Improving bilateral relations and realizing reconciliation and cooperation serve the fundamental interest of the two sides."

Hong said, “We hope that the two sides will demonstrate goodwill and take concrete actions to improve bilateral relations so as to bring the situation of the region to stability.” (Yonhap, “China Urges Koreas to Improve Ties amid Pyongyang’s ‘Peace Offensive,’” Korea Herald, January 17, 2014)

Ambassador to South Korea Sung Kim said that his country is strengthening readiness posture to provision against any situation in North Korea including emergencies. Regarding the possibility of an “implosion” in the North Korean regime, the U.S. envoy said that Seoul and Washington are strengthening coordination to be able to
effectively respond in the event that such an incident occurs. Kim made the remarks during an interview with Dong-A Ilbo at his official residence in central Seoul. “It is in the same vein that the two allies agreed at a bilateral foreign ministers’ meeting in Washington Tuesday to strengthen discussions on changes in the North Korean situation and broaden bilateral cooperation,” he stressed. (Dong-A Ilbo, “U.S. Envoy: Seoul, Washington Step up Readiness for N. Korean ‘Implosion,’” January 17, 2014)

A recent geological study indicates North Korea could hold some 216 million tons of rare earths, minerals used in electronics such as smartphones and high definition televisions. If verified, the discovery would more than double global known sources and be six times the reserves in China, the market leader. British Islands-based private equity firm SRE Minerals Limited announced the study results in December, along with a 25-year deal to develop the deposits in Jongju, northwest of the capital, Pyongyang. The joint venture, called Pacific Century Rare Earth Mineral Limited, is with state-owned Korea Natural Resources Trading Corporation. The potential bonanza could offer the isolated and impoverished North a game-changing stake in the rare earths industry. The East-West Center’s Scott Bruce said South Korea opposes mining the minerals because they could be a valuable resource to help bankroll a future re-unification of the Korean peninsula. “The extent to which they’re being packaged and sold off now is of great concern to the South,” Bruce said, “because it’s effectively taking the economic benefit of re-absorbing the North, if they’re able to do that at some point, and selling it off now.” Other analysts question the estimated size of the deposit. Choi Kyung-soo, president of the North Korea Resource Institute in Seoul, is among the skeptics. “If you look at what SRE Minerals announced, it seems like North Korea has the largest amount of rare earths in the world,” he said. “But I do not think the amount is that large.” The U.S. Geological Survey, which compiles data on sources of minerals, said there was insufficient information to comment on the significance of the announcement. SRE acknowledges the rare earth estimates are conceptual and not yet proven. It plans, through its joint venture, to take further samples in April to better assess North Korea’s rare earth potential. (Daniel Schearf, “North Korea’s Rare Earths Could Be Game-Changer,” Voice of America, January 17, 2014)

KCNA: “An enlarged plenary meeting of the Cabinet of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea took place. Present there were Premier Pak Pong Ju and members of the Cabinet. Leading officials of the organs under the Cabinet, directors of its management bureaus, chairpersons of the provincial, city and county people’s committees, the provincial rural economy committees and the provincial regional planning commissions, directors of the provincial food and essential goods production management bureaus and managers of major industrial establishments were present as observers. The meeting discussed ‘On thoroughly carrying out the important tasks set forth by the respected Comrade Kim Jong Un in his New Year Address.’ Pak Pong Ju made a report at the meeting to be followed by speeches. The reporter and speakers said that last year the service personnel and people of the DPRK, closely rallied around Kim Jong Un, exalted the brilliance of the ideas and cause of President Kim Il Sung and leader Kim Jong Il, extraordinarily strengthened the political and ideological might of our revolutionary ranks and the capabilities for self-defense, achieved proud successes in the drives for building an economic power and improving

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the people’s standard of living and took a big step forward for building a highly
civilized socialist nation by creating the ‘Masikryong speed.’ The meeting referred to
the great advance made on all fronts for building a thriving socialist nation last
year. **The production on all indices of products increased last year compared with
the previous year:** Production of Juche iron increased by 28 percent, cement 14
percent, iron ore 6 percent, electricity 4 percent and coal 3 percent. Many
successes were achieved in implementing the state budget. The meeting set forth
tasks and ways to be fulfilled by the Cabinet this year. The sectors of agriculture,
construction and science and technology should hold the torch of innovations in the
van and all the fields of national economy including the vanguard sectors and basic
industrial sectors should make fresh innovations. In order to raise a fierce wind of
making a fresh leap forward on all fronts for building a thriving socialist nation, **all
officials should organize undertakings in a big way with absolute loyalty to the
Party,** a high sense of responsibility for their work and fervent zeal, and strive with
unflinching perseverance to implement the Party’s plans and intentions without fail. A
relevant decision was adopted at the meeting.” (KCNA, “DPRK Cabinet Enlarged
Plenary Meeting Held,” January 18, 2014)

1/19/14

The primary reason that North Korea is calling for an improvement in inter-Korean
relations and an easing of tensions appears to be economic. A North Korean article
that came to light recently argued that political and military stability are critical to
building the economy. The latest issue of the quarterly publication of North Korea’s
Social Science Institute - published on November 15, 2013, and viewed on January 19
- included an article titled, “Major Issues Pertaining to Making the North Korean
Economy Stronger by Establishing and Expanding Economic Development Zones.”
The article identified “creating the right political and military environment” as one of
the five important tasks for developing economic zones. The other four tasks were
building infrastructure such as roads and railroads, enacting laws for the special
economic zones that take into account the profit of the government and of investors,
providing benefits for foreign investors, and operating and managing projects in a way
that is suitable to the characteristics of the zones. In November 2013, North Korea
announced plans to set up 13 special economic development zones around and one
special economic zone in Sinuiju with the goal of attracting foreign capital and
developing rural regions. **“Before making an investment in a particular country,
investors are bound to consider the political and military situation there,” the
article said. “The basic objective of the political and military situation in an
economic development zone is to insure the stability of investment.”** “Some major
objectives to consider are stabilizing the political situation, eliminating the threat of
war, and strengthening military power,” the paper said. It argued that there is a critical
need for easing military tensions with South Korea and with the US, even if only to
attract foreign investment. Furthermore, the ROK-US joint military exercises to which
North Korea is so adamantly opposed place a direct burden on the soldiers and
civilians of the North. During the two months of the drills - when thousands of
American and South Korean troops are mobilized, fielding weaponry that is capable of
carrying out a nuclear strike - the North must go on emergency footing to counter this.
In North Korea, the military performs a variety of economic roles, including
construction, fishing, and trade. Consequently, it is possible to say that the ROK-US
exercises have a negative effect not only in military terms but also economically speaking. Another relevant factor here appears to be that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un mentioned “improving inter-Korean relations” on three separate occasions during his recent New Year’s address, along with promising an improvement in the people’s livelihoods in areas such as agriculture. “North Korea is attempting to create a peaceful environment so that it can build its economy,” said Jeong Chang-hyeon, adjunct professor at Kookmin University. “We can infer that this is why it is attempting to take the lead in dialogue with the South and with the U.S.” (Choi Hyun-june, “N. Korea Connects Politics and Military to Economic Development,” Hankyore, January 20, 2014)

Nago Mayor Inamine Susumu won re-election, dealing a setback to the government’s plans to build a replacement air base for the U.S. Marines in the Henoko district just weeks after Okinawa’s governor approved the deal. “This election was easy to understand. It was about one issue, the Henoko issue, and whether you were for or against the new base,” Inamine told supporters. “The people have spoken and they have said no.” Inamine, 68, defeated former Okinawa Assemblyman Bunshin Suematsu, 65, by a vote of 19,839 to 15,684. Turnout was high at 76.71 percent. His re-election comes less than a month after Okinawa Gov. Nakaima Hirokazu granted Tokyo permission to proceed with a base-related landfill project in Henoko Bay despite opposition from the mayor and the Nago city council. Inamine received support from traditional anti-base opponents as well as conservative and unaffiliated voters who were angered by what they saw as a backroom deal between Abe and Nakaima to sell out Nago in exchange for ¥346 billion in development assistance in fiscal 2014, as well as a promised ¥300 billion annually for Okinawa until 2021, despite lacking any guarantee Tokyo could keep the promise in the event of political change. Calls on Okinawa for Nakaima to resign before the next gubernatorial election, scheduled to be held by late November, are growing, and Inamine’s victory is likely to intensify efforts to oust him. (Eric Johnston, “Nago Mayor Wins Re-Election in Blow to Abe, U.S., Japan Times, January 19, 2014)

1/20/14 KCNA: “An American criminal, Kenneth Bae, was interviewed by local and foreign reporters at the Pyongyang Friendship Hospital [January 20] at his request. He said he called the press conference to clarify some facts. Over the past 15 months he, through meeting with officials of the Swedish embassy and calls and correspondence with his family, he correctly informed the U.S. government and his family of his criminal acts and humanitarian measures taken by the DPRK government in his behalf, he said, adding: But some media are spreading misinformation about me and launching smear campaign against the DPRK, driving me into a difficult situation. For example, the U.S. vice-president, at a press conference over the release of another U.S. citizen, Mr. Newman, in December last year, claimed that I have been detained here for no reason. Some time ago even my sister reportedly told reporters that I am not guilty. I think such facts enraged people here. This is why I am in a puzzle. Over the past five months I have been hospitalized, but now I am afraid I may be sent back to the labor camp. Worse still, I am afraid the pardon for me becomes more difficult. To cite another example, I was told that some media reports alleged that the DPRK is a ‘human rights violator,’ its human rights records are not good and that I have been treated unfairly.
What I would like to clarify here now is that there has been no human rights abuse and no unfair, severe act for me. The DPRK government has done every possible thing for me from the humanitarian point of view. It allowed me to contact with the Swedish embassy and have correspondence and calls with my family. It also gave me an opportunity to meet my mother here and offered me a medical service at the hospital when my disease got worse.

I, availing myself of this opportunity, call on the U.S. government, media and my family to stop link any smear campaign against the DPRK and false materials with me, making my situation worse. **I hope that I will be pardoned by the DPRK and go back to my family. I request the U.S. government, media and my family to pay deep concern and make all efforts to this end.** Bae gave answers to questions raised by reporters.” (KCNA, “American Criminal Interviewed,” January 20, 2014)

*Rodong Sinmun* bylined article: “Only when the north-south relations are improved to be turned into the ones of deep trust and unity, can the basic conditions for national reunification be provided and independent reunification, peace and prosperity be achieved by the concerted efforts of all Koreans. … Improving the north-south relations is the essential task for ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula and realizing the independent reunification of the country and the prosperity common to the nation. The nearly 70 year-long history of the Korean nation’s division teaches a bitter lesson that the escalated confrontation between the north and the south of Korea brings nothing but the lasting partition and war disasters. The north-south relations can never remain the ties of confrontation. Although differing ideologies and systems exist in the north and the south, they are not the reason of the distrust and confrontation. The inter-Korean relations should become the ties between the homogeneous compatriots and the ones of By Our Nation Itself, whereby they advance toward peace and reunification hand in hand. Converting the present inter-Korean ties plagued by distrust and confrontation into ones of trust and reconciliation is the best way for averting a war on the Korean Peninsula and achieving independent reunification, peace and prosperity by the concerted efforts of the nation. If the south Korean authorities give up the narrow-minded conception of confrontation and make a bold decision to join hands with compatriots in the north, there are no insurmountable difficulties in mending the inter-Korean relations. This was evidenced by the June 15 era of reunification.” (KCNA: “*Rodong Sinmun* Calls for Improved South-North Ties,” January 20, 2014)
Pyongyang and held hours of discussions with Kim Jong Il in October. DPRK Vice Marshal Jo Myong-rok had visited Washington weeks before that bearing a letter from Kim Jong Il for President Clinton. KEDO was functioning well and moving beyond its previous focus on building infrastructure at the site to real progress on the first of the two planned light water reactors at Kumho. Crucially, Kim Jong Il was already beginning to put in place elements of his economic reform package that would begin in July 2002. Finally, and very important, North-South dialogue was picking up speed following the June 15 summit. In those circumstances, it seems to me, there was considerable room for us to raise the HEU problem in ways that would keep the Agreed Framework process overall moving ahead. What we had learned after nearly 8 years of negotiating on various issues was that progress in one area was helpful getting the dialogue over tough spots in other areas. No doubt negotiations on HEU would have been difficult, no doubt opponents of the Agreed Framework (and these were not just neocons) would have insisted that the discovery of the North’s move onto the HEU route was a violation of the Agreed Framework. Nevertheless, based on our experience the developments I just mentioned, I think we had a good environment for tackling the HEU issue. That’s all you can ask when you go into negotiations. The idea that you’ll know ahead of time that the talks will succeed, and that you’ll get everything you want in the final agreement is fantasy.

Hani: In your response to my question about “the uranium enrichment program”, you mentioned, “…and that, it seemed to me, formed the foundation for eventually moving into talks with Pyongyang on both the missile and the highly enriched uranium (HEU) issues.” Did the Clinton administration perceive the issue as an HEU problem before Bush administration came into office?

Carlin: As I mentioned in the book, the Clinton Administration saw a developing HEU problem, but was waiting until the intelligence community gave its approval to raise the issue with the North in the diplomatic arena. Hani: Some people argued that the October 2000 joint communiqué included expressions indicating the U.S. and North Korea would deal with the uranium enrichment issue. Could you please explain to me which expressions represent those contexts?

Carlin: The section noting the relevance and positive example of the resolution of the Kumchang-ri issue was designed to provide an opening for discussing the HEU problem at some point. The exact passage is: “To this end, the two sides agreed on the desirability of greater transparency in carrying out their respective obligations under the Agreed Framework. In this regard, they noted the value of the access which removed U.S. concerns about the underground site at Kumchang-ri.” Note the phrase - “the value of access.” That formulation was used very deliberately. It is worth noting that we gave the North Koreans a draft of this document as early as January 2000, and we referred to it in meetings with the North Koreans throughout the year. As I recall, at talks with the North Koreans in Rome, we also broadly hinted about the possible need for further access, and I had the impression at the time they knew we had something specific in mind. As I note in the Chapter 17 in the book, I think it is worth reexamining the commonly accepted notion that the North Koreans were taken completely by surprise in October 2002 when the US delegation raised the enrichment issue. Hani: You mentioned that the action-reaction cycle between the U.S. and North Korea has been described as “the cycle” of North Korean provocation-negotiation-reward erroneously. Could you please explain to me the reason why it is wrong? Carlin: **We’ve become fixated on this idea of the “cycle” as if it describes something essential about**
North Korean policy and, in effect, absolves us of responsibility for shaping events. We seem to have forgotten that we (the US and South Korea) are in some sense part—a large part—of what goes on. Some North Korean actions ("provocations") are actually tactical moves, for example, an effort to apply pressure when the US or South Korea are laggard in implementing their side of a bargain. I once had a North Korean diplomat tell me that they don’t like operating on the edge of the cliff, but sometimes they feel they have to in order to get Washington or Seoul to take matters seriously and focus on solutions rather than just left the situation drift. That isn’t to say everything the North can be explained in these terms. I still don’t understand what the motivation was for the shelling of Yeonpyeong-do in 2010, an act completely and dangerously out of character with North Korean actions for the previous 40 years or so. In some sense, it might make more sense to view the larger problem less as one of North Korean cycles than it is of vicious circles, each side feeding the other’s worst tendencies. I’ve often thought that hardliners in the South were in a curious way actually the best friends of the hardliners in the North, and vice versa. It’s not as if these cycles/circles are a force of nature or an enduring fixture in the heavens. There are breaks, windows of opportunity when events can be nudged in one direction or another. Whether we take advantage of these windows, or indeed help create them, is another question. Hani: In your response to the “cycle” of the North Korea, you mentioned, “We seem to have forgotten that we (the U.S. and South Korea) are in some sense part—a large part—of what goes on. Some North Korean actions ("provocations") are actually tactical moves,...” and also wrote, “In some sense, it might make more sense to view the larger problem less as one of North Korean cycles than it is of vicious circles, each side feeding the other’s worst tendencies.” Could you please present one or two specific examples of your explanations for my clearer understanding? Carlin: During the Agreed Framework period, the North would sometimes slow or stop the canning of the spent fuel rods at Yongbyon, or delay visas for US experts involved in the canning process not simply to cause trouble but because the US was slow in fulfilling its own obligation. (Most often that was because we were laggard in shipping heavy fuel oil, an obligation under the Agreed Framework.) Such actions on the North’s part may seem minor from the distance of time, but when they are actually happening, these DPRK moves are magnified in importance and labeled either provocative or examples of bad faith. It is difficult to get people to consider them in the context of US actions. To take another example, the Panmunjom “axe incident” of August 1976 was a horrendous, completely unjustified overreaction on the North’s part, but the sequence of events is not as simple as commonly understood. Rather than an unprovoked attack coming out of the blue, the incident stemmed from a dispute over whether or not the UNC Command side could trim a tree in the Joint Security Area without the permission of the North Korean side. At the time of the slaying of the two US officers, no one in Washington seemed to know that the North Koreans had a few days earlier warned the UNC side not to trim the same tree. This is not a question of excusing the North’s actions, but rather of understanding the cycle that can lead to clashes. Hani: The United States and South Korean government have argued that the Agreed Framework have presented the “failure” of the Agreed Framework as major argument against negotiation with North Korea. How do you think about such argument? What’s your overall view on the Agreed Framework? Carlin: The Agreed Framework was much
more than the words on paper. Under its umbrella, there began a range of meetings and activities with the DPRK, a process of multilateral engagement and discussions with the North on a variety of important issues, including missiles. The North Koreans were not particularly interested in discussing missiles at first, but the US was insistent, and at that point keeping the Agreed Framework on track by keeping on the good side of the Americans was a central goal for Pyongyang. Washington tended to view the Agreed Framework primarily as a non-proliferation agreement, but I always saw it as something of broader significance. To the North Koreans, it was a way to operationalize Kim Il Song’s strategic decision to improve relations with the US, as a hedge against Chinese and Russian influence. It was not about getting heavy fuel oil or light water reactors, it was about achieving more normal relations with the United States. For that reason, in some ways, Pyongyang may have been more committed to the Agreed Framework in the early years than was Washington, which at that point didn’t place much importance on the broader political reach of the framework. For that reason, sustaining the Agreed Framework over its initial four or five years was a challenge. It was already wobbling by the time of the North’s rocket launch in August 1998 and the Kumch'ang-ri episode, both of which opponents of the framework raised as reasons to scrap the deal. Instead of scrapping it, however, the Clinton Administration moved to reevaluate it -- and the entire basis for engaging the North -- in the Perry process, which was an intellectually honest and thoroughgoing review of the policy. The result was that in its final 18 months, the Clinton administration spent a lot of time and effort on putting the framework on a stronger foundation, revitalizing and reshaping the agreement in order to move it to a new level. In many ways, the October 2000 joint communique symbolized that new plateau. The idea that the framework “failed” comes exclusively from events swirling around how the Bush administration handled the HEU problem, and the charge that the North “cheated.” It is further based on the mistaken notion that because the Agreed Framework was bilateral, the North felt it could violate the deal without serious consequences. Two points here need to be understood very clearly. First, senior members of the Bush administration came to office deeply opposed to the Agreed Framework, with absolutely no commitment to sustaining it, and with every intention to doing away with the agreement if they possibly could. From the time Bush’s inauguration in January 2001 until the Kelly visit to Pyongyang in October 2002-almost two years-there were no US-DPRK talks outside of largely sterile contacts through the “New York channel.” In other words, by the time James Kelly visited Pyongyang, the Agreed Framework had been virtually suffocated. The only part of it that was working - the Korean Energy Development Organization - was on the chopping block in Washington. The second important point is that once the Kelly visit ended and senior officials in Washington became transfixed by the idea that the North had admitted that it had an HEU program, the thinking turned completely to how to punish the North-not how to deal with the HEU problem while keeping the Agreed Framework intact, but simply how to punish the North. At that point, Washington did not care if the Agreed Framework disappeared, and had no idea of what to put in its place. There is no doubt in my mind that the North’s pursuit of an HEU program was a major miscalculation. The details of the decision making in Pyongyang to go that route we will only learn at a later date, if at all. In any case, it was very typical of Pyongyang’s view that it can exploit the seams of agreements it reaches. That is - or ought to be - understood as a given in dealing
with North Korea, and it is something that can be factored into any serious agreements. It is a reason to be careful, but it is not an excuse for policy paralysis. The question that faced us at the time was always one of balance—how to make sure that US interests were protected and our goals achieved while dealing with the inevitable twists and turns on the road of implementation. It was absolutely imperative to stop the North’s HEU program, and for that, we needed both a careful strategy and the best possible tactical environment for achieving that goal. I don’t know if, in the end, our approach would have worked, but it is beyond dispute that the alternative path that was chosen, destroying the Agreed Framework in favor of Six Party talks, has failed.

Hani: You pointed out that the neocons had no intention of improving the Agreed Framework and wanted to destroy it. So, I am wondering which country was more responsible for destroying the Agreed Framework. Carlin: The neocons wanted to do away with the Agreed Framework, and the North Koreans certainly played into their hands. If Washington had wanted to keep the Agreed Framework—strengthen it, update it, improve it—I think those would have been possible and certainly the wiser course. At this point, assigning responsibility is probably less useful than studying and learning from decisions (on both sides) that had bad consequences. Hani: You described the details of the Kang Sok Ju–James Kelly meeting held in October 2002. In particular, you wrote, “Looking back years later, several of the delegation members saw what had gone wrong in their first reaction.” Do you mean by those expressions that some delegation members admitted their wrong interpretation of Kang’s statements? Carlin: Several people eventually admitted that Kang’s remarks were more ambiguous than they first concluded. Having seen the notes of what Kang said soon after the meeting, it seemed to me that he never “admitted,” nor did he explicitly deny, anything. In any case, I never understood what difference it made what the North Koreans said in this regard at that meeting. If we had evidence that they were pursuing an HEU program, then that was a problem and it had to be solved. Whether or not they admitted it—explicitly or implicitly—or denied it wasn’t relevant. If Washington hadn’t been so intent on doing away with the Agreed Framework, a more fruitful approach would have been to do what we had done in November 1999—tell the North Koreans that we had evidence that they were engaged in activity that was going to make it impossible to move ahead with the Agreed Framework until the problem was resolved, and then go into negotiations to fix the problem. Instead, we told the North Koreans, in so many words, that they had been caught cheating, and until they fixed the problem there was nothing to talk about. Hani: September 2005 Joint Statement failed to be implemented due to the verification issue. Which party was more responsible for a failure of Joint Statement and six party talks? Carlin: There is an assumption in this question the 9/5 joint statement was a solid agreement to begin with. My own view is that it never had a strong base, and that whatever shallow foundation it did have was destroyed immediately by the final US statement at the meeting delivered by Ambassador Hill, and then by the Treasury announcement the following day on Banco Delta Asia (BDA). Things were cobbled together again after BDA was resolved—which, notably, was soon after the North’s first nuclear test in October 2006. But this was only patchwork. By the time the verification issue arose in 2007 and 2008, there was not much to support or sustain the process. Everything was focused on verification, there was little in the way supporting structure. The whole edifice was extremely vulnerable. It was like skating on
thin ice that is cracking behind you as you go. You have to hope to skate fast enough to avoid falling in. Hani: The U.S. and North Korea reached a temporary agreement on February 2012 and they published the different versions of agreement. You mentioned that the differences were not minor. Despite such differences, why did they publish Leap Day Deal? Carlin: A key problem for me is that we don’t know all the details of what went on in talks. That’s not to say that there are “secrets” about the talks, but that the nuances of the negotiations, and especially the final stages, aren’t yet understood. My experience is that it’s very hard to know what went on in talks unless you were actually sitting in the room, and even then, many of the participants will differ on what transpired. Those sorts of differences may be less important when there is an agreed text at the end of the negotiations. In this case, there was no agreed text; I don’t know why not. If the argument is that there was no time to work out an agreed text, or that it would have been too difficult, that would seem to weaken the idea that there really was a “deal” to begin with. Hani: What did you want to focus on in your book? Carlin: Mainly to clear away the myths that have grown up over the past 13 years about what is possible in terms of dealing with the North. We have so burdened ourselves with stereotypes and misimpressions that it is no wonder we seem to be tied to the mast while the ship slowly sinks. If our assumptions about the situation in the North are faulty, or if our understanding of how the situation reached this point is skewed, then it’s pretty unlikely that we’ll be able to achieve our goals. If we believe that it is impossible to negotiate with North Korea or that reaching agreements with them is a waste of time because they will only break them anyway, we will not only be misreading history but also dooming ourselves to shortsighted policies. Hani: If there were major updated parts in earlier sixteen chapters, please let me know about those ones. Carlin: I added recently available information on a number of the earlier sections, for example: Kim Il Song’s trip to Beijing in 1975; the 1976 Panmunjom incident; and Chinese efforts to engage South Korea in the late 1990s. Hani: Secretary of State John F. Kerry said in ABC’s This Week last month North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s execution of his uncle makes denuclearization even more of a priority for the United States. What effect do you think the execution of Jang Song Taek on U.S policy toward North Korea? Carlin: I have no idea. Our public reaction struck me as somewhat hysterical. It seems to me it would have been enough to say that we had seen reports on events in the North, that we were following the situation closely, and that we remained fully prepared to cope with all contingencies. It’s probably natural for those people writing the talking points to connect Jang’s execution to the nuclear issue. Washington is fixated by the nuclear issue (they would say, rather, that they are focused like a laser on the issue), and in this mind-set, virtually everything that happens is in some sense linked to it. To some people that might seem a sensible, principled, and effective position to adopt. To others, it might look like a policy straight jacket. Hani: You have observed the U.S.-North Korean relationships for decades very closely. What are the fundamental causes they could not resolve the stalemate? Carlin: The stars are rarely aligned for the two sides to engage and make real progress. One side or the other is usually out of phase. The North Koreans are much smaller and weaker; it is rare for them to take the initiative out of concern that they will be exposing their vulnerabilities. That doesn’t mean the North Koreans don’t think seriously about various options, but that, at least in their minds, the U.S. has to make the first move, even if it is only a positive gesture. I recall once a ranking North Korean diplomat was
visiting the United States at a crucial time, and it made a good deal of sense for us to meet with him. Washington was hesitant to initiate the contact, windows of opportunity closed, and we were running out of time. At the last minute, arguments in favor of contacting the diplomat won the day, but by then he was at the airport, boarding his plane. When months later, I ran into this diplomat and mentioned that it would have been helpful if a meeting had taken place while he was in the US, he nodded. “Yes, it would have been,” he said, adding that he had some ideas to raise if there had been a meeting. In that case, I asked, why didn’t you call us? His reply highlighted the problem: “I couldn’t take the first step,” he said. “My instructions were to wait for your side to contact me.”

Hani: Please let me know your proposals to improve the relations between the U.S. and North Korea.

Carlin: I’m long out of the government and not in a position to make recommendations.

Hani: What do you think about prospects for inter-Korea relations considering the New Year speeches of both leaders?

Carlin: All I know is that when what look like openings appear, it’s important to test and, if possible, build on them. Waiting for something better to come along has never proved to be wise. In some sense, the old adage “good things come to those who wait,” is exactly wrong when dealing with the Korean situation. At the moment, the two sides look to be sniffing the air and sending half-way positive signals. I don’t try to predict where things will go, sometimes it’s hard enough just to figure out where they are at the moment.


1/21/14

The U.S. said it was ready to send an envoy to North Korea to bring back a jailed American who pleaded in front of reporters to go home. Kenneth Bae, a tour operator arrested in November 2012, made a public confession of wrongdoing — often seen as a prerequisite for the totalitarian state to release foreign prisoners. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the U.S. remained “very concerned” about Bae’s health and was “actively” working to release him. “We continue to urge the DPRK authorities to grant Bae amnesty and immediate release,” Psaki said. Another U.S. official voiced hope that North Korea’s decision for Bae to address reporters “signals their willingness to release him.” The official said that Robert King, the U.S. envoy on human rights in North Korea who has visited in the past, was prepared to bring home Bae. “We have offered to send Ambassador King to Pyongyang to secure Mr. Bae’s release. We have asked the North Koreans this, and await their early response,” the official said. (AFP, “U.S. Ready to Send Envoy to N.K. to Free Citizen,” January 21, 2014)

The United States and South Korea are concerned about the recent development in North Korea and its possible provocations, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William Burns said, expressing commitment to talks for denuclearizing the communist country. Burns made the remarks during a press briefing in Seoul following the meeting with Seoul’s First Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kyung-hyun. The deputy secretary is here for a two-day visit from Monday on the first leg of his three-nation visit to Northeast Asia. “I think the United States and our friends here share a lot of concerns about the recent behavior of the DPRK leadership, and the dangers of further reckless behavior and provocations in the future,” Burns told reporters. The deputy secretary also vowed continued cooperation with South Korea “in dealing with challenges posed by the North Korean leadership,” expressing “strong American support for ROK President
Park’s principled approach” to North Korea, and to South Korea’s defense and security. “Regarding the possibility of North Korea’s (military) provocations, both sides re-confirmed their former stance that they will strongly react to (North Korean) provocations, if they occur, on the basis of allied South Korea-U.S. defense posture,” South Korea’s foreign ministry said in a statement, following the vice-ministerial talk. (Yonhap, “U.S. Concerned about Reckless N. Korea: Deputy Secretary,” January 21, 2014)

South Korea said it will allow North Korean athletes to compete in the Asian Games to be held in Incheon from September 19 to October 4. The North has yet to officially inform the committee of its plans. (Yonhap, “S. Korea to Allow N. Korea to Compete in Incheon Asian Games,” January 21, 2014)

China yesterday unveiled a memorial to a Korean national hero who assassinated a Japanese official a century ago as Sino-Japanese relations hover at their lowest point in years. In 1909, Ahn Jung-gueun shot and killed Hirobumi Ito, Japan’s first prime minister and its top official on the then-Japan-occupied Korean Peninsula, at a railway station in the northeast city of Harbin. Ahn was hanged by Japanese forces in March 1910, when Korea also formally came under Japanese colonial rule. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide criticized the opening of the memorial. “The coordinated move by China and South Korea based on a one-sided view (of history) is not conducive to building peace and stability” he said in Tokyo. “The move is truly regrettable as we had made our stance and our concerns clear to the Chinese and South Korean governments,” Suga said, adding Ahn was “a terrorist who received a death sentence.” The memorial hall that opened yesterday Sunday at Harbin Railway Station honors Ahn, who is viewed as a hero in South Korea for his resistance against Japanese rule. Ahn shot Ito on October 26, 1909. The memorial got under way after South Korean President Park Geun-hye suggested erecting a monument to Ahn to Chinese President Xi Jinping during a meeting last June. Ihara Junichi, head of the Foreign Ministry’s Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, lodged protests by phone with ministers at both embassies in Tokyo. “People have cherished the memory of Ahn for the past century,” Sun Yao, the vice governor of China’s Heilongjiang province, said at the unveiling Sunday, Xinhua reported. “Today we erect a memorial to him and call on peace-loving people around the world to unite, resist invasions and oppose war.” (AFP, Jiji, Kyodo, “Korean Who Assassinated Japan’s First Leader Honored in China,” Japan Times, January 21, 2014)

1/22/14

Rodong Sinmun: “The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is a goal common to the nation and invariable will of the army and people of the DPRK. The U.S. threat of nuclear war against the DPRK is a fundamental factor which spawned the nuclear issue on the peninsula. The U.S. has systematically introduced nuclear weapons into south Korea from the period of the Korean War and frequently staged small and large-scale drills for a nuclear war against the north, posing a constant nuclear threat to the DPRK. These nuclear war moves of the U.S. compelled the DPRK to have access to nuclear weapons as a means for protecting peace on the peninsula and the sovereignty of the nation. Had the DPRK failed to have access to nukes, it would have upset the equilibrium of force on the peninsula and the Korean nation would have met such
tragic fate as suffering a nuclear disaster imposed by the aggressors. The DPRK’s nuclear force is a means to cope with the U.S. nuclear threat, to all intents and purposes. They are by no means aimed at blackmailing and hurting compatriots. Its nuclear force serves as an all-powerful treasured sword common to the nation to put an end to the U.S. nuclear threat and blackmail and defend peace and security of the nation. The south Korean authorities remain unchanged in their distrust and hostility toward their compatriots. Absolutely unjustifiable is the double-dealing posture and stand of allowing nukes of foreign forces designed to do harm to the compatriots and denying the nukes of compatriots for protecting all Koreans. **If the south Korean authorities truly want the improved relations between the north and the south of Korea and peace and denuclearization on the peninsula, they should stop such reckless acts as introducing U.S. nuclear offensive means into south Korea as proposed by the DPRK.** (KCNA, “Denuclearization of Korean Peninsula Is Invariable Will of Army and People: Rodong Sinmun,” January 22, 2014)

The Eighth U.S. Army is seeking to deploy more than 80 Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles to South Korea in the coming years in an apparent move to strengthen its preparedness for possible scenarios of North Korean instability. The EUSA said that pending approval from the U.S. Department of Army, the heavily armored vehicles will be sent from outside Korea to unspecified U.S. military units on the peninsula. Currently, there are no MRAPs in Korea. “Recognizing the value of MRAPs, the Eighth Army identified an enduring requirement for MRAPs for use in support of both logistics and command and control operations,” the army told Korea Herald. “Eighth Army continues to work closely with the Department of the Army in the planning, procurement and fielding of more than 80 MRAPs in the coming years.” (Song Sang-ho, “U.S. to Send 80 Mine-Resistant Vehicles to Korea,” Korea Herald, January 22, 2014)

Egyptian telecom service provider Orascom, which provides mobile services in North Korea, is unable to send back around US$400 million of its investments, Voice of America reported. An audit report by Deloitte posted on Orascom’s website recently says, “North Korea has implemented currency control restrictions and, in particular, rules surrounding the repatriation of dividends to foreign investors.” Orascom started offering 3G mobile services in North Korea in a joint venture with North Korea’s postal service in 2008. Koryo Link is 75-percent owned by Orascom and 25 percent by the North. It has managed to attract 2 million subscribers. According to the audit report, Koryo Link’s gross profit during the first nine months of last year rose 40 percent from the same period of 2012 to $230 million thanks to a rise in the number of subscribers. But red tape is preventing it from sending back the profits. (Chosun Ilbo, “Egyptian Telecom’s Investment Frozen in N. Korea,” January 24, 2014)
for this tragic and disgraceful history of the Korean nation which started following
the liberation of the country. Firmly determined to put an end to the history of the
territorial partition and national split in view of the hard reality to which the Korean
nation can no longer remain a passive on-looker, the supreme leadership of the DPRK
in the New Year Address clarified internally and externally realistic ways of opening a
fresh phase of national reunification. The ardent appeal sent by the NDC of the DPRK
to the south Korean authorities on January 16 represents an important proposal for
opening a wide avenue for improving the north-south relations. The important
proposal of the DPRK reflects the steadfast will of its army and people to improve the
north-south relations by concerted efforts of the two sides, not asking about all
inglorious happenings in the past. This offer also reflects the desire and wishes of all
Koreans for independent reunification, peace and prosperity of the country.
Regretfully, however, the south Korean authorities still remain unchanged in its
improper attitude and negative stand towards the proposal. What is most important
for mending the inter-Korean ties is to have a proper attitude and stance towards this
issue. The issue of improving the inter-Korean ties is a prerequisite for achieving the
national reconciliation and unity and the starting point to provide a shortcut to
reunification. The DPRK has already unilaterally opted for halting all acts of getting on
the nerves of south Korea and slander ing it. What is also important for paving a wide
avenue for mending the north-south relations is to make a bold decision to stop all
hostile military acts, the biggest hurdle stoking distrust and confrontation. The
creation of atmosphere is required for repairing the inter-Korean relations but
what is more important is to definitely terminate hostile military acts, the main
obstacle to it. The DPRK did not urge the south Korean authorities to stop ordinary
military drills. It urged them to halt drills for a war of aggression to be staged
against their compatriots in collusion with outside forces. The south Korean
authorities should not thoughtlessly doubt, misinterpret and rashly reject our sincere,
important proposal. The north-south relations will be improved on a solid basis only
when both sides take realistic measures to prevent impending nuclear disasters with
connected efforts of the Korean nation. The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is
a goal common to the nation as it should be realized by concerted efforts of all
Koreans. The south Korean authorities should have no doubt about the DPRK’s will for
denuclearization. No matter how many regimes and authorities have been replaced,
the south Korean authorities should utter any word after having a proper
understanding of the root cause of the nuclear issue on the peninsula. Before finding
fault with the nation’s precious nuclear force for self-defense to which the DPRK
had access, they should make a bold decision to stop their dangerous acts of
introducing outsiders’ nukes to do harm to their compatriots. It is our
determination to create an atmosphere of reconciliation and unity, completely
halt hostile military acts, realize the reunion of separated families and relatives,
resume the tour of Mt. Kumgang and reenergize multi-faceted north-south
cooperation and exchanges. Unshakable is the stand of the service personnel and
people of the DPRK to pave a wide avenue for mending the north-south relations by
connected efforts of the Korean nation. Improved inter-Korean relations precisely mean
the independent reunification, peace and prosperity desired by all Koreans.” (KCNA,
“NDC of DPRK Sends Open Letter to South Korean Side,” January 24, 2014)
The United States is updating its contingency plans for a possible regime collapse in North Korea and various other scenarios, a top military commander said. Adm. Samuel Locklear, head of the U.S. Pacific Command, said his troops have “detailed planning” for many different types of scenarios of what might unfold on the Korean Peninsula. “And one of those would be a rapidly changing situation that would require stabilization of the peninsula. So that planning is ongoing,” he said at a Pentagon news conference. The admiral voiced worries about Kim’s leadership. His behavior “makes me wonder whether or not he is always in the rational decision-making mode,” Locklear said. He described the nuclear-armed North as a “potentially very dangerous place.” The commander in charge of U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific region made clear that the U.S. will continue annual joint military drills with South Korea as scheduled. “We don’t plan to stop the exercises,” he said. “We are going to continue to do them as long as the risk on the Korean Peninsula persists.” On the Pentagon’s increased deployment of “rotational” troops and advanced weapons to Korea, Locklear said it is aimed at maximizing the combat readiness of the allies. He dismissed a view that such a move may reflect a change in the U.S. defense strategy on the peninsula. The Pentagon announced a decision to deploy 800 additional Army troops and advanced weapons just south of the border between the two Koreas for nine months from February 1. It also plans to send a dozen F-16 fighter jets to South Korea for a temporary mission. “It got played out like it was a big strategic move, but in reality it was just part of the pre-planned decision we had made in the alliance to make sure we had the most capable forces on the peninsula,” Locklear said. Meanwhile, he stressed the need to establish a key military communication channel with China. “I don’t have the ability to pick up a phone and talk directly to a PLA navy admiral or general at the time of a crisis. And we need to work on that,” he said, using the acronym for the formal name of China’s military, the People’s Liberation Army. Washington and Beijing are discussing the issue but “things take time,” he said. He added he is concerned about the growing risk of conflict between China and Japan, stuck in territorial stand-offs. “Any time you have two large powers, two large economic powers, two large military powers that have a disagreement that they’re not talking to each other about that has no clear diplomatic end-state in sight … the risk calculation can grow,” he said. (Yonahp, “U.S. Updating N.K. Contingency Plans: Pacific Commander,” Korea Herald, January 24, 2014)

North Korea made an abrupt proposal for the reunions of separated families living in both Koreas, and the South Korean government immediately welcomed the proposal. The North Korean Red Cross proposed holding the reunions at the Mount Kumgang resort “at a convenient time” after the Lunar New Year holiday, Pyongyang’s Korean Central News Agency said, adding that the proposal was made through a telephone message sent to the president of South Korea’s Red Cross. The North said in the message that the separated family reunions are in accordance with the wishes at home and abroad to improve inter-Korean relations. Seoul's Unification Ministry welcomed the North Korean proposal, confirming that the Red Cross message was delivered through the Panmunjom channel at 6:30 p.m. a reply on details of the reunions, including the timing and preparatory consultations, to the North later. Pyongyang blamed Seoul for the long delays in the separated family reunions in the message, the ministry said, adding that it will send a reply on details of the reunions, including the
timing and preparatory consultations, to the North later. (Yonhap, “North Korea Proposes Separated Family Reunions,” Korea Herald, January 24, 2014) On January 27, South Korea proposed in a message to North Korea that the sides hold a new round of family reunions at Mount Kumgang, a scenic mountain resort on North Korea's east coast, from February 17 to 22. The South also offered to hold Red Cross talks on January 29 at the border village of Panmunjom to discuss details of a new round of family reunions. “We hope that North Korea will positively respond to our proposal,” said Kim Eui-do, spokesman for the unification ministry in charge of inter-Korean relations. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Proposes Family Reunions with N. Korea in Mid-February,” January 27, 2014)

The State and Treasury departments are investigating whether Dennis Rodman broke the law on his most recent trip to North Korea, The Daily Beast reports. The former basketball star reportedly offered luxury gifts to North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un for his 31st birthday, including expensive whiskey and a fur coat for his wife. The gifts would violate the 2010 International Emergency Economic Powers Act, as well as several United Nations sanctions. (Julian Pecquet, “Report: Rodman under Investigation for North Korea Trip,” The Hill, January 24, 2014)

President Park Geun-hye said she was skeptical about North Korea’s recent conciliatory proposals, including the offer to hold reunions for separated families, saying such peaceful gestures were always a prelude to an attack on South Korea. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, met with Park at the Blue House. The meeting was part of a trip to the region to better understand North Korean affairs and other diplomatic issues in Northeast Asia. “Given our previous experiences, such conciliatory propaganda [by North Korea] has always been followed by provocation,” Park told Rubio, according to transcripts released by the Blue House. “Their words were always inconsistent with their actions. “Now it is the time for them to prove [their sincerity] not by words but by actions.” “If North Korea indeed wants peace on the Korean Peninsula, they should come forward to resolve the matter of its nuclear weapons program, the biggest hurdle for peace on the Korean Peninsula,” Park told Rubio on Saturday. “North Korea is becoming increasingly unpredictable, and the two allies [South Korea and the United States] should closely cooperate to maintain tightened security.” The Korea-U.S. joint military exercises are scheduled for early March, and the South Korean government will soon be sending official notifications to China and North Korea about the drills, the source said. However, a military official told JoongAng Ilbo that U.S. aircraft and strategic bombers would not be participating in the coming drills. “Last year, we mobilized bombers for the drills due to the highest military tensions raised by North Korea,” the military official said. “But this year’s situation is not so tense as to bring the bombers.” (Kim Hee-jin, “Park Demands Actions, Not Just Words, by North,” JoongAng Ilbo, January 27, 2014) “All of a sudden, North Korea has come out recently with a campaign of conciliatory propaganda,” Park said during the meeting. “From past experience, every time it has waged this kind of campaign, there has been a provocation, or it has said and done the opposite.” She went on to call for closer coordination with Washington. “Judging from things like the execution of Jang Song-thaek, North Korea is increasingly becoming an unpredictable
place,” Park said. “At times like this, our two countries [South Korea and the US] need to work together closely to establish a security posture.” Park also reiterated her stance that unification could be a way of “relieving the suffering of the North Korean population.” “The most basic means of addressing the suffering of North Koreans is by achieving unification,” she said. “In addition to bringing peace to the Korean Peninsula, it would also be a way of securing the peace and stability of the other countries in the region.” Park also spoke out about the North Korean nuclear program. “If North Korea wants peace on the Korean Peninsula, it needs to take steps to address the nuclear issue, which is the single biggest obstacle to peace on the Korean Peninsula,” she said. “Dialogue with North Korea must be substantive to achieve denuclearization,” she said. “They cannot simply buy time to refine their nuclear weapons through dialogue for the sake of dialogue.” Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies, recommended a softer tack. “Even if the President feels a strong sense of distrust, it isn’t appropriate to openly characterize North Korea’s calls for dialogue as a ‘disguised peace offensive,’” Yang said. “She needs to consider North Korea’s sincerity closely and manage and control her message on North Korea to the outside.” Paik Hak-soon, a senior researcher at the Sejong Institute, expressed similar concerns. “What worries me is that she seems to view North Korea as politically unstable depending on the analyses of a very limited group of people - the Blue House national security office and conservative scholars - and she’s moving forward on that basis,” Paik said. (Seok Jinhwan and Choi Hyun-june, “Pres. Park Maintains Her Critical Stance on N. Korea,” Hankyore, January 27, 2014)

Methamphetamine, known as orum, or “ice,” is a rare commodity manufactured and sold in North Korea, where most factories sit idle, the equipment rusted or looted. The North Korean government once produced the drug, and others that are illicit in the West. Resourceful entrepreneurs have since set up their own small facilities, and evidence suggests that they are distributing the drug beyond the nation’s borders. Last month, five alleged drug smugglers — Chinese, British and Thai men among them — appeared in federal court in New York, extradited from Thailand in a plot to smuggle 220 pounds of crystal meth to the United States. They said that their product originated in North Korea. A Harvard University researcher, Sheena Chestnut Greitens, has tracked 16 drug busts from 2008 to the present in China involving crystal meth from North Korea in quantities of up to 22 pounds. “Meth is a product you can make in bathtubs or trailers,” Greitens said. “You have a wide range of people involved in production and trafficking.”. Through the 1990s, the North Korean government ran the production of opium, meth and other drugs for Office 39, a unit raising hard currency for late leader Kim Jong Il, according to narcotics investigators. But the North Korean government has largely gone out of the drug business, according to the U.S. State Department’s 2013 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report. (Barbara Demick, “In North Korea, Meth Is Offered As Casually As a Cup of Tea,” Los Angeles Times, January 27, 2014)

Hastings: “The actors within the North Korean business community can be categorized by the scale of their business operations, the sophistication of their transactions, and nature of their relationship to the North Korean state. At the lowest level are the private traders (mostly women) who do business in North Korean won in the informal markets
that have sprung up as survival mechanisms in the North Korean countryside. Aside from bribes to local officials when necessary, they probably have little connection to the state. Second are the private traders who do business in hard currencies, such as Chinese yuan, US dollars, or Euros, who may have to pay more substantial rents to local and mid-level officials to operate. Third are what might be called hybrid traders - actual state officials who use their position to go into business for themselves, and private traders with more substantive connections to state institutions, either because they have formed networks with local officials seeking rents in exchange for permission to operate and access to certain state resources, or because they have bought their way to state status. A private trader with a black market opportunity, for example, might partner with a licensed state organization that can buy and sell in China. The trader can then be given ranks in state organization and invest money through them, akin to Chinese ‘red hat’ companies who buy status as state firms to take advantage of certain business incentives. Fourth are state-owned entities with trading licenses. With the collapse of the North Korean economy after the end of the Cold War, and the years of famine in the late 1990s, even state entities (albeit at the provincial and local level) were told to fend for themselves, or more specifically, they were told to engage in profit-making enterprises that could then be taxed by the central state. The results is that state-associated organizations (that is, party, state, and military organizational units) often have subordinated trading corporations which are quite entrepreneurial and use state connections to make money through anything sellable. Some can export resources, build partnerships with foreign investors, or establish enterprises outside of North Korea, subject to the central state’s power to grant licenses to do business overseas. Others let their workers work in the market in exchange for a portion of the proceeds, which is then taxed by the central state. Finally, there are the trading entities of the central state - the highest levels of the military, party, and cabinet, and the agencies, such as Bureaus 38 and 39, specifically tasked with trading both mundane goods, natural resources, weapons, and other goods for the purpose of bringing in foreign exchange to support the top echelon of North Korean society. … While North Korean diplomats had been implicated in a number of smuggling incidents since the 1970s, and poppy cultivation in North Korea had been ongoing since the Japanese occupation, official large-scale state production of drugs, first heroin, and later crystal methamphetamine, apparently ramped up in the early 1990s on the order of first Kim Il-Sung, and then Kim Jong-II, as a way of raising hard currency in the aftermath of the loss of subsidies from the Soviet Union. State-encouraged drug production and trafficking was thus at its height in the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2000s. However, whether due to international pressure or concern over spreading drug addiction within North Korea itself, the North Korean central state apparently abandoned large-scale drug production as a matter of formal policy some time between 2004 and 2007. The central state’s turn against drug use and trafficking seems to have begun in earnest in North Korea at least by August 2005, with crackdowns in Sinuiju, Hamheung, and Pyongyang. Where drug users used to be sent to labor camps for detoxification, they were now sent for longer sentences at prison camps. The state was actively cracking down on drug production and drug addicts by 2007 (as well as, at the same time, placing restrictions on private traders within the country). For instance, the annual US presidential report on countries of concern in drug trafficking stopped mentioning North Korea after
The last verified drug trafficking incidents with official North Korean state involvement were in 2004, and the scholarly and analytical literature devoted to North Korean drug trafficking dried up around the same time. … There are several implications from this paper for our understanding of the relationship between the North Korean state and North Korean trade network’s integration into the global economy. First, changes in state involvement were associated with changes in the governance and geography of the networks that had consequences for the societies around North Korea. While Japan and Taiwan saw dramatic drops in North Korean drug exports after 2004, China as both a transit point and a destination for North Korean-produced drugs bore the brunt of the change in geographic scope. Yanbian, for instance, saw 407 drug cases in 2006, with 10502 grams of ice confiscated. By 2010, this figure had more than doubled to 924 drug cases, with 20,700 grams of ice confiscated. Convincing a state to give up drug trafficking may, depending on the domestic context, merely result in a territorial shift and restructuring of drug trafficking networks rather than their disappearance. Second, while various analysts have argued the apparent drop in state-centered trafficking since the early 2000s may be due to the North Korean state using more plausibly denial means, the paper suggests that if indeed the North Korean central state is still engaged in drug trafficking, it is not using state resources outside of North Korea, and the central state is capturing a considerably smaller portion of the value of drug trafficking than before, although its ‘taxation’ system on state officials ameliorates this somewhat.” (Justin V. Hastings, “The Economic Geography of North Korean Drug Trafficking Networks,” Review of International Political Economy (forthcoming)

South Korea carried out a live-fire drill on its northwestern islands despite North Korea’s warning of “grave consequences,” but the closely-watched exercise ended without clashes with the communist state. Ahead of today’s exercise, the North’s National Defense Commission sent a fax through the western military hotline to National Security Office chief Kim Jang-soo urging President Park Geun-hye to cancel it, defense ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said. "North Korea called on South Korea to stop the live-fire artillery exercise, threatening grave consequences," Kim said during a morning briefing. The South Korean defense ministry’s policy director immediately replied to the North to stress that the naval drill is a “legitimate exercise” that is held in its own territorial waters, and the family reunions should not be affected by the exercise, Kim said. The South Korean military is maintaining a firm readiness against any North Korean attacks and will strike back if provoked, Kim added. Later in the day, artillery batteries stationed at Yeonpyeong and Baengnyeong islands, located just south of the western maritime border, carried out the live-fire exercise for an hour, involving K-9 self-propelled howitzers, tank guns and Vulcan anti-aircraft guns. There were no special movements by the North Korean military, according to military officials. The routine drill was closely watched amid rising hope of thawed inter-Korean ties as the two Koreas are seeking to hold reunions for families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War in mid-February. Following Pyongyang’s recent peace gestures, Seoul officials have been analyzing the intentions behind the unpredictable regime’s recent move, while keeping close tabs on the North Korean military. The North Korean military has been carrying out its winter drills since early December, but it has temporarily stopped sending propaganda leaflets through the border since earlier this
North Korea has temporarily stopped flying propaganda leaflets to South Korea near its western border since the communist state offered a series of peace gestures earlier this month, multiple sources said. Its military had sent large numbers of leaflets using hot air balloons near its western front, starting in early December. The leaflets, under the name of the Korean People’s Army, threatened to mercilessly strike Marine Corps bases on South Korea’s northwestern islands, stressing its words were not empty. Since Pyongyang called on Seoul to halt all acts provoking and slandering the other side in mid-January, propaganda balloons have not been detected near the western front, sources familiar with the matter said. “As the North Korean military has halted sending propaganda leaflets in the last two weeks, we are conducting an in-depth analysis into their intentions,” a senior military official said, asking for anonymity. “Leaflets that strongly denounce South Korea have not been found near Baengnyeong and Yeonpyeong Islands.” Marine Corps troops are stationed on the front-line islands in the Yellow Sea, where several naval skirmishes with North Korea have taken place in the past decade. Another source said the leaflets haven’t been collected near the northwestern islands since January 4, noting an intelligence analysis is currently underway. “At this point, it is not clear whether North Korea didn’t fly leaflets due to weather conditions or stopped because of a certain intention,” the source said. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Holds Live-Fire Drill Despite North’s Warning,” January 28, 2014) North Korea has temporarily stopped flying propaganda leaflets to South Korea near its western border since the communist state offered a series of peace gestures earlier this month, multiple sources said. Its military had sent large numbers of leaflets using hot air balloons near its western front, starting in early December. The leaflets under the name of the Korean People’s Army threatened to mercilessly strike Marine Corps bases on South Korea’s northwestern islands, stressing its words were not empty. Since Pyongyang called on Seoul to halt all acts provoking and slandering the other side in mid-January, propaganda balloons have not been detected near the western front, sources familiar with the matter said. “As the North Korean military has halted sending propaganda leaflets in the last two weeks, we are conducting an in-depth analysis into their intentions,” a senior military official said, asking for anonymity. “Leaflets that strongly denounce South Korea have not been found near Baengnyeong and Yeonpyeong Islands.” Marine Corps troops are stationed on the front-line islands in the Yellow Sea, where several naval skirmishes with North Korea took place in the past decade. Another source said the leaflets haven’t been collected near the northwestern islands since January 4, noting intelligence analysis is currently underway. “At this point, it is not clear whether North Korea didn’t fly leaflets due to weather conditions or stopped because of a certain intention,” the source said. (Yonhap, “North Temporarily Stops Sending Propaganda Leaflets to South,” Korea Herald, January 28, 2014)
cross the border only during a designated time, an obstacle to the overall competitiveness of the complex. "The new system will significantly reduce the time required for entry procedures from 13 seconds per person to five seconds, and from 15 seconds per car to seven," a ministry official said. (Yonhap, "Koreas Launch New Entry System for Joint Industrial Park," January 28, 2014)

Davies: "Q: Let me start with the dialogue between the DPRK and Japan. It is reported, some reported, you know they had a meeting in Hanoi. Do you have some information, did you know about it in advance? DAVIES: I don’t have any information about official contacts between Japan and North Korea. I look forward to my visit to Tokyo, where I will obviously hear from the Japanese government about any efforts they’ve undertaken, but I don’t have any particular information from here. I’m here in Beijing and I have yet to get to Tokyo, so perhaps I’ll know more then. Q: Which means the Japanese Government didn’t consult the United States in advance? DAVIES: Well I’m not even certain that there have been meetings between Japan and North Korea. If you know for a fact there have been, that’s news to me, but we’ll find out. When I get to Tokyo in a couple of days, I’ll certainly raise that, that issue. … Q: How do you think North Korea making conciliatory gestures to South Korea recently? DAVIES: Well, I think you’re referring in that respect to the issue that’s been raised by North Korea, the offer to go forward with family reunions. And, this is a humanitarian issue; it’s a north-south issue between the Republic of Korea and the DPRK. Obviously, we’re very supportive of these reunions going forward. Many of the, of the individuals involved are elderly, getting on in years, they haven’t seen family members in decades, in a number of instances. So it’s exceedingly important that these humanitarian meetings be allowed to go forward. But we’ll see, because we all know that a week and a half or so prior to the North Korean offer, they had rejected a South Korean proposal to go forward with reunification, so it’s very difficult to know what’s likely to happen. But we are supportive of it, we think it’s important, and we hope it goes forward without any linkage to any other issues. Q: Mr. Davies, about the resumption of the Six-Party Talks, are you looking forward to it, and also what did you and your Chinese counterpart talk about regarding going back to the negotiating table? DAVIES: Sure, well we both share an interest in getting back to Six-Party Talks as soon as possible. Here, the principal obstacle, and you all know this, has been the lack of not just interest, but meaningful steps on the part of North Korea to demonstrate that it understands that it has to live up to its obligations and its commitments, principally those it made back in September 2005, that’s encapsulated in the joint statement. And it’s, I mean, I’ve been at this job now over two years, and I’ve been struck with the…the lack of interest on the part of North Korea in meaningfully addressing this denuclearization issue, which is the principal issue that underpins the Six Party talks process. We haven’t seen any signs that they are willing to move on that, willing to take steps to address the concerns that we’ve had. What they’ve said are things like that they have…that they’re interested in coming back to talk without preconditions, which means that they’d like to talk about everything except their obligations to denuclearize. So this is of great concern to us. So of course, here in Beijing, the bulk of the time I spent in meetings with Chinese officials was about how best to move the process forward, get back to Six Party, convince North Korea, if necessary, through further pressure, that it needs to begin taking steps now and get back on to that, into that process of
Prime Minister Abe Shinzo’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine shattered the painstaking groundwork Japanese and South Korean foreign policymakers were laying for a bilateral summit. While the United States is calling on its two Asian allies to mend broken ties, Japanese officials are bracing for another possible haymaker from Abe. “Far from restoring relations, the prime minister may visit the shrine again,” a government source said. South Korean officials were appalled when Japan informed them on the night of December 25 that Abe might visit the shrine, where 14 Class-A war criminals are commemorated, the next day. The day before, South Korean diplomats met with their Japanese counterparts in Tokyo to discuss a possible trilateral summit among Japan, South Korea and China. In a meeting on December 18, Japanese and South Korean officials also considered arranging vice-ministerial dialogue in January to smooth the way for a future bilateral summit. Foreign policymakers of the two countries were holding out hopes that Abe and South Korean President Park Geun-hye might sit for one-on-one talks around March, when a nuclear security summit is scheduled. Abe’s December 26 visit meant all their hard work had come to naught, however. “A sense of weariness has sunk in,” a Foreign Ministry source said of the mood among ministry bureaucrats. Around October, Abe’s lieutenants in the prime minister’s office told Foreign Ministry officials that he would decide between visiting Yasukuni and flying to Beijing to improve ties with China on the first anniversary of his administration in December. The ministry sprang into action to arrange a summit with China, another with South Korea and a three-way summit as ways to keep Abe from paying his respects at Yasukuni. “If the prime minister visits the shrine, the wheels of Japanese diplomacy will fall off,” a senior Foreign Ministry source said of the mood among ministry bureaucrats. Around October, Abe’s lieutenants in the prime minister’s office told Foreign Ministry officials that he would decide between visiting Yasukuni and flying to Beijing to improve ties with China on the first anniversary of his administration in December. The ministry sprang into action to arrange a summit with China, another with South Korea and a three-way summit as ways to keep Abe from paying his respects at Yasukuni. “If the prime minister visits the shrine, the wheels of Japanese diplomacy will fall off,” a senior Foreign Ministry official said. Japan and South Korea had already begun consultations for a summit when their foreign ministers met in July and September. On November 7, vice-ministerial officials from Japan, South Korea and China met in Seoul, raising hopes of a three-nation summit. A week later, Vice Foreign Minister Akitaka Saiki called on Lee Byung-kee, South Korean ambassador to Japan, to work toward a trilateral summit by the end of the year. “We will consider whatever date is feasible,” Saiki told Lee during a meeting at the Foreign Ministry on Nov. 14. South Korea, however, set several conditions for a summit with Japan. Seoul asked for Abe’s promise to abide by Japan’s past apologies for its wartime actions issued in the names of former Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono. The 1995 Murayama statement expressed remorse and an apology for Japan’s aggression and colonial rule, while the 1993 Kono statement acknowledged that the nation’s military forcefully recruited “comfort women” to provide sex for its troops before and during World War II. Seoul also called for a letter of apology to former comfort women from Abe, and Japanese government assistance to those women for reasons other than humanitarian support. Japan’s Foreign Ministry was not amenable because Abe had demanded there be no strings attached to a summit with Park. Negotiations were brought to a standstill when the ministry asked South Korea to refrain from anti-Japan activities in the international community and to guarantee that Japanese assistance to former comfort women would be its last. Meanwhile, confrontation with China intensified after Beijing declared an air defense identification zone over the East China Sea on
November 23 that includes the disputed Senkaku Islands. Japan planned to let South Korea continue to preside over a three-nation summit in 2014, but then sought to take over the chairmanship to break the stalemate with its two neighbors. In vice-ministerial dialogue with South Korea on December 19, however, China made it clear that it would never accept a trilateral summit if Japan chaired the framework. Japanese and South Korean diplomats failed to reach a consensus when they met in Tokyo on December 24. “In Japan, a handful of close aides in the prime minister’s office were acting in a different dimension, which is not governed by the logic of diplomacy,” a South Korean government source said. Abe’s Yasukuni visit drew a rebuke of “disappointment” in a U.S. government statement, an unexpectedly blunt response apparently reflecting criticism on the part of Vice President Joe Biden. When Biden met with Park in Seoul on December 6, he called for cooperation with Japan after briefing her on what he had discussed with Abe in Tokyo three days earlier. According to sources, Biden said Abe had admitted some excessive responses had been made in regards to Japan-South Korea relations. He also said the prime minister indicated that he would stand by the Murayama and Kono statements and would not visit Yasukuni. Japan was taken aback when it learned about the exchange between Biden and Park. “The prime minister can never be expected to promise to a foreign dignitary that he will not visit Yasukuni,” a government source said. Japanese officials contacted their U.S. and South Korean counterparts to confirm what was discussed. Their responses were largely in line with what Japanese officials believed. Some sources said it remains a mystery why Biden interpreted Abe’s words in those ways. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel went to the Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery to pay their respects to Japan’s war dead, not Yasukuni, when they visited Japan in October. The Foreign Ministry took the gesture as a U.S. warning against a visit to Yasukuni, a ministry official said. “Biden probably got his wishful thinking mixed in when he talked with Park,” a source said. Last summer, the ministry heard about Abe’s intention to visit Yasukuni by year-end, a secret shared by a select group in the prime minister’s office, according to government sources. The ministry secretly sought opinions on the prime minister’s shrine visit from administration officials, members of Congress and experts in the United States. The reactions were invariably negative. Some said they completely supported the Abe administration’s foreign policy, but the pilgrimage would turn such an assessment on its head. The Foreign Ministry reported the results to the prime minister’s office. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide became cautious about the visit, while Abe remained unfazed, according to sources. Biden apparently made the remarks in Seoul, aware of these developments. After Abe’s Yasukuni visit, the Japanese government studied how it was received in the United States. “Biden’s reaction was the fiercest,” a government source said. Government officials believe that his stance led to the “disappointment” expressed by the U.S. government. “Biden alone handles the Obama administration’s coordination with Congress,” a government source said. “We cannot say the prime minister is on good terms with President Obama. There could be a negative consequence to our relations with Congress as well.” After Biden’s remarks, South Korean government sources said Washington has leaned closer to Seoul than to Tokyo. The sources also said negotiations will stall over Abe’s defense initiatives, such as lifting the self-imposed ban on the right to collective self-defense and acquiring the capability to strike enemy bases, as far as the Korean Peninsula is concerned. According to the
South Korean government, the United States has sought an understanding about Abe’s policies on the grounds that Japan will exercise the right to collective self-defense within the framework of the Japan-U.S. alliance. The United States has also given its understanding to South Korea’s stance on the issues of comfort women and Yasukuni. South Korea has indicated it will not allow Japan to strike bases in North Korea, at least without its approval. In January, Yachi Shotaro, chief of the secretariat of Japan’s National Security Council, traveled to the United States, and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William Burns came to Japan. On both occasions, the United States called on Japan to improve ties with South Korea. “It is not easy to restore relations,” a South Korean government official said. (Makino Yoshihiro, “Abe’s Shrine Visit Blew Japan-S. Korea Efforts for Summit Sky-High,” Asahi Shimbun, January 28, 2014)

Japan’s conservative government has ordered schools and textbook publishers to take a more strongly nationalist line when describing disputed island territories, prompting the latest acrimonious exchange with South Korea and China. South Korea’s foreign ministry demanded that Tokyo retract the new teaching guidelines, which require that three groups of disputed islands – one administered by Seoul, another controlled by Russia and third controlled by Japan but claimed by China and Taiwan – be described as “integral parts of Japan’s territory.” A Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman also expressed “grave concern” over the new Japanese directive. “It is important to teach students correctly about their country’s territory,” Shimomura Hakubun, Japan’s education minister, said on Tuesday in announcing the directive, which will take effect in April and be reflected in new editions of middle school textbooks beginning in 2016, and in high school textbooks beginning in 2017. Current guidelines do not specify how teachers or textbooks should refer to the territories. Under the new rules, lessons and materials are to specify that the Korean- and Russian-held islands are “illegally occupied”, and “make it understood that no dispute over territorial rights exists” with China over the third, Japanese-held group. PM Abe Shinzo has long favored reshaping Japanese school curricula to deliver more “patriotic education,” and, like many members of his right-leaning Liberal Democratic Party, sees schoolteachers and their leftist national trade union as a malignant influence on the young. Abe has also sought to impose his conservative stamp on other cultural institutions. Late last year he appointed a group of close allies to the board of NHK, the national broadcast network, engineering a political shift that led to the appointment of Momii Katsuto, a former businessman, as its new chairman. On January 27, in his first news conference since taking the position, Momii caused widespread outrage by defending the sexual abuse of women by the Japanese army during the second world war, remarks for which he later apologized. He also said NHK’s international news programs should reflect official government positions. “International broadcasting is different from domestic,” Momii said. “It would not do for us to say ‘left’ when the government is saying ‘right.”’ (Jonathan Soble, “Tokyo Decree over Islands Causes Upset,” Financial Times, January 29, 2014, p. 4)

The U.S. military is scaling back an annual exercise with South Korea next month and carrier involvement in exercise Key Resolve this year,” a US defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP. In addition, there were no plans to send out nuclear-capable bombers as in last year’s drill, the official said. “Every year the scenario
is slightly different,” said a second official. The two officials acknowledged that the United States tends to calibrate what ships and aircraft are featured in drills partly in response to North Korea’s behavior. (AFP, “U.S. Scales back Military Exercise with S. Korea,” January 29, 2014)

DCI Threat Briefing: “North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missile programs pose a serious threat to the United States and to the security environment in East Asia, a region with some of the world’s largest populations, militaries, and economies. North Korea’s export of ballistic missiles and associated materials to several countries, including Iran and Syria, and its assistance to Syria’s construction of a nuclear reactor, destroyed in 2007, illustrate the reach of its proliferation activities. Despite the reaffirmation of its commitment in the Second-Phase Actions for the implementation of the September 2005 Joint Statement not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or know-how, North Korea might again export nuclear technology. In addition to conducting its third nuclear test on 12 February 2013, North Korea announced its intention to ‘adjust and alter’ the uses of existing nuclear facilities to include the uranium enrichment facility at Yongbyon, and to restart its graphite moderated reactor that was shut down in 2007. We assess that North Korea has followed through on its announcement by expanding the size of its Yongbyon enrichment facility and restarting the reactor that was previously used for plutonium production. North Korea has publicly displayed its KN08 road-mobile ICBM twice. We assess that North Korea has already taken initial steps to field this system, although it remains untested. North Korea is committed to developing long-range missile technology that is capable of posing a direct threat to the United States. Its efforts to produce and market ballistic missiles raise broader regional and global security concerns. Because of deficiencies in their conventional military forces, North Korean leaders are focused on deterrence and defense. We have assessed that, in Pyongyang’s view, its nuclear capabilities are intended for deterrence, international prestige, and coercive diplomacy. We do not know Pyongyang’s nuclear doctrine or employment concepts. … Two years after taking the helm of North Korea, Kim Jong Un has further consolidated his position as unitary leader and final decision authority. He has solidified his control and enforced loyalty through personnel changes and purges. The most prominent was the ouster and execution of his uncle, Jang Song Thaek in December 2013. Kim has elevated the profile of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) through appointments of party operatives to key leadership positions and the convening of party conferences and plenums. Kim and the regime have publicly emphasized his focus on improving the country’s troubled economy and the livelihood of the North Korean people while maintaining the tenets of a command economy. He has codified this approach via his dual-track policy of economic development and advancement of nuclear weapons.” (DCI James R. Clapper, Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 29, 2014)

Hansen: “Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that North Korea may be preparing the Sohae Satellite Launching Station (“Tongchang-ri”) for a more robust rocket test program in the future involving larger space launch vehicles and road-mobile ballistic missiles able to attack targets in Northeast Asia and the United States.
Specifically: The Sohae gantry tower has been undergoing significant modifications to enable it to launch a large rocket up to 25 percent longer than the Unha-3 space launch vehicle tested in 2012. It is unclear when that rocket will be ready. Because of construction, the pad will not be available for launches until March/April 2014 at the earliest. Construction has continued since summer 2013 on a growing number of projects consistent with preparations for using Sohae as a training and launch facility for North Korea’s new generation of regional and intercontinental-range mobile missiles. The latest projects are the construction of two 45,000-gallon tanks that could be used to fuel vehicles in mobile missile units and a pad possibly intended for use by those units for training. A possible test of a rocket engine used by the road-mobile KN-08 intercontinental ballistic missile took place between late December 2013 and early January 2014. Imagery from late December indicated the presence of what appears to be a rocket stage consistent with the KN-08 ballistic missile’s first stage and possibly a crane that would be used to place the engine into the test stand and remove it after a test. Imagery taken two weeks later showed that the rocket stage and other equipment were gone. North Korea continues to upgrade the facility’s instrumentation site including the installation of a new permanent dish antenna for tracking launches, providing a further indication that Sohae will be the location of an active space launch vehicle and missile test program in the future.” (Nick Hansen, “Significant Developments at North Korea’s Sohae Test Facility,” 38North, January 29, 2014)

North Korea agreed to hold border talks with South Korea this week to discuss arranging reunions where relatives separated by the Korean War would meet for the first time in six decades, officials here said. North Korea agreed last month to restart the reunions after a three-year hiatus and asked South Korea to pick the dates. On January 27, the South suggested that the reunions be held from February 17 to 22 and that the two sides hold Red Cross talks on the border January 29 to sort out the details. Despite the South’s repeated appeals, however, the North did not respond for a week. Today, it said such talks could be held February 5 or 6. Later today, both Koreas agreed to hold them February 5 at the border village of Panmunjom. “We welcome the North Korean response, even if it is belated,” Kim Eui-do, a spokesman for the South Korean government, said at a media briefing on Monday. South Korea had hoped to hold the Red Cross talks last week to allow the Koreas time to prepare for the reunions before the South and the United States begin joint annual military exercises scheduled for late February. North Korea has denounced the drills for being what it says are a rehearsal for an invasion, and has used such exercises as a reason to scuttle or delay family reunions. About 22,000 Koreans participated in 18 rounds of government-arranged reunions from 1985 to 2010, when the program was suspended. About 73,000 South Koreans, half of them older than 80, remain on a waiting list to meet their relatives in the North for the first time since the war. After months of harsh talk after the North’s nuclear test last February, the Koreas agreed in August to revive the reunions, although the North later backtracked from that agreement. The South selected 100 people by lottery to participate. Two have since died. (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Agrees to Talks on Reunions,” New York Times, February 3, 2014, p. A-6)

KCNA: “The chairman of the C.C., the Red Cross Society of the DPRK sent a notice to the president of the south Korean Red Cross [today]. He in the notice proposed
holding a working contact between the Red Cross organizations in the north and the south for the reunion of separated families and their relatives from both sides at the Thongil House in the portion of the north side in Panmunjom on February 5 or 6. The notice said that if the south side fixes a convenient date, the north side's delegation will go out for the working contact on that day.” (KCNA, “DPRK Red Cross Head Sends Notice to His S. Korean Counterpart,” February 3, 2014)

It’s late afternoon at the e-library in North Korea’s Kim Il Sung University, where row after row of smartly dressed students sit quietly, their faces bathed in the glow of computer displays as they surf the Internet. On the surface, it’s a familiar-seeming scene, which is exactly why officials are offering it up for a look. As with so many other aspects of its internal workings, North Korea has tried hard to keep its relationship to the Internet hidden from foreign eyes. But it opened that door just a crack recently for The Associated Press to reveal a self-contained, tightly controlled Intranet called Kwangmyong, or “Bright.” North Korea thinks Bright is the authoritarian answer to the freewheeling Internet. Chats and email? Monitored. Content? Restricted to the point that the use of Bright hardly even needs to be watched by officials. How about the OS? It’s “Red Star,” now available in version 3.0, which looks a lot like the Microsoft operating system, but is used only in North Korea. Red Star has audio and video players, and even a game – Korean chess. There’s a Firefox-style search engine called “Our Country” that helps users navigate around an estimated 1,000 to 5,500 websites, mostly for universities, government offices, libraries and state-run corporations. Most North Koreans have no access to the Internet at all. "The goal is to reap the benefits of information technology, while keeping out potentially corrosive foreign influences,” said Scott Bruce, a North Korea IT expert and analyst at the Arlington, Virginia-based nonprofit CRDF Global. Copies of Red Star have found their way outside of the North and been studied abroad. But North Korea is so secretive about Bright, which it launched more than a decade ago, that it is off-limits to even the foreign technical advisers it brings in. It can be accessed only in the North and is meant exclusively for domestic use. "I haven’t had a time when I’ve been allowed to use the Intranet – since the point is that it is not open to foreigners," said Will Scott, a computer sciences instructor at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology who has worked about as closely with North Korea’s attempt to get wired as any other foreigner. Through daily interactions with North Korean students at his university, however, Scott has been able to glean a general outline of what Bright is all about. “The Intranet provides a connection between industry, universities and the government. It seems to be focused on information propagation, rather than commerce, entertainment or communication,” he told the AP. “Given the limited resources in the country, where computers are likely not to be owned by individuals, and are a valuable resource, this has a striking resemblance to the uses first made of the Internet in the U.S. when it was introduced in the ’80s.” Technologically, he said, North Korea’s Intranet is a mini-Internet, with a combination of joint venture companies and vaguely government-affiliated labs that collectively maintain the core infrastructure that exists on the global Web. Graduate students and North Korean professors at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology are allowed to access the real Internet from a dedicated computer lab, similar to the e-library at Kim Il Sung University. They receive the same speed and unfiltered access that foreign instructors do, although everyone’s access is
monitored. Scott said the graduate students don’t use the Internet nearly as much as Americans would, treating it more like the way Western students might visit a library to find books. Students’ emails must be reviewed and approved by one of the vice presidents of the university before they can be sent, which, Scott said, means they rarely use email. “There is some resistance to providing Internet access to students because it requires some level of political capital, and is generally discouraged by higher-up ministries as not worth the potential danger,” he said. “I think you would find a surprising lack of technical surveillance on the Intranet, due largely to the high level of self-censorship built into the collective psyche in the country.” (Eric Talmadge, “Wary N. Korea Struggles to Stay Afloat in Info Age,” Associated Press, February 3, 2014)

Jeffrey Lewis: “On April 15, 2012, North Korea paraded what appeared to be six road-mobile missiles, quickly identified in the media as KN-08 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), through Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang. Attention immediately focused on these unusual vehicles, after Chinese bloggers identified them as Chinese-manufactured transporter-erector-launchers (TELS) used by Beijing’s strategic missile forces. Officials in Beijing initially denied exporting “any items prohibited by relevant UN Security Council resolutions and Chinese laws and regulations.” However they later stated that the Chinese firm in question had only exported civilian-use chassis, which can be used for a variety of civil purposes, including logging and construction.

Although the chassis export appeared to violate sanctions on North Korea and Chinese domestic law, the Chinese showed evidence that the North Koreans had provided the name of a false end-user for the vehicles, a standard tactic for evading export controls, and stated that North Korea had added the erectors and other specialized equipment to the chassis themselves. It is possible, using open source information, to make some preliminary judgments about China’s claim, as well as North Korea’s infrastructure for producing TELs. Although it is hard to believe that the Chinese were not aware that North Korea would use the vehicle chassis for its illicit missile program, available evidence suggests that Pyongyang did indeed add the erectors at facilities known to assemble missile TELs. Following the April 2012 parade, Chinese officials told the United Nations Panel of Experts charged with monitoring sanctions enforcement that a Chinese firm, the Wanshan Special Vehicle Company (WSV), had exported six heavy-duty vehicle chassis to North Korea in 2011. The delivery appears to have been made in two shipments: two chassis in May 2011 followed by another four in October 2011. In retrospect, information concerning the shipments was available in the public domain. The State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council (SASAC) announced the export of heavy-duty vehicle chassis to an unnamed foreign customer at the time of the sale, as did WSV. Neither statement mentioned the number of chassis or the identity of the customer, but they did indicate that the recipient—China’s first foreign customer for such vehicles—paid 12 million RMB in advance on a 30 million RMB order. Chinese officials subsequently claimed that Pyongyang had told them that the vehicles were to be used in logging by the Ministry of Forestry. Although the story is difficult to believe, logging and construction are plausible civil uses for these otherwise highly specialized vehicles. One question that remained was whether the Chinese exported fully assembled launchers, or, as Chinese officials claimed, just the chassis-and-cab assembly, leaving North Korea to mount the launcher and other specialized
equipment. In 2013, North Korea released a commemorative video entitled, *Kim Jong Il’s Efforts to Defend the Country*, posted by pro-North Korean groups on YouTube. Although it is strange to think of North Korea using social media extensively, the country’s state-run propaganda apparatus and affiliated groups in foreign countries make extensive use of such platforms to share and distribute the regime’s propaganda internationally. This propaganda also can provide outside analysts with important clues about activities in the North that otherwise are off limits to foreigners, for example, factories where North Korean leaders conduct field inspections. *Kim Jong Il’s Efforts to Defend the Country* contains the only known footage taken inside North Korea’s facility for completing assembly of TELs for ballistic missiles. Three clips lasting a few seconds show Nodong TELs inside a spacious, rectangular, high-bay building as well as a KN-08 TEL in a very similar building. Kim Jong Il appears in some frames, looking at a Nodong TEL. The first analysis of the film, along with still images, appeared on *North Korea Leadership Watch*, a website which regularly analyzes North Korean propaganda. Because the internal images show a distinct building, it is possible to model the outside of the structure by first simulating the inside. First, along one of the long sides of the building there is an unusual pattern of clerestory windows—high windows above eye level—as well as the cupola-like structure near the center of the building. Second, windows run along only one of the long sides of the building, suggesting that it is either partially buried or has an adjoining structure on the opposite side. Finally, the windows along the short side of the building are spaced in an irregular manner and make an identifiable pattern. Referencing the video footage, we digitally constructed the building interior on SketchUp, a free, widely-available 3D modeling program. This rendering revealed the structure’s approximate dimensions, and based on the windows and roof, suggested that the two clips may have been filmed in different buildings. Combining what we knew about the windows, roof, and building dimensions, we created external models of the two buildings—one with a square cupola, and another with a larger cupola spanning the width of the roof. Once the configurations of the structures were identified, the next question we addressed was, where might such unusual buildings be located? Google Earth houses an enormous repository of high-resolution satellite and aerial images, including fairly comprehensive coverage of built-up areas of North Korea. Additional images can be purchased from other providers, such as Astrium. The only problem is where to start looking. A number of defector accounts describe the location of various North Korean defense industries, including some linked to the production of vehicle chassis and the final assembly of transporter-erector-launchers. We mined Korean-language social media sites and other electronic resources containing defector accounts to create a search area. Although the accounts differ from one another, descriptions of facilities to assemble missile launchers converged on an area in Chagang Province that is well known as the heart of North Korea’s defense industries. (Chagang is also a center of forestry, an amusing coincidence given the stated end-use for the Chinese vehicles.) For example, Ko Chong Song, a North Korean defector, published a book in Japan describing the locations of defense enterprises, stating Pyongyang produces “missile launchers” at the No. 81 Factory located in the Chungsonggan workers’ district, Songgan County, Chagang Province, about 2.5 to 3 kilometers from Songgan-up.” However, Ko cautions that the No. 81 Factory may only produce some components for launchers with final assembly done elsewhere. Another account, posted online by an
anti-DPRK dissident group, describes a gruesome incident of cannibalism at the
“No. 11 munitions factory (Hakmu worker’s district 6 km northwest of Jonchon, Jagang)
where missile launchers are manufactured…” Jonchon and Songgan are close to one
another, lying about 10 kilometers apart along a river valley. Songgan, Chunsonggan
and Jonchon (Chonchon) all appear in the Gazetteer maintained by the National
Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. Hakmu does not—although the description of the
place as about 6 kilometers northwest of Jonchon is consistent with a mention in a
survey conducted by UNICEF and the World Health Organization. Ko also mentions
Factory 11—although he claims it is near Songgan. All of these locations are within a
few kilometers of each other, creating a manageable search area centered on the river
valley between Songgan and Jonchon, particularly the Chungsonggan and Hakmu
Worker’s Districts, which lie between the two locations. There are other possible
locations mentioned in defector accounts, but this is the only cluster of possibilities.
This became our initial search area. While the ten kilometers along the river valley
between Jonchon and Songgan represent a manageable search area, it was further
simplified through crowdsourcing. The social media site Wikimapia and the North
Korea Uncovered KMZ file offered by North Korean Economy Watch provide the
locations of many known defense sites, including surface-to-air missile installations.
Although the No. 81 and No. 11 Factories are not listed, clusters of surface-to-air
missiles sites often help identify locations that the North Koreans regard as important
enough to warrant air defenses. The area six kilometers northwest of Jonchon—
consistent with the location of the Hakmu Worker’s District—appears to be well-
defended so our search started there. Less than one kilometer from a surface-to-air
missile site, and 4.6 kilometers northwest of the Jonchon train station (a proxy for
central Jonchon), lies a building located at 40°38′44″N, 126°25′58″E that matches one
of our models. We will call this structure Site A. Several interesting details emerge right
away looking at the satellite imagery. The Site A building is a close match based on the
modeled dimensions and the windows. The building has a single row of high,
clerestory windows because the main building has an adjoining structure. The
completely windowless opposite side appears to be flush with another hall. The
windows at the eastern short end match very closely. The large cupola is revealed to
be a curved, fan-like structure (consistent with the arc made by the tip of an erecting
missile on a TEL inside). As it turns out, the two different roofs are actually from the
same building. Satellite images show that North Korea remodeled the roof at Site A
between 2004 and 2011—probably at the same time it negotiated for the export of the
KN-08 chassis. Most conclusive, was the fact that a KN-08 missile could easily be
erected on a launcher under the 2011 cupola, where the previous 2004 cupola could
only support the shorter Nodong missile. Frank Pabian and Tamara Patton built a
model of the KN-08 TEL and missile using parade images and SketchUp. Wanshan’s
original marketing materials for the WS51200 chassis also included specifications, thus
they were able to scale the model to the correct size. This detail not only provides
strong confirmation of the site’s purpose, but indicates that China probably only
exported the bare chassis. It would seem the launcher modifications were added here
near Jonchon. Working with 38 North, we purchased new satellite images, including a
low-angle view that shows the windows running alongside the south of the building.
They are not evenly spaced, presenting the opportunity to match the inside of the
building with the outside. The matching window pattern is strong evidence that the
KN-08 launchers seen in the video were located in the building at Site A. The windows in one video clip of the Nodong launcher, however, do not seem to match. In particular, one image shows a Nodong with a row of continuous windows behind it. It is possible that the windows were altered when the roof was remodeled. There is, however, another possibility. In addition to the building at Site A, we found a nearly identical building a few kilometers away at what we call Site B (40°36′43″N, 126°25′34″E). This structure appears to be located in the same industrial facility, which is spread out over many square kilometers in the river valleys. This roof was also modified to receive a new cupola sometime before 2011. The available evidence strongly suggests these buildings are the ones shown in *Kim Jong Il’s Efforts to Defend the Country*, as well as described in defector accounts. Based on Kim Jong Un’s visit, as well as the presence of the KN-08 launchers, this would appear to be North Korea’s most important facility for the final assembly of TELs.) While much remains unknown about North Korea’s infrastructure for producing ballistic missiles and launchers, a persistent analyst can identify the primary facilities for ballistic missile TEL assembly by referencing various resources—in this case, footage available online, a 3D modeling program, published defector accounts, mapping projects, and satellite images. In isolation, none of these tools would offer much insight into North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs. Together, they make it possible to establish with high confidence when and where North Korea fixed the erectors and launchers to imported Chinese heavy-duty vehicle chassis. Many of these steps were already possible but labor-intensive (perhaps prohibitively so). Today, nearly all of the necessary information is available to any nongovernmental analyst with a decent internet connection. Satellite images purchased from private companies can simply be downloaded. Questions can be asked, and answered, by email or social media. Images and models can be shared online. Our team operated virtually, using email and Dropbox to connect participants from offices in Monterey, California; Washington, DC; and Vienna, Austria. The result helps answer an interesting policy question—yes, the North Koreans added the KN-08 launch hydraulics—but more importantly, this analysis illustrates both the new realities and opportunities for open source research in the field of arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament. (Jeffrey Lewis, “That Ain’t My Truck: Where North Korea Assembled Its Chinese Transporter-Erector-Launchers,” *38North*, February 3, 2014)

China confirmed February 12 that a group of its diplomats in charge of Korean affairs visited North Korea last week, marking the first visit by Chinese officials since the high-profile purge of leader Kim Jong-un’s uncle about two months ago. The Chinese delegation, led by Deputy Director-General of Asian Affairs Xing Haiming, to North Korea is aimed at letting “the Chinese embassy in the DPRK carry out relevant works,” China’s foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters. Describing last week’s visit as “routine work,” Hua said, “They exchanged views on bilateral relations and the situation on the Korean Peninsula.” Earlier in the day, a diplomatic source told Yonhap that the Chinese delegation included some diplomats who are working to persuade North Korea to return to the long-stalled talks aimed at ending the North’s nuclear weapons development. “To my knowledge, the Chinese delegation included working-level officials in charge of the six-party talks,” the source said. (Yonhap, “China Confirms Its Diplomats Made First Visit to N. Korea Since Purge,” February 12, 2014)
South and North Korea agreed to stage a new round of reunions later this month for families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War, an official said, a move that could help ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula. The reunions -- the first since October 2010 -- will be held at Mount Kumgang, a scenic resort on North Korea’s east coast February 20-25, according to the text of an agreement reached at their Red Cross talks. The deal is the first sign of progress in improving inter-Korean relations that have worsened due to the North’s military threats against the South in recent months. North Korea’s chief delegate Pak Yong-Il said that the Red Cross meeting “is a very important starting point for improving the North-South relations.” Pak made the comments at the beginning of the meeting at the border village of Panmunjom, according to a brief audio file released by the unification ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs. The planned reunions coincide with South Korea’s annual joint military exercises with Washington, which are set to run from late February through April. North Korea has pressed South Korea to scrap the drills, condemning them as a rehearsal for a nuclear war against it. The North had indicated that the reunions could not be held “amid gunfire,” referring to the military drills. The North mentioned the joint military exercises and its recent conciliatory overture at the border talks, though it did not attach a condition for the family reunions, said the unification ministry official. South Korea said it can discuss other issues with North Korea if the reunions go well. The sides also agreed to hold Red Cross talks after the reunions to resolve humanitarian issues, in an apparent reference to South Korean prisoners of war and abductees being held in the communist country, as well as Seoul’s food aid to the North. (Kim Kwang-tae, “Koreas Agree to Hold Family Reunions in Late February,” Yonhap, February 5, 2014)

KCNA: “North-south Red Cross working contact was made at the Thongil House in the north’s portion of Panmunjom [today] for the reunion of separated families and their relatives. At the contact both sides discussed the issues arising in successfully ensuring the reunion of separated families and their relatives before adopting an agreement. According to it, the north and the south decided to hold the reunion at Mt. Kumgang resort from Feb. 20 to 25, 2014 and agreed to fix the number of the persons involved in the event according to the final lists exchanged last year and follow practice as regards the way and method of arranging the reunion. Both sides decided to arrange indoor reunion instead of outdoor reunion, taking weather conditions into consideration, and hold group reunion at the Mt. Kumgang Reunion Centre and Kumgangsan Hotel. It was also decided to open the north-south Red Cross working contact after the event to further the discussion on settling humanitarian issues.” (KCNA, “North-South Red Cross Working Contact Made,” February 5, 2014)

The Obama administration has significantly sharpened its rhetoric about China’s territorial claims in the South China Sea amid growing pressure from allies in the region for Washington to take a firmer line. In public statements in recent days, senior U.S. officials placed the blame for tensions in the region solely on China and warned that the U.S. could move more forces to the western Pacific if Beijing were to declare a new air defense zone in the South China Sea. Although President Barack Obama is due to visit the region in April, several Asia governments have complained privately that the administration has become distracted in the Middle East and has left the way open for China to pursue its claims with greater confidence. “They [the administration] are
definitely trying to turn up the volume about China,” said Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington DC. “This is as close as the Obama administration has come to saying that the nine-dash line is illegal. It is quite significant because they previously danced around the issue.” The nine-dash line is a map produced by China which appears to claim that the bulk of the South China Sea is under Chinese control. The U.S., along with several other governments in the region, believes that China is pushing these claims as part of a broader strategy to exert greater control over large areas of the western Pacific. “There are growing concerns that this pattern of behaviour in the South China Sea reflects incremental effort by China to assert control over the area,” Danny Russel, assistant secretary of state for East Asia said at a hearing. China had “created uncertainty, insecurity and instability in the region.” Russel urged China to “clarify or adjust its nine-dash line claim to bring it in accordance with the international law of the sea.” In a separate statement, Evan Medeiros, the Asia director at the White House national security council, warned China against declaring an air defense identification zone for the South China Sea, following its announcement in December of new rules for airspace in the East China Sea. “We have been very clear with the Chinese that we would see that [the establishment of a new air zone] as a provocative and destabilizing development that would result in changes in our presence and military posture in the region,” Medeiros told Kyodo. Speaking at a congressional hearing, Russel made a series of statements that represent a hardening of the US position over the various territorial disputes. While the U.S. claims to be neutral on the territorial disputes, he said that China was responsible for the increased tension in the region. Russel said that any claims to the seas must be based on genuine land features, rather than just rocks that can be covered at high tide. Under the UN convention on the law of the sea, a country can claim a 200km economic zone around islands. Russel also endorsed the effort by the Philippines to take its territorial dispute with China to an international court, part of its efforts to find a “peaceful, non-coercive” solution. One of the difficulties for the Obama administration is that while it bases some of its arguments on the UN convention on the law of the sea, the US Senate has refused to ratify the same treaty. (Geoff Dyer, “U.S. Toughens Line on China Sea Clash,” Financial Times, February 10, 2014, p. 4) “We oppose China’s establishment of an ADIZ in other areas, including the South China Sea” where China is involved in territorial rows with Southeast Asian countries, Evan Medeiros, senior director for Asian affairs at the National Security Council, said in an interview. “We have been very clear with the Chinese that we would see that (setting of another ADIZ) as a provocative and destabilizing development that would result in changes in our presence and military posture in the region,” Medeiros said. ...Medeiros said the U.S. government has been working with the Japanese government in “very strong coordination” on the ADIZ issue. Washington thinks Beijing set up an ADIZ over the East China Sea “to try and bolster its claims to disputed territories,” he said, referring to the uninhabited Senkakus, islands that China calls the Diaoyus. ...“We do not accept, we do not acknowledge, we do not recognize China’s declared ADIZ,” Medeiros said. Washington has said the Senkakus are covered by its security treaty with Tokyo, which obliges the United States to defend Japan. ...Medeiros dismissed a view that the United States will try harder to join hands with China and lead decision-making on international issues under a so-called Group of Two framework. “Nobody wants it,”
Medeiros said, referring to the G-2 concept. The NSC official said there are “serious sources of competition in the U.S.-China relationship and that these need to be managed.” “When we look at major powers in East Asia who share our interests, who share our values, and who are actively working with us to solve problems, Japan is at the top of the list,” he said. (Japan Times, “U.S. Could ‘Change Military Posture’ If China Sets up Second ADIZ,” February 1, 2014)

2/6/14

North Korea threatened to cancel reunions of families separated by the Korean War, accusing the United States of flying nuclear-capable B-52 bombers on a training mission over the Korean Peninsula. North and South Korea agreed on Wednesday to hold the family reunions from February 20-25, when hundreds of elderly Koreans would be allowed to meet their relatives for the first time since the war ended in 1953. But today North Korea warned that it could scrap the agreement unless South Korea canceled joint annual military exercises that it planned to start with the United States the last week of this month. “How can we talk about trust and improvement of relations while they are opening their sky for a fleet of American nuclear-capable strategic bombers?” Korean Central Television quoted its National Defense Commission as saying in a statement. “We will not just sit and do nothing about this farce.” The U.S. Pacific Air Force Command declined to comment on operational details of specific missions but said that it “has maintained a rotational strategic bomber presence in the region for more than a decade.” “These aircraft, and the men and women who fly them, provide a significant capability that enables our readiness and commitment to extended deterrence, provides assurances to our allies, and strengthens regional security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region,” its public affairs office said in an emailed statement. Kim Min-seok, a spokesman of the South Korean Defense Ministry, said Seoul and Washington would press ahead with their joint military exercises regardless of the North’s warning. Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae, South Korea’s top North Korea policy maker, urged the North not to cancel family reunions. “If an agreement is reached and then retracted, we cannot move forward,” he said. “The agreement yesterday must be kept for a South-North relationship where trust is multiplied.” North Korea has routinely accused the United States of sending B-52 bombers on missions over the peninsula, although the Pentagon often does not publicize them. But last March, during the height of tensions with North Korea following its nuclear test, the Pentagon not only dispatched an aircraft carrier but also took the rare step of announcing practice sorties over the peninsula by nuclear-capable B-52 and B-2 bombers. Yesterday’s deal to allow family reunions was unusual because of its timing. North Korea has often refused to discuss or has even canceled talks for such reunions when Seoul and Washington have staged joint military drills. Today, the North said it had reached the deal a day earlier, taking into consideration “the intention of the South Korean leader.” President Park Geun-hye of South Korea has often urged Pyongyang to prove through “action” that it was sincere with its recent proposals to improve relations. (Choe Sang-hun, “U.S. Bomber Training Run Imperils Family Reunions in Korea,” New York Times, February 6, 2014)

National Defense Commission (NDC) Policy Department spokesman’s statement: “The south Korean authorities have become frantic with the racket of confrontation with compatriots in the north these days contrary to the sincere efforts made by the DPRK to
improve the north-south relations and achieve the reconciliation and unity of the nation. Its typical example is that they dared hurt the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK as regards the field guidance given by it to a baby home and orphanage and the schedule of the election of the deputies to the Supreme People’s Assembly, etc. while unhesitatingly perpetrating reckless acts of groundlessly hurting the social system in the DPRK. At the moment when the north and the south were reaching an agreement on the reunion of separated families and their relatives at Panmunjom, the south Korean authorities let formations of U.S. B-52 nuclear-capable bombers based on Guam fly into the sky above Jik islet in the West Sea of Korea for a whole day for staging drills for a nuclear strike at the DPRK. The south Korean warmongers are busy making final arrangements to go ahead with Key Resolve and Foal Eagle joint war exercises as scheduled, claiming that they are irrelevant to humanitarianism. Shortly ago they, defying the repeated warnings of the DPRK, openly staged such naval strike drill targeting it under the signboard of ‘regular drills’ on Paekryong and Yonphyong islands, the hotspots in the West Sea, though it is taking a goodwill measure to halt military hostile acts first. The Policy Department of the NDC of the DPRK clarifies the following principled stand reflecting the unanimous will of its service personnel and people: First, the DPRK will be compelled to consider the implementation of the agreement reached as long as the dignity of its supreme leadership is malignantly hurt and the acts of groundlessly slandering and defaming its social system persist. Nothing is more foolish than the calculation that reconciliation and cooperation can be achieved while the reckless remarks hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK are floated and connived at under the pretext of ‘liberal democracy’ and media’s smear campaign against it is going on under the pretence of ‘freedom of speech.’ The south Korean authorities should bear in mind that the consequences of the smear campaign against the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK and its social system will be unpredictably disastrous whether it is spearheaded by the authorities or staged by media. Second, we will not remain a passive on-looker to their farce staged allegedly to build confidence when formations of U.S. nuclear strategic bombers are flying into the sky, threatening and blackmailing against fellowmen. It is none other than the U.S. which has instigated the south Korean authorities, claiming they should react to the DPRK’s principled and crucial proposal and open letter ardently appealing to the Koreans by raising the nuclear issue. It is again the U.S. which is throwing all sorts of obstacles to the DPRK’s patriotic and positive efforts to create an atmosphere for improving the inter-Korean relations and chilling them. Third, we would like to take this opportunity to clarify once again that war exercises and racket for confrontation are incompatible with dialogue and reconciliation. The south Korean authorities should get rid of the existing state of affairs and stance, abandon their narrow-minded prejudice and inveterate motive of confrontation and make a bold policy decision to meet the expectation of the nation. They should no longer pursue such distrust and confrontation as rejecting the warm sincerity of their compatriots with evil will and reacting to compatriots’ call for reconciliation with hostile war drills and nuclear threat. They should neither misjudge nor abuse with a wrong way of thinking the goodwill, tolerance, patience and self-restraint shown by the service personnel and people of the DPRK to pave the way for improving the north-south relations in the spirit of By Our Nation Itself. All Koreans in the north, south and
abroad will closely follow the stand the south Korean authorities are obliged to clarify and their future attitude.” (KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities Urged to Clarify Its Ulterior Design before Whole Nation,” February 6, 2014)

South Korean and U.S. forces will apply a new bilateral strategy for the first time in this year’s joint military exercises to enhance their deterrence capabilities against North Korea’s nuclear program, the defense ministry said. In this year’s policy briefing to President Park Geun-hye, Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin said the allies will further develop the “tailored deterrence strategy” by applying it in various scenarios during this year’s joint exercises. Signed in November in light of Pyongyang’s third nuclear test early last year, the strategy covers how to deal with different levels of nuclear threats posed by North Korea in peacetime and wartime, taking into consideration the development of weapons programs and the political situation in the communist state. As the strategy largely remains a conceptual action plan, the two allies will develop specific action plans by conducting drills under various nuclear crisis scenarios in this year’s joint drills, the ministry said. Based on the results of the exercises, Seoul and Washington will craft guidelines for the tailored deterrence strategy by the end of this year to determine how to handle a nuclear crisis under specific circumstances, as well as countermeasures that could be taken, the ministry said. South Korea and the U.S. will step up the joint operation of surveillance assets, including spy planes and satellites, and establish an early warning system to better monitor North Korea’s nuclear and missile facilities, the ministry said. As part of the efforts, the military plans to acquire five more surveillance satellites in early 2020 capable of monitoring North Korea. South Korean and U.S. forces will also enhance defense capabilities against biochemical weapons, jointly carrying out drills annually, the ministry said. This year, the two nations’ military officials and government officials will carry out the biochemical drills in August. “We will prepare for both provocations and an all-out war and establish deterrence posture against any provocations by the enemy,” Kim said. (Kim Eun-jung, “S. Korea, U.S. to Apply Tailored Deterrence Strategy in Joint Drills for First Time,” Yonhap, February 6, 2014)

President Obama called on North Korea and Iran to release two Americans held captive since 2012, using an address at the National Prayer Breakfast to demand that foreign nations respect religious freedoms and to declare that the men “deserve to be free.” Obama said Kenneth Bae, a missionary held in North Korea, and Saeed Abedini, a Christian pastor held in Iran, were victims of religious intolerance by foreign governments and that the United States would continue to press for their release. “Around the world, freedom of religion is under threat,” Obama said, addressing the annual gathering of religious leaders in Washington. “We see governments engaging in discrimination and violence against the faith.” “Promoting religious freedom is a key objective of U.S. foreign policy,” he said. “I’m proud no nation on earth has done more to stand up for freedom of religion around the world than the United States.” Bae, an American father of three, was arrested in North Korea in 2012 and accused of preaching against the Pyongyang government. He has been sentenced to 15 years of hard labor. Although the Obama administration has pushed for his release, his case gained added notoriety when former NBA star Dennis Rodman made two trips to Pyongyang for exhibition basketball games. “Let us pray for Kenneth Bae. . . . His family

Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that North Korea is nearing completion of modifications to the gantry at the launch pad of the Sohae Satellite Launching Station (Tongchang-ri). A new eleventh level has been added—one more than previously estimated—allowing the facility to handle large rockets of up to 50 meters in length and almost 70 percent longer than the Unha-3 space launch vehicle (SLV) tested twice in 2012. Structural beams present in early January that appeared intended to support a roof for the tenth level are instead being used to support the additional level. Work appears nearly complete since there are no additional structures on or above that level and the roof is almost finished. (Nick Hansen, “North Korea Nears Completion of Larger Rocket Launch Pad,” *38North*, February 6, 2014)

2/8/06

South and North Korea launched a working-level meeting on Internet connectivity at their joint industrial park in the North’s border city of Kaesong, Seoul’s unification ministry said. Inter-Korean discussions have been under way to boost the Kaesong Industrial Complex, with a focus on launching Internet services at the park, along with how to make South Koreans’ access to the park easier and to simplify the customs process for products produced there. “The two sides are planning to continue discussions on technical issues regarding Internet connectivity,” Seoul’s unification ministry spokesman Kim Eui-do said during a regular briefing. The sub-panel meeting of the joint Kaesong management committee last took place in January. (Yonhap, “Inter-Korean Talks Underway on Internet Connectivity at Joint Complex,” February 7, 2014)

Stephen J. Kim, a former State Department contractor charged with leaking information from a highly classified report about North Korea to a Fox News reporter in 2009, pleaded guilty and agreed to serve a 13-month prison sentence. Kim became the sixth official to be convicted in a leak-related prosecution by the Obama administration, which has pursued eight such cases to date. Only three leak cases were prosecuted under all previous administrations. Kim’s leak led Fox News to report in June 2009 that “the Central Intelligence Agency has learned, through sources inside North Korea” that North Korea was likely to respond to a United Nations resolution condemning its nuclear and missile tests with even more tests. C.I.A. officials were said to be furious that a top-secret analysis had been leaked almost as soon as it had been written. Kim’s lawyer, Abbe Lowell, portrayed his client’s actions as identical to “what so many government officials do every day in Washington.” (Charlie Savage, “Ex-Contractor in State Department Pleads Guilty in Leak Case,” *New York Times*, February 8, 2014, p. A-10)

2/9/14

For a second time, North Korea has rescinded an invitation for a special American envoy to visit Pyongyang, the capital, to seek the release of Kenneth Bae, a Korean-American Christian missionary held in the country for over a year, the State Department said. In blocking the trip by Ambassador Robert King, Washington’s special envoy on North Korean human rights, North Korea again appeared to blame...
the tensions it said were caused by military exercises that the United States and South Korea are scheduled to begin this month. “We are deeply disappointed by the D.P.R.K. decision – for a second time – to rescind its invitation for Ambassador King to travel to Pyongyang to discuss Kenneth Bae’s release,” said Jen Psaki, the State Department spokeswoman, using the acronym of the North’s official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. She pointed out that North Korea “announced publicly in May it would not use the fate of Kenneth Bae as a political bargaining chip.” Bae, speaking on February 7 to Choson Sinbo, a pro-North Korean newspaper based in Japan, from his penal labor camp outside Pyongyang, said he had heard that Pyongyang had extended an invitation to King to visit North Korea as early as this week to discuss his fate. North Korea abruptly canceled a similar invitation for Mr. King in August, citing the military exercises as its reason. The exercises are “transparent, regularly scheduled and defense-oriented,” Psaki said. “These exercises are in no way linked to Bae’s case. We again call on the D.P.R.K. to grant Bae special amnesty and immediate release as a humanitarian gesture so he may reunite with his family and seek medical care.” She said Washington maintained its longstanding offer to send Mr. King to North Korea. Separately, under a request from Bae’s family, the Rev. Jesse Jackson offered to travel to Pyongyang on a humanitarian mission to help win Bae’s release, she said.


Tamogami Toshio’s strong showing in today’s election for Tokyo governor far exceeded the expectations of campaign strategists even in his own camp and in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, suggesting an undercurrent of ultraconservatism among the electorate. The former Air Self-Defense Force chief of staff, who denies Japan’s war of aggression, came in fourth with 611,000 votes, double the separate projections by his camp and the LDP. The figure represents 12 percent of all ballots cast. A senior official of the Tamogami camp declared that a new political force was born. “We do not feel we lost,” said the official, visibly agitated. “So many people are fed up with the delusions and the hypocrisy of postwar Japan.” Tamogami on February 8 spoke before 200 people who braved the heavy snow to gather in front of JR Akihabara Station. The crowd erupted into applause when he said the war of aggression, the 1937 Nanking Massacre and “comfort women,” a euphemism for women forced to provide sex to Japanese soldiers before and during World War II, were all fabricated. The 65-year-old said he will continue to visit Yasukuni Shrine, which commemorates Class-A war criminals along with the nation’s war dead, to restore pride in the nation’s history. He also expressed opposition to granting suffrage for foreign residents. While middle-aged and elderly men usually dominated the audiences at Tamogami’s speeches, Asahi Shimbun exit polls showed that he captured strong support from young men. Twenty-four percent of those in their 20s cast ballots for Tamogami, second only to 36 percent for former welfare minister Yoichi Masuzoe, who won the election with 2.11 million votes. The ratio for Tamogami was 17 percent among those in their 30s. For all people who voted for Tamogami, men outnumbered women by 70 percent. The LDP, which backed Masuzoe, believes that Tamogami encroached on its supporters, particularly conservatives who back Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. “We thought that he would receive 300,000 votes,” an LDP official said. “We were shocked (by his tally).” Abe campaigned for Masuzoe in Tokyo’s Ginza district on
February 2. The Masuzoe camp had requested his appearance to make it clear that the prime minister was backing Masuzoe’s bid, according to a senior official. Still, *Asahi Shim bun* exit polls showed that 16 percent of LDP supporters voted for Tamogami. LDP Secretary-General Ishiba Shigeru apparently downplayed the defection of party supporters. “Tamogami was in complete agreement with LDP policies,” he told a news conference Feb. 10. “It is understandable if some LDP supporters shifted toward him.”

Ishihara Shintaro, the nationalist former Tokyo governor and co-leader of the Japan Restoration Party, backed Tamogami. Some lawmakers who supported Tamogami are members of Sosei Nippon, a conservative policy group headed by Abe that calls for constitutional revisions and Yasukuni visits. Hiranuma Takeo, Sosei Nippon’s top adviser and chief of the caucus of Japan Restoration Party Diet members, campaigned for Tamogami. Twenty-five percent of Japan Restoration Party supporters voted for Tamogami, while 36 percent voted for Masuzoe, according to *Asahi Shim bun* exit polls. Satoru Mizushima, chief of the election strategy headquarters of the Tamogami camp, said people who post nationalistic messages online, known as Internet right-wingers, turned out to be Tamogami’s core supporters. Furuya Tsunehira, a commentator who backed Tamogami’s candidacy, said Internet right-wingers have emerged as a new political force. “Until now, the reality of anonymous online conservatives remained unclear,” said Furuya, who wrote books on Internet right-wingers. “Given low voter turnout, the latest election apparently showed the close-to-actual strength of online conservatives.” By comparison, an LDP candidate supported by an organization of postal workers, a traditional interest group, garnered 430,000 votes in the Upper House election last summer. An LDP candidate backed by an organization of agricultural cooperatives received 340,000 votes. However, online news editor Nakagawa Junichiro said Internet right-wingers alone cannot mobilize 600,000 voters. He said a broader spectrum of conservatives supported Tamogami partly because media outlets treated Tamogami as one of the four major contenders with Masuzoe, lawyer Utsunomiya Kenji and former Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro. Tamogami was dismissed as ASDF chief of staff in November 2008 after he wrote an essay seeking to legitimate Japanese military action before and during World War II. (Akiyama Soichiro, Okada Noboru, Miwa Sachiko and Tsuruoka Masahiro, “600,00 Votes for Tomogami Mya Signal Rise of Ultraconservatives,” *Asahi Shim bun*, February 11, 2014)

Officials from three South Korean companies set to participate in an economic project between Pyongyang and Moscow will visit North Korea’s northeastern port of Rajin February 12-14 for an on-site inspection, the unification ministry said. The companies are state-run Korea Railroad Corp. (KORAIL), top steelmaker POSCO and No. 2 shipper Hyundai Merchant Marine. No government official will join the 18 officials, the ministry said. Their inspection is part of South Korea’s participation in the Rajin-Khasan development project, the Russian-led rail and port development venture in North Korea. It’s designed to develop Rajin into a logistics center linked to Russia’s Trans-Siberian Railway. Last September, a double-track railway reopened between Rajin and Khasan, the nearby Russian town, after years of renovation. (Yonhap, “S. Korean Corporate Officials to Visit N. Korea as Part of Pyongyang-Moscow Venture,” February 9, 2014)
Rodong Sinmun: “No force on earth can stem the trend of the times toward the improved inter-Korean relations in the idea of By Our Nation Itself. All the Koreans in the north, the south and abroad call for putting the earliest possible end to the history of harmful distrust and confrontation and ushering in a new heyday of independent reunification, peace and prosperity through national reconciliation and unity. The DPRK has entered the road of totally stopping slandering and defaming the other side in order to create a climate required by the trend of the times towards mending the north-south relations. It, at the same time, solemnly declared that it would never take military actions obstructive to ensuring the nation’s security and peace by introducing outside forces. The north and the south are taking technical measures for arranging the reunion of separated families and their relatives thanks to the DPRK’s compatriotic goodwill and positive efforts for mending the inter-Korean relations. The hard-won atmosphere of mending the inter-Korean relations should prove successful to meet the requirements of the times and the expectation of all Koreans. The inter-Korean relations cannot be achieved by the efforts of one side only. The south Korean authorities should not misunderstand the DPRK’s sincere efforts, pay heed to the voices of all Koreans, boldly drop their wrong interpretation and conception of confrontation and opt for improving the inter-Korean relations. Only when the south Korean authorities positively respond to the DPRK’s call, will new steady changes take place in the inter-Korean relations.” (KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Calls for Improvement of Inter-Korean Relations,” February 10, 2014)

North Korea appears ready to conduct its fourth nuclear test, but no imminent signs have been detected at its main site on its northeastern tip, South Korea's defense chief said in a parliamentary interpellation session. Kim Kwan-jin said Pyongyang has prepared for an underground nuclear test at the Punggye-ri site, which was used for the third atomic test a year ago, and has taken “initial steps” for a missile launch at its northwest test site in Tongchang-ri. “These things (the nuclear test and the missile launch) depend on the decision by the North Korean leadership. As seen in the past, the long-range missile test and the nuclear test are connected to each other,” Kim told lawmakers. “We are closely watching (the North Korean military) to prepare against any provocations.” (Kim Eun-jung, “N. Korea Ready for Atomic Test, Yet No Imminent Sign: Seoul’s Defense Chief,” Yonhap, February 10, 2014)

Donald Gregg, a former U.S. ambassador to South Korea, arrived in North Korea, Pyongyang's state media reported, a trip seen to help facilitate the release of a Korean-American man detained there. In a brief report, the North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Gregg, now chairman of the U.S. Pacific Century Institute, and other members of the institute are visiting Pyongyang. (Yonhap, “Ex-U.S. Envoy Visits Pyongyang: State Media,” February 10, 2014)

The two Koreas will hold their first high-level talks in seven years tomorrow, the Unification Ministry said, as the North ramps up efforts to put their strained relations back on track. The meeting will open at the truce village of Panmunjeom at 10:00 a.m. led by Kim Kyou-hyun, vice chief of the presidential National Security Office, and Won Dong-yon, deputy head of the United Front Department in the North’s ruling Workers’ Party. The vice ministerial contact will mark the first high-level dialogue between the
divided states since 2007. The talks were arranged following Pyongyang’s request on Saturday. North Korea asked a presidential official lead the Seoul delegation. With no agenda set, each side would raise issues of concern, including the planned reunions of families separated by the Korean War from February 20-25 at Mount Kumgang, the ministry said. “At the talks, (the two sides) are expected to confer on key issues of interest including ways to ensure the smooth handling of the family reunions and (how to) make it a regular event,” ministry spokesman Kim Eui-do said at a news conference. Kim Kyou-hyun, a former vice foreign minister who assumed the post just a week ago, faces the daunting task of untangling a web of longstanding cross-border issues including deep-rooted mistrust and the North’s nuclear program. His delegation will also include officials from the unification and defense ministries. (Shin Hyon-hee, “Korea’s to Hold High-Level Talks,” Korea Herald, February 11, 2014)

An adviser to Japanese Premier Abe Shinzo held a meeting with North Korean officials in China in October, Kyodo reported, kindling speculation that Tokyo is seeking to reopen talks with Pyongyang over the issue of Japanese abductees. In response to the report, South Korea cautioned against any unilateral move by Japan regarding Pyongyang. “Japan’s talks with North Korea should be conducted in close communication and coordination with South Korea and the United States,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Cho Tai-young said in a briefing, adding that the government is still verifying the report. The four-day visit by Iijima Isao was made to the northeastern port city of Dalian, where the two sides had met for covert negotiations in the past, Kyodo said, citing diplomatic sources in Beijing. The latest trip coincides with the pending sale of the headquarters of the General Association of Korean Residents, a Tokyo-based pro-North Korea group better known as Chongryon. Though a Mongolian firm won the bid for the property on October 17, a Tokyo court rejected it, saying its documents were not “trustworthy,” the news outlet added. But the meeting’s main focus was likely to have been the issue of Japanese nationals kidnapped by the North decades ago, observers say.

After Iijima traveled to Pyongyang last May, he advised Abe to pursue talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The nationalist premier has displayed his resolve to tackle the long-festering issue since taking office in December 2012. Iijima was a top aide to former Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro and accompanied him on his two trips to Pyongyang in 2002 and 2004 for summits with late leader Kim Jong-il. Kyodo also said earlier that Ihara Junichi, director general for Asian and Oceanian affairs at the Japanese Foreign Ministry, and other two officials met with three working-level North Korean officials in Hanoi from January 26-27. Tokyo’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide denied the report. Iijima’s surprise trip last year prompted South Korea and the U.S. to express discomfort over Japan’s failure to inform them in advance. Seoul’s Foreign Ministry openly said the visit was “unhelpful.” “If the Abe government is indeed looking for any unilateral move regarding North Korea, it will create another awkward situation for all of us,” a Seoul official said. (Shin Hyon-hee, “North Korea, Japan Held Secret Meeting,” Korea Herald, February 11, 2014) “Japan needs to deal with issues with North Korea under close (trilateral) communication and consultation with South Korea and the United State as it does over the North Korean nuclear missile issue,” foreign ministry spokesman Cho Tai-young said in a briefing. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Urges Japan’s Concerted Approach to N. Korea,” February 11, 2014)
With no agenda set, the two sides were expected to chiefly discuss the planned reunions of families separated by the Korean War on Feb. 20-25 at Mount Geumgangsan. Seoul may also have raised the need to break the impasse over the North’s nuclear programs, trilateral economic projects with Russia, its plan to create a peace park in the Demilitarized Zone, and other key issues. Pyongyang, for its part, would try to explain its “crucial proposals” made last month, which include a cessation of slander, military drills by South Korea and the U.S., and mutual steps to “prevent a nuclear catastrophe.” “The discussions took place in an earnest atmosphere with no particular point of issue,” a Unification Ministry official told reporters in the afternoon on customary condition of anonymity. “They are not to strike a deal at this point, though our delegation may have been trying to carry through our position on any given issue. But primarily both sides were asking each other’s issues of interest, then answer and explain.” The North’s potent National Defense Commission offered a gathering on Saturday, asking for a presidential official as head of the Seoul delegation. Four additional officials from related agencies accompanied each side’s representative. “We are seeking to put emphasis on how to ensure that the family reunions will get underway as agreed,” Kim told reporters before leaving for the border town. “I will engage (in the talks) with an open attitude and mind to explore opportunities to usher in a new peninsula.” Rodong Sinmun today called for defused tension on the peninsula and efforts for enduring peace, warning against “attempting to test” the nation’s resolve to safeguard peace. Sources of contention remain, however, including joint annual military exercises by South Korea and the U.S. that are slated to begin midway through the family reunion sessions. The North urged the allies to drop their plan, threatening to reconsider the agreement on the much-anticipated event. “During the latest talks, North Korea may propose an exchange of special envoys or a fresh round of ministerial or prime ministerial dialogue, and discuss a road map for the development of inter-Korean ties,” said Cheong Seong-chang, a senior fellow at the independent Sejong Institute. “It also appears to have the intention of making way for a summit in the longer term, given the appointment as the chief delegate of Won who took part in the preparations of past inter-Korean summits.” (Shin Hyon-hee, “Two Koreas Hold Senior-Level Talks,” Korea Herald, February 12, 2014)

South and North Korea will meet today at the border village of Panmunjom for a second round of high-level talks, according to the Ministry of Unification. Kim Kyou-hyun, head of the secretariat of the National Security Council, and Won Dong-yon, the deputy head of the United Front Department of the ruling Workers’ Party, will again be leading their respective sides. However, it is still uncertain whether the much-hoped-for reunions of families separated by the 1950-1953 Korean War will take place as Pyongyang is calling for a delay in the upcoming ROK-U.S. military exercises that partly overlaps the scheduled get-togethers. During high-level talks Wednesday, the North demanded that the South postpone the war games until after the reunions, scheduled for February 20 to 25, are held. The joint drills — Key Resolve and Foal Eagle — are set to run from February 24 through April. The reunions will come in two parts — one taking place from February 20 to 22 and the other from February 23 to 25. “The North said it is willing to hold the family reunions as scheduled, but in principle, it cannot do so during the exercises,” said an official at the unification ministry. However, South
Korea rejected the North’s request, noting that family reunions should not be linked to the exercises and the first high-level talks in seven years ended with little progress made. “We made it clear that we cannot accept the North’s request to delay the drills, and holding the reunions without a hitch is the first step to better inter-Korean ties,” said Minister of Unification Ryoo Kihl-jae during a meeting of the National Assembly Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee. The unification minister also expects the family reunions to take place as scheduled. “Despite the North’s demand, it was neither agreed nor notified, so we do not have to worry about the North backing out of the reunions. Should the North do something about the pullout, we will seek countermeasures,” Ryoo said. “But I think it will go well this time. The reunions will be held without a problem.” As part of the South’s efforts to keep the get-togethers alive, the unification ministry plans to send a team to the venue where the scheduled reunions of separated families are to be held at Mount Geumgang, north of the Demilitarized Zone, this week. North Korea watchers say that the South needs to be flexible when dealing with the issue. “As the North has willingness to hold the family reunions, the South need to make efforts to keep the reunions alive such as less promotion of the joint military drills and provocations of the North,” said Chang Yong-seok, a senior researcher at the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies at Seoul National University. (Kang Seung-woo, “Second High-Level Talks Today,” Korea Times, February 13, 2014) Carlin: “Barely a month since Kim Jong Un’s New Year’s address signaling a major North Korean decision to push for improved inter-Korean ties the two Koreas on Wednesday held a high-level “contact” (quietly proposed by the North several days ago) at Panmunjom. Despite the lack of any agreement at Wednesday’s exceptionally long meeting, and early reports that there had been “no progress,” official ROK accounts of the meeting characterized the atmosphere as “sincere,” noting that the session had provided an opportunity for the two sides to lay out their positions. Altogether, that sort of delicate public portrayal was a pretty good sign that the session had been productive in laying foundations for further engagement. Indeed, today it was announced there would be a second meeting [today]. Without being in the room or seeing a transcript of the meeting, of course, it’s impossible to know exactly what went on, but the most significant development may have been that the North Korean delegation, led by deputy director of the Central Committee’s United Front Department and including two uniformed officers from the National Defense Commission (NDC), suggested that rather than cancel the US-ROK joint exercises (due to begin on February 24), the South postpone them for a couple of days, so they would not overlap with the scheduled family reunions, due to take place at the Mt. Kumgang resort in North Korea from February 20-25. Depending on whether both sides are looking for progress or want to dig in their heels, this would seem to have opened the way to explore various compromises. When they want to be—which unfortunately is not all that often—both sides are capable of imaginative solutions to what, at first, looks to be intractable problems. Not incidentally, the North’s suggestion that the start of the exercises be postponed fits with indications in the NDC proposal last month that Pyongyang did not expect the South to call off the exercises and that it might be looking for (or already had in its pocket) ways to work around the problem. There is no sense in arguing about where things might go from this point, but it is well worth reviewing how we got here. Recall, the Blue House dismissed Kim’s New Year’s offer, as well as a subsequent NDC proposal, as a “trick.” One might
wonder whether President Park, at first, demurely turned away from Kim’s advances so as not to seem too eager. Is she, in other words, crazy like a fox? If so, she played things brilliantly, even to the point of keeping a straight face while lecturing a visiting US senator that, “Given our previous experience, such conciliatory propaganda [by the North] has always been followed by provocation.” In this scenario, her defense minister also probably deserves an Oscar for thundering about the likelihood of a North Korean provocation even while his president was edging toward more engagement. On the other hand, it may be that the Blue House wasn’t acting, and it was only through the persistence of what the press loves to label the North’s “charm offensive” that Pyongyang got to first base. Persistence in this case means a mode that the North has from time to time taken with Washington or Seoul over the decades—a “not going to take no for an answer” posture. In that case, the critics might ask themselves how long a “charm offensive” has to last before it is judged to be a serious policy opening? A question still much on people’s minds at the moment is whether the North will go through with family reunions scheduled for the Mt. Kumgang resort in a few weeks. That may be answered at tomorrow’s meeting. There was a straw in the wind a few days ago when unusually heavy snows blanketed the east coast of Korea (North and South—weather does not observe the demilitarized zone) making access to the site extremely difficult. It would have been—and still might be—relatively easy for Pyongyang to put off the family reunions on account of the weather. Instead, ROK media reported that several South Korean snowplows have been dispatched to the site to clear the roads. South Korean snowplows do not willy-nilly show up in North Korea. Unless they go in by ship, they have to cross the DMZ, which on the North Korean side is controlled by the Korean People’s Army (KPA). The KPA does not easily open the gates on the highway (a threatening high-speed access route poked through the DMZ as far as they are concerned). The only reason they would do this without a lot of paperwork and “internal discussion” is if they had very clear orders from Pyongyang to open the damned highway and be quick about it. The shift in Seoul’s stance toward Pyongyang did not take place overnight, of course. By late January, the tone of ROK characterizations of the situation was, by degrees, softening, with parallel changes in South Korean media comment. Also by mid-January, there were several North-South meetings in the business sphere, all of which seemed to go relatively well. On Monday, it was reported that several ROK businessmen would travel to the North Korean port of Rajin on February 11 to discuss the possibility of additional work restoring the railroad from the Russian border at Khasan. ROK businessmen do not plan to go to North Korea without the ROK government’s approval, not unless they want to end up in jail upon their return. The North is now positioned in an interesting spot. Having rescinded the invitation to Ambassador Robert King to come to negotiate the release of Kenneth Bae, but pressing ahead on inter-Korean contacts, it can test how far the ROK is willing to get out in front of Washington in engaging Pyongyang. Again, the parlor game of predicting what happens next is wide open for those who enjoy that past time. For now, maybe it is enough to note where we are at this moment—on the edge of the dance floor, the band back from its break, and this metaphor, thankfully, about to run out of gas. (Robert Carlin, “Shall We Dance?” 38North, February 13, 2014)
noun to a verb. The Secretary believes strongly that the North Korean nuclear threat is not a problem that we can all admire from a distance. What he seeks to do is to enlist greater and greater levels of Chinese cooperation in actually helping to achieve the goal of denuclearization, not just talking about it. So he will discuss with the Chinese what more we can do together, what more we can do as the five of the Six Party Talks, and what more China can do, given its unique set of ties and leverage with North Korea. What we’re trying to achieve is an effect, an effect in which North Korea takes real and meaningful steps in the direction we are asking it to go, and demonstrate that it’s prepared to negotiate denuclearization, not merely to posture. … Q. A question about the Secretary’s appeal to the Chinese regarding North Korea: Have the Chinese responded to that so far? Has there been any specific action from China in response? And second of all I wonder, do you have any concern that the absence of Kim Jong-un’s uncle now, who was an intermediary for the Chinese, whether that will make communication more difficult? SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: The question is the degree of responsiveness the Chinese have shown to the Secretary’s importuning and argumentation on North Korea and the extent to which it is a handicap for the Chinese to be bereft of Jang Song-thaek, Kim Jong-un’s lamented uncle, who, per the question, served a role as an intermediary. I personally have been present at most if not all of Secretary Kerry’s engagements with Chinese officials on North Korea and can personally attest from experience to the intensity and the effectiveness of his representations. The conversation that he will have in China is building on a very solid foundation of explaining the U.S. perspective, of explaining the threat that North Korea’s continued pursuit of nuclear capability presents to U.S. interests and those of our allies and partners, but also a clear articulation of the objectives that the U.S. holds in terms of helping to create a stable, secure, and prosperous region in which the Korea Peninsula is a net contributor and not a major liability. I think that - although I obviously won’t speak for the Chinese - that the Secretary gets a good hearing and a good response. I can’t attribute to the Secretary all of the steps – each of the steps that China has taken over the previous months to signal to North Korea the intensity of its interest in seeing North Korea take steps to end its nuclear program and to denuclearize. But I certainly am of the view that Secretary Kerry’s clear articulation of the stakes of the U.S. position and of the importance of this issue in terms of U.S.-China cooperation have had a significant effect. On the subject of Jang Song-thaek, no analyst that I have heard is of the opinion that Jang Song-thaek was the premier conduit through which the Chinese communicated to North Korea. However, I think there is a widely held view among analysts that the purge of the number two in the Chinese system and the brutality manifested in that purge – excuse me, in the North Korean system -- is evidence of weakness not of strength, and is the source of concern to all of North Korea’s neighbors, frankly, as well as to the international community. The type of policies that the North Korean leadership claims to want to pursue, in other words a growing and strengthening economic capability, are utterly incompatible with both a nuclear program and with the kind of personnel management that was reflected in the purge of Jang Song-thaek. … Q: A small administrative question and then a follow-up question to Paul’s question. Secretary Kerry’s gone to the region five times. As I count it, this is his second visit as Secretary to Beijing and to Seoul, and he was last there in April. Is that right? And – so it’s his second visit to these two places. And since
he was there last, the American policy has been to seek – to induce China to use its influence with North Korea to constrain their nuclear program. But North Korea seems to moving on the plutonium front by reactivating the Yongbyon reactor. They’re moving to expand their program – their parallel program in terms of centrifuges and enriched uranium. Can you point to a single thing that has led to a tangible constraint on the North Korean program since Secretary Kerry was there in April? In what respect has that program slowed or paused or halted, if at all, in – since you made the same entreaties last time? Thank you. SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE: Mike, I think you’re factually correct, although I have one of the world’s worst memories. But if you’re not, we will fact-check the first part of your question for you. The second, more substantive, question gets at the challenge of proving a negative: What is it that one could establish has not happened as a consequence either of Secretary Kerry’s diplomacy or of Chinese actions? I think the way to look at it is instead take a step back and acknowledge that unless and until North Korea has made the basic decision to come into compliance with its international obligations and its commitments by beginning a process of denuclearization through irreversible steps that have credibility in the eyes of certainly the other six party members, as well as the international community. Until and unless that happens, our efforts have not yet borne fruit. They are – there is still much more work to be done, and that’s where we are. Taking that as both the goal and the starting point, the question then becomes: What more can be done, who can do what, and how do we operate together bilaterally and multilaterally to bring North Korea to that decision? It’s a decision the North Koreans need to make. My belief – and I think this is widely shared – is that it’s not the decision North Korea wants to make. It is a decision that they will make only by weighing the alternatives and reaching the conclusion that it is simply not viable to continue down the path of threatening its neighbors and threatening the international community. Now, already it is fair to say that unlike in the past, North Korea has been unable to elicit benefits from the international community by virtue of its provocation, by virtue of its threats, by virtue of its nuclear and missile programs. That is not trivial but it is not enough. So the point that Secretary Kerry has made and I know intends to make to the Chinese is that as a nation with unique ties, including important economic and logistic trade and financial ties with North Korea, the proof is in the pudding. And if North Korea is, as you say, continuing to expand its plutonium, its uranium programs, it’s continuing to defy its international obligations, is continuing to make the wrong choices, then by definition the international community collectively, and China specifically, have not yet done enough. SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Let me just add very quickly to that answer. … North Korea has done us the backhanded favor of making explicitly plain over the last couple of years that it has no desire to denuclearize. We’ve seen the announcement of their so-called Pyongjin policy that elevates the pursuit of nuclear weapons to one of the two main aims of the state. We’ve seen them change their constitution. We’ve seen the nuclear threats. This, I think, has helped clarify thinking not just in Washington and among the other states who form the five parties among the six parties, but also in Beijing. And so the quality of conversations that we’ve had with the Chinese, to my knowledge, has never been better on this. We’ve made a great deal of progress in narrowing differences, but it’s no secret that the United States and China do not have
perfectly congruent sets of interests when it comes to North Korea. So it’s not the simplest of tasks to chart a way forward, but that’s the path that we’re embarked on. **Q:** Official Number One, in your opening comment you made a point of saying that North Korea and climate change would be high on the Secretary’s agenda in Beijing, but that he would also talk about the maritime disputes. One, should we deduce from that that the maritime disputes come sort of third on his list and the other two issues are higher up on his agenda? Second, what kinds of consequences - what kinds of consequences, if any, might China face from continuing to pursue its territorial claims in the uncoordinated fashion that you’ve described and you find objectionable? One of your NSC colleagues was recently quoted as talking about if a second ADIZ was established that there could be a change in the U.S. military posture in the region. Is that something that is actively under discussion? And then lastly, what do you specifically want to see China do on North Korea? **SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE:** You’ve exceeded my brain buffer there and I may have to come back to you to remind me of your multipoint question. …Well, other than me trying to telegraph prescriptive formulas for China, I would draw you back to the point I sought to make earlier, which is the effect that we seek to have. We want cooperation and actions from China and with China that will have the net effect of bringing the North Korean leadership to the realization that the consequences for continuing on the dead-end path they are on, namely a path in pursuit of a nuclear missile capability, does not bring them security, does not bring them prosperity, and is simply not tenable. And we ask that China apply all of the tools at its disposal to bring North Korea to that realization. **Q:** Thank you. In Korea - South and North Korea had high-level talks. They are first in seven years. It’s quite a fast-moving development, I think. Are you comfortable with the speed and pace of their inter-Korean reconciliation or rapprochement? Thanks. **SENIOR STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL ONE:** Well, I know that the Secretary looks forward to hearing more directly from the leadership of the Republic of Korea about the current status of discussions and the overall state of inter-Korean relations. **As a matter of policy and a matter of practice, the U.S. strongly supports improved North-South ties, and we welcome inter-Korean dialogue. We hope that North Korea is sincere and that North Korea is cooperative in its discussions with the Republic of Korea.** We are particularly concerned about and sympathetic to the plight of the separated families and certainly hope that the North Koreans will not pull back from previous agreements to allow separated families to be reunited, even briefly. In a similar vein, with respect to humanitarian issues, we ourselves have been sorely disappointed at the North Korean decision to rescind its previous agreement for Ambassador Robert King to visit North Korea in the hopes of being able to bring Kenneth Bae, an American citizen in failing health, back to his family. We very much hope that North Korea will listen to the voices in South Korea who are asking for compassion for your countrymen who want to have a chance to see their relatives and that they will listen to the voices of Americans and the international community who similarly are asking for compassion to be shown to Kenneth Bae. **Q:** You talked about how the purpose of this trip – regarding North Korea, you said you’re going to look at what more can be done to make sure that North Korea starts denuclearizing both bilaterally and multilaterally. Aside from seeking the effects of a pressure via China, what, from the U.S. perspective, are you seeking to do to push North Korea towards the goal of denuclearization? Can you talk a little bit more about
To answer your second question first, which is how stable is the North Korean regime in the aftermath of the purge and whether it’s underway or over, I’ll be honest and say that I do not know, and I don’t think that the – our time is best spent in speculating on that. I think it is the first part of your question that bears focus, which is namely what combination of actions on the part of the U.S., the Republic of Korea, China, Japan, Russia, others in the international community can have the effect on North Korea that we seek, namely, bringing it to the conclusion that it has no viable alternative but to engage seriously in pending negotiations to bring to an end its nuclear program. I think that the actions on the part of the United States can fall broadly in two categories: actions that we take or that we facilitate in tandem with partners to bring home to North Korea the consequences and the effect that continued intransigence will have on North Korea as well as on its prospects; and secondly, to continue to make clear that there is a real alternative available to North Korea. President Obama has said – and Secretary Kerry has underscored – that North Korea has a choice to make. North Korea has an option that will end its international isolation that will bolster its security and that will create opportunities for prosperity for its people. But to avail itself of that opportunity, North Korea has to make a real choice and demonstrate its commitment to take steps to come into compliance with international obligations. The days are long gone when the international community will take North Korea’s IOU. North Korea has not honored its own commitments in the past, and so words alone won’t do. What the international community, including the five members of the Six-Party Talks, seek from North Korea are convincing steps and real evidence that North Korea is prepared to negotiate denuclearization. And our willingness to respond to bona fide steps by North Korea provides an incentive. Our unwillingness to offer concessions in advance, in the hope that it will induce good behavior from North Korea, is a pressure point that we hope will lead North Korea to make the right choice. **Q:** I wanted to ask about (inaudible) and no one asked the fate of Bae, who’s in detention, and when anyone’s last heard from him and what’s known about his circumstances, and he’s back in a prison camp. And I know it’s not done through intermediaries, but can you update us on that please? **SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL:** Yeah, I can tell you what we know, which shouldn’t differ from what you know because we’ve seen the video released by the North Koreans and by Choson Simbo, the news organization that was in there. It would appear that he has been moved back to the camp and is once again at – in a labor camp performing eight or nine or 10 hours of labor a day. And this makes even more urgent the need to resolve the matter, which is why our efforts continue to prevail upon the North Koreans to accept a visit from Ambassador King to Pyongyang to discuss the matter. And we hope to bring Kenneth Bae back to the United States. So we believe he has returned to a camp. Our protecting power, the Swedes, have sent us some reports. And that’s the status as far as we know it at this stage.” (DoS, Senior Administration and State Department Officials, Background Briefing on Secretary Kerry’s Trip to Republic of Korea, China and Indonesia, February 13, 2014)
Kerry: "Q: (Via interpreter) My name is Kimi Joon. I’m from YTN. I would like to ask a question about North Korea. You said that progress is very important. Yesterday, for the first time in seven years, there was a high-level meeting. And at the meeting, North Korea said that - demanded that the military exercises be postponed until after the family reunions. And if the military exercises go on as planned, do you think that this might impact the reunions, family reunions? So I would like to know your reaction. … Regarding the nuclear issue, yesterday, during the high-level meeting, they said - North Korea said that this shouldn’t be discussed between South and North. So regarding nuclear - denuclearization, it could mean that North Korea wants to talk directly with the U.S. So what is your position? KERRY: We’re - our - well, let me be clear, first of all, on the reunification issue. The United States does not believe that it is appropriate to link a humanitarian issue such as reunification with any other issue. And since the exercises are exercises that are not changed - not bigger, not different, occurring at exactly the same time as they have occurred every year, in the same manner that they have occurred as a matter of readiness between the United States and the Republic of Korea - there is no legitimate excuse for linking the two. The family reunification is a matter of human rights. It’s a matter of decency. It’s a matter of living up to normal standards of human behavior and of human - of shared values and standards in the international community. And we would urge a complete separation of these two and no use of one as an excuse to somehow condition the other. With respect to the Six-Party Talks versus individual talks, nuclear talks, the United States position has not changed. It is clear. We are in full agreement with President Park’s stance on North Korea. Today we reaffirm our commitment to a common goal, which is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. And we are committed to going to talks only if there is a clarity with respect to the steps that need to be taken for denuclearization by the North. We are not in favor of talks for the sake of talks. We’ve been through that exercise previously. We want to know that this is real. And it’s - frankly, the responsibility is on North Korea to take meaningful actions to demonstrate that denuclearization is real. And it’s time for the North to choose the path of peace and to refrain from provocations and/or using excuses to avoid the responsibility that they bear. So we are not engaged in back-channel efforts to have face-to-face talks or bilateral talks. We are committed to a process, together with our allies and friends in this effort, to guarantee that when and if we get back to talks those talks are meaningful." … Q: I wanted to ask about the rift between our allies. How can U.S. and Korea present a united front and coordinated Asia policy when our two biggest allies - the U.S. allies in Asia, Japan and South Korea, are at each other’s throats? And what practical actual steps can you take, on the part of Secretary Kerry, and do you intend to take, on the part of Minister Yun, to bring those two sides together? KERRY: Look, there is no question but that positive relations between Japan and its neighbors are in the best interests of the United States, the region, and the two countries themselves. That’s our belief. And we respect the fact that the Republic of Korea and Japan are both developed free-market economies that share values. They share a robust economic relationship, and they also share with us compelling strategic interests. So while the United States obviously has a strong interest in the relationship and in the security component of the relationship, it’s up to Japan and the Republic of Korea to put history behind them and move the relationship forward. And it is critical at the same time that we maintain robust trilateral
cooperation, particularly in the face of North Korea’s nuclear threat. So we urge our friends in Japan and in North Korea – in North Korea and South Korea – excuse me, in the Republic of Korea – we urge both of them to work with us together to find a way forward to help resolve these deeply felt historic differences that still have meaning today. And we respect the meaning that they still have today. We understand the meaning that they still have today. So I made this case to Foreign Minister Kishida last week when he visited Washington, and again – we talked about it today with President Park and with Foreign Minister Yun. So we will continue – the United States will continue, I will personally continue to encourage both allies to find mutually acceptable approaches to legacy issues from the past and find ways to enhance bilateral and trilateral cooperation that will define the future. We believe it is possible to do both. And we’re going to work very hard, obviously, over the course of the next weeks and months to do so. FOREIGN MINISTER YUN: (Via interpreter) I would just like to add (inaudible) regarding the relationship between Korea and Japan. Of course, with the new government we have made a lot of efforts to stabilize the relationship between Korea and Japan. But unfortunately, as the international society has seen, during the past few months, some Japanese political leaders have made a lot of historically incorrect remarks. And so these revisionist – historically revisionist remarks, as long as they last, till then it will be difficult to build trust between our two countries. And so these leaders must look at history as it is, and they must be very sincere. And we are always willing to dialogue with them. And so they must make the efforts to create an environment conducive to dialogue. International society these days regarding the sexual slavery as well as the view on history is a matter of concern for international society. So they must listen to these concerns and must take the appropriate measures to correct the situation. This must be the foundation for the improved Korean-Japanese relations.” (Secretary of State Kerry, Remarks with ROK Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se, February 13, 2014)

38North: “Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates a significant acceleration in excavation activity at the West Portal area since last viewed in early December 2013. The size of the pile of spoil excavated from a new tunnel appears to have doubled in a period of a little over a month. Exactly what accounts for this acceleration remains unclear. However, it is unlikely Pyongyang intends to use this tunnel for its next nuclear test since two other tunnels in the Southern area of the site appear complete. Because the Southern area is often covered in shadows during the winter, coverage by commercial satellites can prove to be spotty. As a result, it was not possible to view the tunnel entrances in the most recent February imagery. Once a decision is made in Pyongyang, indicators visible in satellite imagery of an impending nuclear test can appear 4-6 weeks prior to the test, both near the tunnel entrance and in other areas of the site. In the past, they have included: camouflage netting deployed to conceal activities at the tunnel entrance itself during preparations for a blast; a satellite communications dish for relaying data off-site in the vicinity of the test tunnel; a special vehicle covered by an awning and surrounded by many personnel in the central support/staging area; and a marked increase in overall activity at the central support area and roads leading to the test tunnel. Based on the most recent satellite imagery, there are no signs that a test is in preparation. (Jack Liu, “North Korea’s Punggye-ri
South and North Korea agreed to hold reunions of separated families later this month as scheduled, an official said, a deal that could help improve inter-Korean relations after months of tensions. The rival Koreas also agreed to stop making slanderous remarks against each other to boost mutual confidence, South Korea’s chief delegate Kim Kyu-hyun told reporters. He further said the two Koreas vowed to make efforts to improve their relations and agreed to hold another round of high-level talks at a later date, which has yet to be set. The deal was reached at the high-level talks -- the second such meeting in three days -- at the border village of Panmunjom that separates the two Koreas. "It is meaningful that the two Koreas took a first step toward development of inter-Korean relations based on confidence," Kim said. "I expect the two Koreas to continue to build confidence through dialogue in the future." (Yonhap, “Koreas Agree to Hold Family Reunions As Scheduled,” February 14, 2014)

KCNA: “A north-south high-level contact took place in Panmunjom on February 12 and 14. Present there were the delegation of the National Defence Commission of the DPRK headed by Won Tong Yon, vice department director of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, from the north side and members of the delegation with Kim Kyu Hyon, first vice-chief of the "National Security Section" of Chongwadae and secretary general of the "National Security Council", as chief delegate from the south side. Both sides confirmed the will to open a new phase of national unity, peace, prosperity and independent reunification by improving the inter-Korean relations, sincerely discussed various issues arising between the north and the south and issued a joint press release: The north and the south held a high-level contact in Panmunjom on February 12 and 14, 2014 and reached the following consensus:

The north and the south agreed to hold the reunion of separated families and their relatives as scheduled.

The north and the south agreed to refrain from slandering each other in order to promote mutual understanding and trust.

The north and the south agreed to continue discussing the issues of mutual concern and make positive efforts to develop the inter-Korean relations.

The north and the south agreed to hold a high-level contact at date convenient to both sides.” (KCNA, “Inter-Korean High-Level Contact Held,” February 14, 2014)

Secretary of State John F. Kerry said he had held a very constructive meeting with China’s President Xi Jinping as he sought Beijing’s help in deterring North Korea from pursuing nuclear weapons. He described his morning meeting with Xi at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing as very positive. “I'm glad we had an opportunity to dig into the detail of some of the North Korea challenges,” he said. “And also I appreciate his willingness to move forward on the climate change initiative.” China remains the key to pushing North Korea toward denuclearization. Long seen as a key factor in propping up the Pyongyang regime, China has maintained stalwart support for North Korea for years – watering down international sanctions and sending desperately needed aid. But early last year, after North Korea ignored its pleas to avoid the nuclear test, China...
began showing signs of frustration. Kerry and other U.S. officials said they were encouraged by the signs—such as tougher government statements and editorials debating China’s long-standing support of Pyongyang. “China has responded. China has done positive things,” Kerry told reporters in Seoul, but he said that more is needed and vowed to ask the country “to use all the means at its disposal.” “No country has a greater potential to influence North Korea behavior than China,” he said. “All of the refined fuel that goes in to move every automobile and airplane in North Korea comes from China. All of the fundamental, rudimentary banking structure it has with the world passes through China. Significant trade and assistance goes from China to North Korea.” But China—which values stability above all else—is unlikely to abandon North Korea anytime soon. And much of its outspokenness against Pyongyang from last year has died down, especially after Kim Jong Un’s dramatic purge of his uncle Jang Song Thaek. Jang, Kim’s most prominent adviser, was executed in December and derided as “despicable human scum” by the regime. “It’s been really quiet ever since then,” said Victor Cha, a Georgetown University professor and a national security official under President George W. Bush. “I think the Chinese are as worried by the shake-up as everyone else. They’re in wait-and-see mode.”

(Simon Denver and William Wan, “Kerry Pushes China on North Korea Nukes,” Washington Post, February 14, 2014) Wang Yi said the “top priority is to seize the opportunity to resume dialogue as soon as possible.” He urged all parties to “have the overall situation in mind; speak and act prudently; show flexibility; do more things beneficial to the relaxation of situation; and take practical measures to create favorable conditions for pushing the resumption of six-party talks.” (Bonnie Glaser and Jacqueline Vitello, “China’s maritime Disputes Top the Agenda,” Comparative Connections, May 2014)

A former U.S. ambassador to South Korea said Friday that he called on North Korea to swiftly release detained American Kenneth Bae during this week’s visit to Pyongyang and expressed “regret” over the North’s cancellation of a U.S. envoy’s visit aimed at securing his release. “That was not why we went. That was not part of our agenda,” Gregg replied, when asked whether his visit was aimed at seeking the release of Bae. However, Gregg said he held “very interesting” talks with North Korean officials. “We had three good meetings,” Gregg said, describing the mood as “friendly.” He didn’t elaborate further. (Yonhap, “Ex-U.S. Envoy Urges N. Korea to Free Detained American Soon,” February 14, 2014)

Kerry: “Q: Just to make clear on the DPRK issue, you said that the Chinese voiced their commitment to taking action on this. Did you receive a specific commitment from China to do more to try to prevent North Korean provocations? ... KERRY: Yeah. On the DPRK, China could not have been more emphatic or made it more clear that they will not allow a nuclear program over the long run, that they believe deeply in denuclearization, that denuclearization must occur, that they are committed to doing their part to help make it happen, and that they also will not allow instability and war to break out in the region. They believe it has to be done in a political negotiation and through diplomacy. That is their preference. But they made it very clear that if the North doesn’t comply and come to the table and be serious about talks and stop its program and live up to an agreed-upon set of standards with respect to the
current activities that are threatening the people, that they’re prepared to take additional steps in order to make sure that their policy is implemented. And when I say “their policy,” their shared policy together with the other participants of the Six Party group and those in the region. And there is a very firm commitment to achieving that. Now what we’re talking about are some of the specifics of how you do that. And they put some ideas on the table, and we put some ideas on the table. And both of us are taking those under evaluation. I will report back to the President those things that the Chinese thought might be helpful, and they are taking under advisement - I shared with each leader at each level our thoughts about what must be done and what we need in order to proceed forward. And they have agreed to take that under advisement. And we will continue this dialogue in the days ahead in a very serious way with a great sense of the urgency of time and purpose.” (Secretary of State John Kerry, Solo Press Availability in Beijing, February 14, 2014)

A United Nations panel has served notice to Kim Jong-un that he may be personally held liable in court for crimes against humanity committed by state institutions and officials under his direct control. A letter conveying this notice is part of a report by the panel to the United Nations Human Rights Council, released after a yearlong investigation. In the letter, dated January 20, the panel chairman, the retired Australian judge Michael Donald Kirby, summarized the investigation’s findings of crimes against humanity committed by officials that could be inferred to be acting under Kim’s personal control and wrote that his panel would recommend that the United Nations Security Council refer the situation in North Korea to the International Criminal Court, to make all those responsible for crimes accountable, “including possibly yourself.” “I hope that the international community will be moved by the detail, the amount, the long duration, the great suffering and the many tears that have existed in North Korea to act on the crimes against humanity,” Judge Kirby told reporters in the Geneva offices of the United Nations. “Too many times in this building there are reports and no action,” Judge Kirby said. “Well, now is a time for action. We can’t say we didn’t know.” A statement from the North Korean Mission in Geneva, quoted by Reuters, said that such rights violations “do not exist in our country,” and that the findings were “an instrument of a political plot aimed at sabotaging the socialist system.” The North Korean authorities repeatedly denied the panel’s request for permission to visit the country to investigate. The report relied heavily on testimony from North Korean refugees, escapees and asylum seekers. The panel’s 36-page summary report and a 372-page annex detail what the report calls a wide range of crimes against humanity. The report also criticizes the political and security apparatus of the North Korean state, saying that it used surveillance, fear, public executions and forced disappearances “to terrorize the population into submission.” “Systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, its institutions and officials,” the report asserted, referring to North Korea by its official name. The report stopped short of alleging genocide but specified among others the crimes of “extermination,” murder, enslavement, torture, rape and persecution on grounds of race, religion and gender. The report also reported in detail on the abduction of foreign citizens, notably from Japan and South Korea, observing “these international forced disappearances are unique in their intensity, scale and nature.” In many instances the abuses constitute crimes against humanity, the report
said, adding that “these are not mere excesses of the state; they are essential components” and have been committed “pursuant to policies at the highest level of the state.” “It really opens up a whole new chapter in the international reaction to North Korea,” Lee Jung-hoon, South Korea’s ambassador for human rights, said by telephone. “It’s not just an investigation and a report and that’s the end of it. It’s giving a road map and blueprint to end this thing. There’s a very strong sense of urgency.”

There appears to be little immediate prospect of winning approval for International Criminal Court prosecution, however. Approval is necessary from the Security Council’s permanent members, which include North Korea’s long-term protector, China. Still, Lee said, “just the fact that they are getting the vocabulary of crimes against humanity, the International Criminal Court and Kim Jong-un on the same page is a huge step forward in the debate on North Korean human rights.” The panel also listed some other possible options for prosecution, including the formation of an ad hoc tribunal such as those convened to investigate crimes in the Balkans and Rwanda. It also called for the Human Rights Council to establish a structure to keep up the collection of evidence of human rights violations. “The U.N. has been more or less indifferent about these issues for six decades – the panel are trying to jump-start the reaction of the international community,” said Julie de Rivero, Geneva representative of Human Rights Watch. “Steps need to be put in place so that North Korea gets the message loud and clear that the issue won’t be ignored and it won’t just be the nuclear issue that triggers an international response.” (Nick Cumming-Bruce, “U.N. Panel Says North Korean Leader Could Face Trial,” New York Times, February 18, 2014, p. A-8)

UN Report: “24. The commission finds that systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. In many instances, the violations found entailed crimes against humanity based on State policies. The main perpetrators are officials of the State Security Department, the Ministry of People’s Security, the Korean People’s Army, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the judiciary and the Workers’ Party of Korea, who are acting under the effective control of the central organs of the Workers’ Party of Korea, the National Defence Commission and the Supreme Leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. 25. The commission emphasizes that the current human rights situation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has been shaped by the historical experiences of the Korean people. Confucian social structures and the experience of the Japanese colonial occupation have to some degree informed the political structures and attitudes prevailing in the country today. The division imposed on the Korean peninsula, the massive destruction caused by the Korean War and the impact of the Cold War have engendered an isolationist mindset and an aversion to outside powers that are used to justify internal repression. The particular nature and the overall scale of human rights violations in the State can be more easily understood through an appreciation of the nature of its political system, which is based on a single party led by a single Supreme Leader, an elaborate guiding ideology and a centrally planned economy. A. Violations of the freedoms of thought, expression and religion. 26. Throughout the history of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, among the most striking features of the State has been its claim to an absolute monopoly over information and total control of organized social life. The commission finds that there is an almost complete denial of the right to freedom of thought,
conscience and religion, as well as of the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, information and association. 27. The State operates an all-encompassing indoctrination machine that takes root from childhood to propagate an official personality cult and to manufacture absolute obedience to the Supreme Leader (Suryong), effectively to the exclusion of any thought independent of official ideology and State propaganda. Propaganda is further used by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to incite nationalistic hatred towards official enemies of the State, including Japan, the United States of America and the Republic of Korea, and their nationals. 28. Virtually all social activities undertaken by citizens of all ages are controlled by the Workers’ Party of Korea. Through the associations that are run and overseen by the Party, and to which citizens are obliged to be members, the State is able to monitor its citizens and to dictate their daily activities. State surveillance permeates the private lives of all citizens to ensure that virtually no expression critical of the political system or of its leadership goes undetected. Citizens are punished for any “anti-State” activities or expressions of dissent. They are rewarded for reporting on fellow citizens suspected of committing such “crimes.” 29. Citizens are denied the right to have access to information from independent sources; State-controlled media are the only permitted source of information in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Access to television and radio broadcasts, as well as to the Internet, is severely restricted, and all media content is heavily censored and must adhere to directives issued by the Workers’ Party of Korea. Telephone calls are monitored and mostly confined to domestic connections for citizens. Citizens are punished for watching and listening to foreign broadcasts, including foreign films and soap operas. 30. Strengthening market forces and advancements in information technology have allowed greater access to information from outside the country as information and media from the Republic of Korea and China increasingly enter the country. The State’s monopoly on information is therefore being challenged by the increasing flow of outside information into the country and the ensuing curiosity of the people for “truths” other than those provided by State propaganda. Authorities seek to preserve their monopoly on information by carrying out regular crackdowns and enforcing harsh punishments. 31. The State considers the spread of Christianity a particularly serious threat, since it challenges ideologically the official personality cult and provides a platform for social and political organization and interaction outside the realm of the State. Apart from the few organized State-controlled churches, Christians are prohibited from practising their religion and are persecuted. People caught practising Christianity are subject to severe punishments in violation of the right to freedom of religion and the prohibition of religious discrimination. B. Discrimination 32. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea presents itself as a State where equality, nondiscrimination and equal rights in all sectors have been fully achieved and implemented. In reality, it is a rigidly stratified society with entrenched patterns of discrimination, although these are being modified to some extent by the transformative socioeconomic changes introduced by market forces and technological developments. State-sponsored discrimination in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is pervasive, but is also shifting. Discrimination is rooted in the songbun system, which classifies people on the basis of State-assigned social class and birth, and also includes consideration of political opinions and religion. Songbun intersects with gender-based discrimination, which is equally pervasive. Discrimination is also
practised on the basis of disability, although there are signs that the State may have begun to address this particular issue. 33. The *songbun* system used to be the most important factor in determining where individuals were allowed to live; what sort of accommodation they had; what occupations they were assigned to; whether they were effectively able to attend school, in particular university; how much food they received; and even whom they might marry. This traditional discrimination under the *songbun* system was recently complicated by increasing marketization in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and by the influence of money, including foreign currency, on people’s ability to have greater access their economic, social and cultural rights. At the same time, significant segments of the population who have neither the resources nor favourable *songbun* find themselves increasingly marginalized and subject to further patterns of discrimination, given that basic public services have collapsed or now effectively require payment. 34. Early reforms aimed at ensuring formal legal equality have not resulted in gender equality. Discrimination against women remains pervasive in all aspects of society. Indeed, it might even be increasing, as the male-dominated State preys on both economically advancing women and marginalized women. Many women, survival-driven during the famine of the 1990s, began operating private markets. The State imposed, however, many restrictions on female-dominated markets. Gender discrimination also takes the form of women being targeted to pay bribes or fines. There is recent evidence that women are beginning to object and to resist such impositions. 35. The economic advances of women have not been matched by advances in the social and political spheres. Entrenched traditional patriarchal attitudes and violence against women persist in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The State has imposed blatantly discriminatory restrictions on women in an attempt to maintain the gender stereotype of the pure and innocent Korean woman. Sexual and gender-based violence against women is prevalent throughout all areas of society. Victims are not afforded protection from the State, support services or recourse to justice. In the political sphere, women make up just 5 per cent of the top political cadre and 10 per cent of central government employees. 36. Discrimination against women also intersects with a number of other human rights violations, placing women in a position of vulnerability. Violations of the rights to food and to freedom of movement have resulted in women and girls becoming vulnerable to trafficking and increased engagement in transactional sex and prostitution. The complete denial of the freedoms of expression and association has been a large contributing factor to the generally unequal status of women vis-à-vis men. These limitations have, inter alia, prevented women from collectively advocating for their rights as women have done elsewhere in the world. 37. While discrimination exists to some extent in all societies, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has practised a form of official discrimination that has had a very significant impact on individual enjoyment of human rights. Given the exceptional extent of State control, this official discrimination influences most aspects of people’s lives. Discrimination remains a major means for the leadership to maintain control against perceived threats, both internal and external. C. **Violations of the freedom of movement and residence.** 38. The systems of indoctrination and discrimination on the basis of social class are reinforced and safeguarded by a policy of isolating citizens from contact with each other and with the outside world, violating all aspects of the right to freedom of movement. 39. In the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the State imposes on
citizens where they must live and work, violating their freedom of choice. Moreover, the forced assignment to a State-designated place of residence and employment is heavily driven by discrimination based on songbun. This has created a socioeconomically and physically segregated society, where people considered politically loyal to the leadership can live and work in favourable locations, whereas families of persons who are considered politically suspect are relegated to marginalized areas. The special status of Pyongyang, reserved only for those most loyal to the State, exemplifies this system of segregation. Citizens are not even allowed to leave their province temporarily or to travel within the country without official authorization. This policy is driven by the desire to maintain disparate living conditions, to limit the flow of information and to maximize State control, at the expense of social and familial ties. In an attempt to keep Pyongyang’s “pure” and untainted image, the State systematically banishes entire families from the capital city if one family member commits what is deemed to be a serious crime or political wrong. For the same reason, the large number of street children migrating clandestinely to Pyongyang and other cities - principally in search of food - are subject to arrest and forcible transfer back to their home provinces, experiencing neglect and forced institutionalization on their return. The State imposes a virtually absolute ban on ordinary citizens travelling abroad, thereby violating their human right to leave the country. Despite the enforcement of this ban through strict border controls, nationals still take the risk of fleeing, mainly to China. When they are apprehended or forcibly repatriated, officials from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea systematically subject them to persecution, torture, prolonged arbitrary detention and, in some cases, sexual violence, including during invasive body searches. Repatriated women who are pregnant are regularly subjected to forced abortions, and babies born to repatriated women are often killed. These practices are driven by racist attitudes towards inter racial children of Koreans, and the intent to punish further women who have left the country and their assumed contact with Chinese men. Persons found to have been in contact with officials or nationals from the Republic of Korea or with Christian churches may be forcibly “disappeared” into political prison camps, imprisoned in ordinary prisons or even summarily executed. Despite the gross human rights violations awaiting repatriated persons, China pursues a rigorous policy of forcibly repatriating citizens of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea who cross the border illegally. China does so in pursuance of its view that these persons are economic (and illegal) migrants. Many women are trafficked by force or deception from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea into or within China for the purposes of exploitation in forced marriage or concubinage, or prostitution under coercive circumstances. An estimated 20,000 children born to
women from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are currently in China. These children are deprived of their rights to birth registration, nationality, education and health care because their birth cannot be registered without exposing the mother to the risk of refoulement by China. 45. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has repeatedly breached its obligations to respect the rights of its nationals who have special ties to, or claims in relation to, another country, in this case the Republic of Korea, to return there or otherwise to enjoy a facility to meet long separated families. The severe impediments put in place by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to prevent contact and communication with family members in the Republic of Korea are a breach of the State’s obligations under international human rights law. The restrictions are arbitrary, cruel and inhuman. This is particularly the case when previously agreed temporary reunions of separated families are cancelled for wholly unpersuasive reasons, especially given the advanced age of the persons concerned. D.

Violations of the right to food and related aspects of the right to life. 46. The rights to food, freedom from hunger and to life in the context of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea cannot be reduced to a narrow discussion of food shortages and access to a commodity. The State has used food as a means of control over the population. It has prioritized those whom the authorities believe to be crucial in maintaining the regime over those deemed expendable. 47. Confiscation and dispossession of food from those in need, and the provision of food to other groups, follows this logic. The State has practised discrimination with regard to access to and distribution of food based on the songbun system. In addition, it privileges certain parts of the country, such as Pyongyang, over others. The State has also failed to take into account the needs of the most vulnerable. The commission is particularly concerned about ongoing chronic malnutrition in children and its long-term effects. 48. The State was aware of the deteriorating food situation in the country well before the first appeal for international aid in 1995. State-controlled production and distribution of food had not been able to provide the population with adequate food since the end of the 1980s. The lack of transparency, accountability and democratic institutions, as well as restrictions on freedom of expression, information and association, prevented the adoption of optimal economic solutions over those in accordance with Party directives. The State has evaded structural reforms to the economy and agriculture for fear of losing its control over the population. 49. During the period of famine, ideological indoctrination was used in order to maintain the regime, at the cost of seriously aggravating hunger and starvation. The concealment of information prevented the population from finding alternatives to the collapsing public distribution system. It also delayed international assistance that, provided earlier, could have saved many lives. Despite the State’s inability to provide its people with adequate food, it maintained laws and controls effectively criminalizing people’s use of key coping mechanisms, particularly moving within or outside the country in search of food and trading or working in informal markets. 50. Even during the worst period of mass starvation, the State impeded the delivery of food aid by imposing conditions that were not based on humanitarian considerations. International humanitarian agencies were subject to restrictions contravening humanitarian principles. Aid organizations were prevented from properly assessing humanitarian needs and monitoring the distribution of aid. The State denied humanitarian access to some of the most affected regions and groups, including homeless children. 51. The State has consistently failed
in its obligation to use the maximum of its available resources to feed those who are hungry. Military spending - predominantly on hardware and the development of weapons systems and the nuclear programme - has always been prioritized, even during periods of mass starvation. Nevertheless, the State still failed to feed the ordinary soldiers of its disproportionately large army. Large amounts of State resources, including parallel funds directly controlled by the Supreme Leader, have been spent on luxury goods and the advancement of his personality cult instead of providing food to the starving general population. 52. The State has also used deliberate starvation as a means of control and punishment in detention facilities. This has resulted in the deaths of many political and ordinary prisoners. 53. The commission found evidence of systematic, widespread and grave violations of the right to food in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. While acknowledging the impact of factors beyond State control over the food situation, the commission finds that decisions, actions and omissions by the State and its leadership caused the death of at least hundreds of thousands of people and inflicted permanent physical and psychological injuries on those who survived. 54. In the highly centralized system of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, decisions relating to food, including its production and distribution, State budget allocation, decisions relating to humanitarian assistance and the use of international aid, are ultimately made by a small group of officials, who are not accountable to those affected by their decisions. 55. While conditions have changed since the 1990s, hunger and malnutrition continue to be widespread. Deaths from starvation continue to be reported. The commission is concerned that structural issues, including laws and policies that violate the right to adequate food and freedom from hunger, remain in place, which could lead to the recurrence of mass starvation.

E. Arbitrary detention, torture, executions and prison camps. 56. The police and security forces of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea systematically employ violence and punishments that amount to gross human rights violations in order to create a climate of fear that pre-empts any challenge to the current system of government and to the ideology underpinning it. The institutions and officials involved are not held accountable. Impunity reigns. 57. Gross human rights violations in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea involving detention, executions and disappearances are characterized by a high degree of centralized coordination between different parts of the extensive security apparatus. The State Security Department, the Ministry of People’s Security and the Korean People’s Army Military Security Command regularly subject persons accused of political crimes to arbitrary arrest and subsequent incommunicado detention for prolonged periods of time. Their families are not informed of their fate or whereabouts. Persons accused of political crimes therefore become victims of enforced disappearance. Making the suspect disappear is a deliberate feature of the system that serves to instil fear in the population. 58. The use of torture is an established feature of the interrogation process in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, especially in cases involving political crimes. Starvation and other inhumane conditions of detention are deliberately imposed on suspects to increase the pressure on them to confess and to incriminate other persons. 59. Persons who are found to have engaged in major political crimes are “disappeared”, without trial or judicial order, to political prison camps (kwanliiso). There, they are incarcerated and held incommunicado. Their families are not even informed of their fate if they die. In the past, it was common that the authorities sent
entire families to political prison camps for political crimes committed by close relatives (including forebears, to the third generation) on the basis of the principle of guilt by association. Such cases still occur, but appear to be less frequent now than in past decades. 60. In the political prison camps of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the inmate population has been gradually eliminated through deliberate starvation, forced labour, executions, torture, rape and the denial of reproductive rights enforced through punishment, forced abortion and infanticide. The commission estimates that hundreds of thousands of political prisoners have perished in these camps over the past five decades. The unspeakable atrocities that are being committed against inmates of the kwanliso political prison camps resemble the horrors of camps that totalitarian States established during the twentieth century. 61. Although the authorities in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea deny the existence of the camps, this claim was shown to be false by the testimonies of former guards, inmates and neighbours. Satellite imagery proves that the camp system continues to be in operation. While the number of political prison camps and inmates has decreased owing to deaths and some releases, it is estimated that between 80,000 and 120,000 political prisoners are currently detained in four large political prison camps. 62. Gross violations are also being committed in the ordinary prison system, which consists of ordinary prison camps (kyohwaso) and various types of short-term forced labour detention facilities. The vast majority of inmates are victims of arbitrary detention, since they are imprisoned without trial or on the basis of a trial that fails to respect the due process and fair trial guarantees set out in international law. Furthermore, many ordinary prisoners are, in fact, political prisoners, who are detained without a substantive reason compatible with international law. Prisoners in the ordinary prison system are systematically subjected to deliberate starvation and illegal forced labour. Torture, rape and other arbitrary cruelties at the hands of guards and fellow prisoners are widespread and committed with impunity. 63. As a matter of State policy, the authorities carry out executions, with or without trial, publicly or secretly, in response to political and other crimes that are often not among the most serious crimes. The policy of regularly carrying out public executions serves to instil fear in the general population. Public executions were most common in the 1990s. However, they continue to be carried out today. In late 2013, there appeared to be a spike in the number of politically motivated public executions. F. Abductions and enforced disappearances from other countries. 64. Since 1950, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has engaged in the systematic abduction, denial of repatriation and subsequent enforced disappearance of persons from other countries on a large scale and as a matter of State policy. Well over 200,000 persons, including children, who were brought from other countries to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea may have become victims of enforced disappearance, as defined in the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. More information would have to emerge from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to provide a more precise estimate of the number of victims. 65. For a nation State that seeks to live alongside others, the above-mentioned actions, in defiance of the sovereignty of other States and the rights of foreign nationals guaranteed under international law, are exceptional. 66. The vast majority of abductions and enforced disappearances are linked to the Korean War and the organized movement of ethnic Koreans from Japan that started in 1959. However, hundreds of nationals of the Republic of Korea, Japan and other States were
also abducted and disappeared between the 1960s and 1980s. In more recent years, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea abducted a number of its own nationals and nationals of the Republic of Korea from China. 67. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea used its land, naval and intelligence forces to conduct abductions and arrests. Operations were approved at the level of the Supreme Leader. The vast majority of victims were forcibly disappeared to gain labour and other skills for the State. Some victims were used to further espionage and terrorist activities. Women abducted from Europe, the Middle East and Asia were subjected to forced marriages with men from other countries to prevent liaisons on their part with ethnic Korean women that could result in interracial children. Some of the abducted women have also been subject to sexual exploitation. 68. A number of the forcibly disappeared travelled to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea voluntarily. Others were abducted through physical force or fraudulent persuasion. Subsequently, they were all denied the right to leave the country. They have also been subject to severe deprivation of their liberty and freedom of movement within the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, denied the right to recognition as a person before the law, and the right not to be subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. All of the forcibly disappeared have been placed under strict surveillance. They have been denied education and employment opportunities. 69. Ethnic Koreans from the Republic of Korea and Japan, forcibly disappeared by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, have been discriminated against for their origins and background. They were categorized as “hostile” and forced to work in mines and farms in remote marginalized areas of the country. Many of them were likely to have been the first victims of the famine in the 1990s because of their lower social status. 70. Non-Korean abductees were not able to integrate into social and economic life in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea as they were detained in tightly controlled compounds. They were denied the right to work, to leave their place of residence or to move freely in society, and they were unable to choose educational opportunities for themselves and their children. 71. Family members abroad and foreign States wishing to exercise their right to provide diplomatic protection have been consistently denied information necessary to establish the fate and whereabouts of the victims. Family members of the disappeared have been subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. They have been denied the right to effective remedies for human rights violations, including the right to the truth. Parents and disappeared children have been denied the right to family life. 72. Despite admitting to the abduction of 13 Japanese nationals by agents of the State, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has never adequately disavowed the practice of international abductions. Since the 1990s, its agents have abducted a number of persons from Chinese territory, including nationals of China, the Republic of Korea and, in at least one case, a former Japanese national. 73. The commission finds that almost all of the foregoing victims remain disappeared. Human rights violations continue against them and their families. The shock and pain caused by such actions is indescribable. IV. Crimes against humanity 74. In accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 22/13, the commission carried out its inquiry with a view to ensuring full accountability, in particular where these violations may amount to crimes against humanity. The commission is neither a judicial body nor a prosecutor. It cannot make final determinations of individual criminal responsibility. It can, however, determine whether its findings constitute reasonable
grounds establishing that crimes against humanity have been committed so as to merit a criminal investigation by a competent national or international organ of justice. 75. According to that standard, the commission finds that the body of testimony and other information it received establishes that crimes against humanity have been committed in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, pursuant to policies established at the highest level of the State. 76. These crimes against humanity entail extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation. The commission further finds that crimes against humanity are ongoing in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea because the policies, institutions and patterns of impunity that lie at their heart remain in place. 77. Persons detained in political and other prison camps, those who try to flee the State, Christians and others considered to introduce subversive influences are the primary targets of a systematic and widespread attack against all populations that are considered to pose a threat to the political system and leadership of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. This attack is embedded in the larger patterns of politically motivated human rights violations experienced by the general population, including the discriminatory system of classification of persons based on songbun. 78. In addition, the commission finds that crimes against humanity have been committed against starving populations, particularly during the 1990s. These crimes arose from decisions and policies violating the right to food, which were applied for the purposes of sustaining the present political system, in full awareness that such decisions would exacerbate starvation and related deaths of much of the population. 79. Lastly, the commission finds that crimes against humanity are being committed against persons from other countries who were systematically abducted or denied repatriation, in order to gain labour and other skills for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. V. Conclusions and recommendations 80. Systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, its institutions and officials. In many instances, the violations of human rights found by the commission constitute crimes against humanity. These are not mere excesses of the State; they are essential components of a political system that has moved far from the ideals on which it claims to be founded. The gravity, scale and nature of these violations reveal a State that does not have any parallel in the contemporary world. Political scientists of the twentieth century characterized this type of political organization as a totalitarian State: a State that does not content itself with ensuring the authoritarian rule of a small group of people, but seeks to dominate every aspect of its citizens’ lives and terrorizes them from within. 81. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea displays many attributes of a totalitarian State: the rule of a single party, led by a single person, is based on an elaborate guiding ideology that its current Supreme Leader refers to as “Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism”. The State seeks to ensure that its citizens internalize this guiding ideology by indoctrinating citizens from childhood, suppressing all political and religious expression that questions the official ideology, and tightly controlling citizens’ physical movement and their means of communication with each other and with those in other countries. Discrimination on the basis of gender and songbun is used to maintain a rigid social structure that is less likely to produce challenges to the political system. 82. The State’s monopolization of
access to food has been used as an important means to enforce political loyalty. The
distribution of food has prioritized those who are useful to the survival of the current
political system at the expense of those deemed to be expendable. Citizens’ complete
dependence on the State led to one of the worst cases of famine in recent history. The
authorities have only recently come to tolerate the fact that markets can no longer be
fully suppressed. Instead of fully embracing reforms to realize the right to food,
however, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea maintains a system of inefficient
economic production and discriminatory resource allocation that inevitably produces
more unnecessary starvation among its citizens. 83. The key to the political system is
the vast political and security apparatus that strategically uses surveillance, coercion,
fear and punishment to preclude the expression of any dissent. Public executions and
enforced disappearance to political prison camps serve as the ultimate means to
terrorize the population into submission. The State’s violence has been externalized
through State-sponsored abductions and enforced disappearances of people from
other nations. These international enforced disappearances are unique in their
intensity, scale and nature. 84. Today, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea finds
itself surrounded by a world that is changing rapidly in political, economic and
technological terms. These changes offer opportunities for incremental social change
within the State. In response, the authorities engage in gross human rights violations
so as to crack down on “subversive” influences from abroad. These influences are
symbolized by films and soap operas from the Republic of Korea and other countries,
short-wave radio broadcasts and foreign mobile telephones. For the same reason, the
State systematically uses violence and punishment to deter its citizens from exercising
their human right to leave the country. Persons who are forcibly repatriated from China
are commonly subjected to torture, arbitrary detention, summary execution, forced
abortion and other forms of sexual violence. 85. A number of long-standing and
ongoing patterns of systematic and widespread violations, which were documented by
the commission, meet the high threshold required for proof of crimes against humanity
in international law. The perpetrators enjoy impunity. The Democratic People’s
Republic of Korea is unwilling to implement its international obligation to prosecute
and bring the perpetrators to justice, because those perpetrators act in accordance
with State policy. 86. The fact that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, as a
State Member of the United Nations, has for decades pursued policies involving
crimes that shock the conscience of humanity raises questions about the inadequacy of
the response of the international community. The international community must accept
its responsibility to protect the people of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
from crimes against humanity, because the Government of the Democratic People’s
Republic of Korea has manifestly failed to do so. In particular, this responsibility must
be accepted in the light of the role played by the international community (and by the
great powers in particular) in the division of the Korean peninsula and because of the
unresolved legacy of the Korean War. These unfortunate legacies help not only to
explain the intractability of the human rights situation but also why an effective
response is now imperative. 87. The United Nations must ensure that those most
responsible for the crimes against humanity committed in the Democratic People’s
Republic of Korea are held accountable. Options to achieve this end include a Security
Council referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court or the establishment
of an ad hoc tribunal by the United Nations. Urgent accountability measures should be
combined with a reinforced human rights dialogue, the promotion of incremental change through more people-to-people contact and an inter-Korean agenda for reconciliation. 88. On the basis of its findings and conclusions, the Commission makes the recommendations below. 89. The commission of inquiry recommends that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea: (a) Undertake profound political and institutional reforms without delay to introduce genuine checks and balances upon the powers of the Supreme Leader and the Workers’ Party of Korea; such changes should include an independent and impartial judiciary, a multiparty political system and elected people’s assemblies at the local and central levels that emerge from genuinely free and fair elections; reform the security sector by vetting the entire officers’ corps for involvement in human rights violations and by limiting the functions of the Korean People’s Army to defending the nation against external threats; and dismantle the State Security Department and place the Ministry of Public Security under transparent democratic oversight. An independent constitutional and institutional reform commission, consisting of respected members of society in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, should be constituted to guide this process and should be assisted by appropriate international experts; (b) Acknowledge the existence of human rights violations, including the political prison camps described by the commission in the present report; provide international humanitarian organizations and human rights monitors with immediate access to the camps and their surviving victims; dismantle all political prison camps and release all political prisoners; and clarify with full detail the fate of any disappeared persons who cannot be readily traced; (c) Reform the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure to abolish vaguely worded “anti-State” and “anti-People” crimes and to fully enshrine the right to a fair trial and due process guarantees articulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; enforce existing provisions in the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure that prohibit and criminalize the use of torture and other inhuman means of interrogation that are illegal under international law; reform the ordinary prison system so as to ensure humane conditions of detention for all inmates deprived of liberty; end reprisals against persons on the basis of guilt by association; and abolish immediately the practice of forcibly resettling the families of convicted criminals; (d) Declare and implement an immediate moratorium on the imposition and execution of the death penalty, followed without undue delay by the abolition of the death penalty both in law and in practice; (e) Allow the establishment of independent newspapers and other media; allow citizens to freely access the Internet, social media, international communications, foreign broadcasts and publications, including the popular culture of other countries; and abolish compulsory participation in mass organizations and indoctrination sessions; (f) Introduce education to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and abolish any propaganda or educational activities that espouse national, racial or political hatred or war propaganda; (g) Allow Christians and other religious believers to exercise their religion independently and publicly, without fear of punishment, reprisal or surveillance; (h) End discrimination against citizens on the basis of their perceived political loyalty or the sociopolitical background of their families, including in matters of access to education and employment; dismantle the neighbourhood watch (inminban), the secret resident registration file system, and all surveillance of persons and their communications that serve purposes of political oppression and/or are not subject to effective judicial and democratic control; and
publicly acknowledge the extent of surveillance practices carried out in the past and
provide citizens with access to their resident registration file; (i) Take immediate
measures to ensure gender equality in practice, such as by providing equal access for
women in public life and employment; eradicate discriminatory laws, regulations and
practices affecting women; take measures to address all forms of violence against
women, including domestic violence, sexual and gender-based violence by State
agents and/or within State institutions; and respond immediately and effectively to
trafficking in women, and address the structural causes that make women vulnerable to
such violations; (j) Ensure that citizens can enjoy the right to food and other economic
and social rights without discrimination; pay particular attention to the needs of
women and vulnerable groups, such as street children, the elderly and persons with
disabilities; promote agricultural, economic and financial policies based on democratic
participation, good governance and non-discrimination; and legalize and support free
market activities, internal and external trade and other independent economic conduct
that provide citizens with a livelihood; (k) In the light of the past expenditures by the
leadership, the military and security apparatus, realign priorities and dedicate the
resources made available to ensure, as necessary, freedom from hunger and other
essential minimum standards for citizens, including those citizens serving in the armed
forces; (l) Where necessary to ensure the right to food, seek international humanitarian
assistance without delay; provide international humanitarian organizations with free
and unimpeded access to all populations in need, including for the purposes of
effective monitoring; and hold accountable State officials who illegally divert
humanitarian aid for improper purposes; (m) Abolish the de facto prohibition on
foreign travel imposed on ordinary citizens; decriminalize illegal border crossings and
introduce border controls that conform to international standards; renounce orders to
shoot and kill at the border; cease to regard citizens repatriated from China as political
criminals or to subject them to imprisonment, execution, torture, arbitrary detention,
deliberate starvation, illegal cavity searches, forced abortions and other sexual
violence; and abolish the State’s compulsory designation of places of residence and
employment, as well as the requirement to obtain a permit for domestic travel outside
a person’s designated province; (n) Provide the families and nations of origin of all
persons who have been abducted, or otherwise forcibly disappeared, with full
information on their fate and whereabouts, if they have survived; allow those who
remain alive, and their descendants, to return immediately to their countries of origin;
and, in close cooperation with their families and nations of origin, identify and
repatriate the physical remains of those who have died; (o) Allow separated families to
unite, including by allowing citizens to travel or emigrate where they choose; and
immediately provide such persons with facilities for unmonitored communications by
way of mail, telephone, email and any other means of communication; (p) Prosecute
and bring to justice those persons most responsible for alleged crimes against
humanity; appoint a special prosecutor to supervise this process; ensure that victims
and their families are provided with adequate, prompt and effective reparation and
remedies, including by knowing the truth about the violations that have been suffered;
launch a people-driven process to establish the truth about the violations; provide
adults and children with comprehensive education on national and international law
and practice on human rights and democratic governance; and seek international
advice and support for transitional justice measures; (q) Take immediate steps to end
all other human rights violations and to address the human rights concerns raised by the commission in the present report, as well as in successive resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, in the procedures of universal periodic review and in the reports of special procedures mandate holders and the treaty bodies; (r) Ratify without delay the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization; (s) Accept immediately a field-based presence and technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other relevant United Nations entities to help to implement the above-mentioned recommendations. 90. The commission of inquiry recommends that China and other States: (a) Respect the principle of non-refoulement and, accordingly, abstain from forcibly repatriating any persons to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, unless the treatment there, as verified by international human rights monitors, markedly improves; extend asylum and other means of durable protection to persons fleeing the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea who need international protection; ensure that such persons are fully integrated and duly protected from discrimination; stop providing information on activities and contacts of persons from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea living in China to the State Security Department and other security agencies in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; and allow persons from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea free access to diplomatic and consular representations of any State that may be willing to extend nationality or other forms of protection to them; (b) Provide the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and relevant humanitarian organizations, full and unimpeded access to all persons from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea seeking such contact; (c) Request technical assistance from the United Nations to help to meet the obligations imposed under international refugee law, and ensure the effective protection of persons from trafficking; (d) Adopt a victim-centric and human rights-based approach to trafficking in persons, including by providing victims with the right to stay in the country and access to legal protection and basic services, such as medical treatment, education and employment opportunities equivalent to those afforded to their own citizens; (e) Regularize the status of women and men from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea who marry or have a child with a Chinese citizen; and ensure that all such children may realize their rights to birth registration and Chinese nationality where applicable, and have access to education and health care without discrimination; (f) Take immediate measures to prevent agents of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea from carrying out further abductions from Chinese territory; prosecute and adequately punish apprehended perpetrators of abduction and demand the extradition of those giving such orders so that they may be tried in accordance with law. China should raise with the Supreme Leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and other high-level authorities the issues of abductions, the infanticide of children entitled to Chinese nationality, forced abortions imposed on repatriated women and other human rights violations that target persons repatriated from China. 91. The commission of inquiry recommends that the Korean people foster inter-Korean dialogue in a phased approach leading to an agenda for reconciliation. Inter-Korean dialogue could be furthered through such initiatives as friendly sporting events;
academic and business interactions; scholarships and apprenticeships for young people from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; student exchanges; exchanges between civil society organizations, including national Red Cross Societies; contacts between professional organizations and women's groups; and the development of “sister city” relationships and, eventually, the re-establishment of transport and communication links. 92. The commission of inquiry recommends that States and civil society organizations foster opportunities for people-to-people dialogue and contact in such areas as culture, science, sports, good governance and economic development that provide citizens of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea with opportunities to exchange information and be exposed to experiences outside their home country. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and other States should remove applicable obstacles to people-to-people contact, including measures that criminalize travel and contact to the extent that these are not in accordance with relevant obligations under international human rights law. 93. The commission also recommends that States, foundations and engaged business enterprises provide more support for the work of civil society organizations to improve the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, including efforts to document human rights violations and to broadcast accessible information into each country. Eventually, and once conditions are deemed to be appropriate, such foundations and enterprises should join forces with the Governments concerned to coordinate efforts to adopt a coherent plan for the development of the country, creation of livelihoods for the population and the advancement of the situation of human rights. 94. With regard to the international community and the United Nations, the commission makes the following recommendations: (a) The Security Council should refer the situation in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to the International Criminal Court for action in accordance with that court’s jurisdiction. The Security Council should also adopt targeted sanctions against those who appear to be most responsible for crimes against humanity. In the light of the dire social and economic situation of the general population, the commission does not support sanctions imposed by the Security Council or introduced bilaterally that are targeted against the population or the economy as a whole; (b) The General Assembly and the Human Rights Council should extend the country-specific human rights monitoring and reporting mechanisms on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea that predate the establishment of the commission; these include the periodic reports of the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Such mechanisms should be mandated to focus on ensuring accountability, in particular for crimes against humanity, and should report on the implementation of the commission’s recommendations; (c) The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with full support from the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, should establish a structure to help to ensure accountability for human rights violations in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, in particular where such violations amount to crimes against humanity. The structure should build on the collection of evidence and documentation work of the commission, and further expand its database. It should be field-based, supported by adequate personnel deployed to the region so as to enjoy sustained access to victims and witnesses. In addition to informing the work of human rights reporting
mechanisms and serving as a secure archive for information provided by relevant stakeholders, the work of such a structure should facilitate United Nations efforts to prosecute, or otherwise render accountable, those most responsible for crimes against humanity; (d) The High Commissioner should continue the engagement of OHCHR with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, offering technical assistance and enhancing advocacy initiatives. The High Commissioner should facilitate the implementation of a strategy led by the Special Rapporteur and involving all concerned human rights mechanisms of the United Nations system to address, coherently and without delay, the special issue of international abductions and enforced disappearances and related matters described in the present report. Member States should afford full cooperation to ensure the implementation of such a strategy; (e) The High Commissioner should periodically report to the Human Rights Council and other appropriate United Nations organs on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present report; (f) The Human Rights Council should ensure that the conclusions and recommendations of the commission do not pass from the active attention of the international community. Where so much suffering has occurred, and is still occurring, action is the shared responsibility of the entire international community; (g) The United Nations Secretariat and agencies should urgently adopt and implement a common “Rights up Front” strategy to ensure that all engagement with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea effectively takes into account, and addresses, human rights concerns, including those collected in the present report. The United Nations should immediately apply this strategy to help to prevent the recurrence or continuation of crimes against humanity in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The strategy should contemplate the possibility of the Secretary-General referring the situation to the Security Council; (h) States that have historically friendly ties with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, major donors and potential donors, as well as those States already engaged with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the framework of the six-party talks, should form a human rights contact group to raise concerns about the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and to provide support for initiatives to improve it; (i) States should not use the provision of food and other essential humanitarian assistance to impose economic or political pressure on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Humanitarian assistance should be provided in accordance with humanitarian and human rights principles, including the principle of non-discrimination. Aid should only be curbed to the extent that unimpeded international humanitarian access and related monitoring is not adequately guaranteed. Bilateral and multilateral providers of assistance should coordinate their efforts to ensure that adequate conditions of humanitarian access and related monitoring are provided by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; (j) Without prejudice to all the obligations under international law that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea must immediately implement, the United Nations and the States that were parties to the Korean War should take steps to convene a high-level political conference. Participants in that conference should consider and, if agreed, ratify a final peaceful settlement of the war that commits all parties to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. States of the region should intensify their cooperation and consider following such examples as the Helsinki Process.” (U.N. Human Rights Council, Report of the

DoS: “We strongly welcome and support the final report released by the UN Human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, which provides compelling evidence of widespread, systematic, and grave human rights violations by the D.P.R.K. The COI report reflects the international community’s consensus view that the human rights situation in the D.P.R.K. is among the world’s worst. We urge the D.P.R.K. to take concrete steps – as recommended by the COI – to improve the human rights situation for the North Korean people. The COI’s investigation – through, for example, its public hearings in Seoul, Tokyo, London, and Washington – clearly and unequivocally documents the brutal reality of the D.P.R.K.’s human rights abuses. We continue to work actively with our partners and with international organizations to raise awareness of and address the deplorable human rights conditions in the D.P.R.K. The United States was proud to co-sponsor, along with Japan, the EU, and the R.O.K., the resolution at the UN Human Rights Council that established the COI in March 2013. We look forward to thoroughly reviewing the report and discussing its recommendations with our partners, who share our deep concern about the human rights situation in North Korea. We look forward to the COI’s presentation of its report in front of the UN Human Rights Council in March.”
(Deputy State Department Spokesperson Marie Harf, Press Statement, February 17, 2014)

2/18/14

Japan’s point man on Northeast Asia, Ihara Junichi, director general of the foreign ministry’s Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, and met with his South Korean counterpart Lee Sang-deok in an apparent bid to improve ties frayed over territorial and historical issues, Seoul officials said. It marks the first direct-general level gathering of the neighbors after Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo’s visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine last December seriously inflamed public opinion in South Korea.
(Yonhap, “S. Korea, Japan Hold Talks amid Tensions,” February 18, 2014)

China strongly criticized a high-profile U.N. report on human rights situations in North Korea that said Beijing may be “aiding crimes against humanity” by repatriating North Korean defectors to their homeland against their will. “We totally cannot accept this accusation,” China’s foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters. China, the North’s key ally, has considered tens of thousands of North Koreans hiding in the border areas as illegal migrants, not asylum-seekers, and routinely sends them back to North Korea, where they face harsh penalties, even death. Hua repeated China’s stance on North Korean defectors, saying Beijing views them as “illegal border-crossers,” not “defectors,” therefore not subject to protection. Hua also said China would block any attempt to refer the case to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

2/19/14

A 75-year-old Australian missionary has been detained in North Korea for allegedly distributing Korean-language Christian pamphlets, his wife told AFP. Hong Kong-based John Short was taken from his Pyongyang hotel on Monday by North Korean
police, two days after arriving from Beijing as part of an organised tour group, Karen Short said. “On Monday they (the officers) came early, around 7:00 am,” she told AFP in Hong Kong. (Jennifer O’Mahoney, “Australian Missionary Held in N. Korea,” AFP< February 19, 2014)

A graduate student at UCSD, Akshay Bharadwaj, recently brought a handful of things to our attention on India-DPRK relations. In the early-2000s, North Korea’s imports from India hovered between $100-200 million, not a trivial figure at around 8 percent of total imports (in 2003-2004). Between 2006-2008, however, imports from India increased 786 percent to top $1 billion. As evidenced in Figure 2, the reason is the rapid growth in trade of fuel oils, petroleum products and distillates. Aviation spirit (jet fuel) in particular is responsible for much of the spike: In 2003, India was exporting only $5.5 million in aviation fuel, by 2008 this figure was above $750 million. Ms. Baree explains this spike as a classic political economy tale. In the late-2000s Indian refining capacity got ahead of domestic demand, particularly at two large firms: Reliance Industries and the Essar Group. In addition, massive oil subsidies kept pump prices low. While state-owned refiners were compensated, private refiners had to turn to the international market and India became one of the largest exporters of refined fuels east of the Suez. Iran and North Korea took advantage of the opportunity: not only does trade data show a marked increase in North Korea’s total fuel imports, but also huge trade diversion from its existing supplier China. In 2005, China supplied 83 percent of the DPRK’s jet fuel imports; in 2007 China had plunged to 3 percent, with the other 97 percent now coming from India. Competitive prices must have played a role in this big shift, which no doubt financed an increase in military inventories of fuel. But things contracted as swiftly as they had grown, with fuel exports falling dramatically in 2009-10 and virtually disappearing by 2011-12. A variety of organic chemicals now make up a growing share of what looks like a more diversified portfolio of exports. Incidentally, China has now replaced India as the main supplier of petroleum and distillates, making up over 80 percent of North Korea’s imports in this category in 2011 and 2012. But what explains this drop? India’s petroleum exports on a whole contracted significantly in 2009, but have since seen robust growth. Perhaps the difficulty of doing business with the DPRK became too much to bear. A slightly dated report by the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on trade relations with North Korea (updated through August 2012) notes “there are certain draw back (sic) for trade with DPRK such as limited foreign exchange with DPRK, non-availability of direct shipping and non-guarantee of payments through an established banking and insurance system.” The page goes on to note that the DPRK has a “keen interest” in importing consumer goods on a “deferred payment basis” and is engaged in some countertrade or barter of raw materials, but that “Indian exporters have not shown much enthusiasm in exploring this market.” We wonder if the oil exporters got burned, but we doubt it; exports of that magnitude must have been secured through some form of payment. Which raises the interesting question of exactly how North Korean trade and payments works. Was Pyongyang spending its hard currency Kaesong proceeds – or even forex reserves – in India during 2007-8? While the trade spike is likely the result of a number of anomalous factors, it looks as if the current India-DPRK relationship is returning to historical norms: low level (but non-trivial) trade in a fairly diversified number of goods, and a sizable Korea-side export deficit. (Stephan Haggard and Kevin Stahler, “Obscure
Hundreds of South and North Korean families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War met each other for the first time in emotional reunions at a North Korean mountain resort. A total of 82 elderly South Koreans, accompanied by 58 family members, met with 180 North Korean relatives at a hotel at Mount Kumgang, a scenic resort on the North’s east coast. (Kim Kwang-tae and Joint Press Corps, “Korean Families Reunited after Six Decades of Separation,” Yonhap, February 20, 2014) The lists of divided family members originally traded by North and South Korea in preparation for the reunions, scheduled for Sep. 25, 2013, included 250 people from the South and 200 from the North. Of the 250 applicants from South Korea, 167 were confirmed to have family in the North, and 117 indicated that they were able to attend the reunions. However, only 96 of these actually wanted to participate in the reunions. Of the 200 applicants from North Korea, 149 were found to have family in the South. 127 of these said they were able to participate in the reunions, and 100 were included on the final list of reunion participants.

But after North Korea unilaterally delayed the reunions in September 2013, the number of participants decreased even further. Fourteen more South Korean participants had decided not to attend the reunions by Feb. 19, and two of these were laid to rest without ever being reunited with their families. The reason that the other 12 chose not to participate was because of their worsening health. Sadly, it is very unlikely that the people who chose not to participate in this reunion will ever have another chance. The number of participants from North Korea also decreased by 12, from 100 to 88. Since 1988, 129,287 people have registered with the Unification Ministry as members of divided families. So far, 57,784 of these have passed away, with 71,503 still alive. (Kim Kyu-won, “Fewer Divided Family Members Participating in This Week’s Reunions,” Hankyore, February 20, 2014) Among the families, there were five people whose relatives were abducted to North Korea during and even after the war, an unusual phenomenon for the reunions. Park Yang-gon, a 53-year-old from South Korea, was reunited with his elder brother, Yang-su, who was abducted to North Korea while working on a fishing boat in 1972. He was one of 24 crew members fishing in the Yellow Sea on a vessel called the Odaeyang (Five Oceans) 61 that was seized by a North Korean patrol ship. (Kim Hee-jin and Joint Press Corps, “Reunions Feature Tears, Surprises,” JoongAng Ilbo, February 21, 2014)

China said it has been working hard to restart long-stalled six-nation negotiations on North Korea’s nuclear program, with one of its senior diplomats set to visit South Korea this week immediately after leaving the North. The back-to-back trip by China’s Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin to the two Koreas is highly unusual and believed to be part of U.S.-involved diplomacy to revive the six-party talks. Wrapping up a four-day visit to Pyongyang on Thursday, Liu will arrive in Seoul later in the day. “China is committed to peace and stability, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” China’s foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters, when asked about Liu’s visit to the two Koreas. “We will continue to make positive efforts in our own way to press ahead with the resumption of the six-party talks,” Hua said, without giving further details. During the three-day visit to South Korea, Hua said Liu “will meet with his ROK
(South Korea) counterparts as well as officials from other relevant departments. The two sides will exchange views on bilateral relations as well as other issues of common interest." Liu’s trip to North Korea came days after U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said in Beijing that he discussed with Chinese leaders specific ideas to revive the six-party forum that has been dormant since late 2008. Late last week, Kerry met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. He later told reporters, "Now what we are talking about is sort of the specifics of how you do that. They put some ideas on the table and we put some ideas on the table." Immediately thereafter, Liu flew to North Korea where he is believed to have discussed with Pyongyang officials specific ideas broached and shared by Kerry and Chinese leaders. (Yonhap, “China Pressing to Revive N. Korea Nuclear Talks,” February 20, 2014) China has told North Korean senior officials it "will never allow war or chaos" on the Korean Peninsula and agreed with Pyongyang to seek an early resumption of multilateral nuclear disarmament talks, the Foreign Ministry said. China’s position was delivered by Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin to North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun and other senior officials, including Ri Yong Ho, the country’s chief negotiator at the long-stalled six-party nuclear talks. Liu’s four-day visit to North Korea February 17-20 comes after U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry held a meeting on February 14 in Beijing with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. (Kyodo, “China’s Senior Diplomat Tells N. Korea ‘War or Chaos’ Not Allowed,” February 19, 2014)

A series of defiantly nationalistic comments, including remarks critical of the United States, by close political associates of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo has led analysts to warn of a growing chill between his right-wing government and the Obama administration, which views Japan as a linchpin of its strategic pivot to Asia. Rebuttals from the American Embassy in Japan have added to concerns of a falling-out between Japan and the United States, which has so far welcomed Abe’s efforts to strengthen Japan’s economy and military outreach in the region to serve as a counterbalance to China. The comments, which express revisionist views of Japan’s World War II history, have also led to renewed claims from Japan’s neighbors, particularly China and South Korea, that Abe is leading his nation to the right, trying to stir up patriotism and gloss over the country’s wartime history. One of the most direct criticisms of the United States came this week, when Eto Seiichi, a governing party lawmaker and aide to Abe, posted a video online in which he criticized the Obama administration for expressing disappointment in the prime minister’s recent visit to a shrine. The visit to the shrine, which honors the war dead including war criminals, stoked anger in South Korea and China, which both suffered under Imperial Japanese rule. “It is I who am disappointed in the United States," said Eto on YouTube, which was removed on yesterday as the prime minister’s office sought to control the diplomatic damage. “Why doesn’t America treat Japan better?” he added. The disconnect between Washington and its strongest Asian ally comes at a time of rising regional frictions that Abe has likened to the eve of World War I. The disputes over history and territory have complicated the United States’ already fraught attempts to persuade Japan and Korea to present a united front to a more confident China, while also trying to avoid antagonizing the Chinese. American officials express frustration that Abe is not doing enough to allay fears in South Korea, a crucial American ally in Asia, about a conservative agenda they worry includes rolling back the apologies that Japan made
for its early 20th-century empire-building. American officials also fear he could undermine his own efforts to restore Japan’s standing in Asia by playing into what they call Chinese efforts to paint the Japanese as unrepentant militarists. Analysts say such concerns are behind the United States Embassy’s taking the unusual step of publicly criticizing Abe’s trip to the shrine. For their part, Japanese officials express their own exasperation that the United States does not take a clearer stand in favor of Japan in its continuing dispute with China over the control of islands in the East China Sea. They also complain that the Obama administration has not rewarded Abe enough, despite his self-proclaimed efforts to improve ties with Washington by taking such politically difficult steps as pushing to restart a stalled base relocation in Okinawa. “Prime Minister Abe feels frustrated,” said Hosoya Yuichi, an expert on United States-Japan relations at Keio University in Tokyo. “He feels he is not being thanked enough for expending his political capital to strengthen the alliance.” One of the most provocative comments from Abe allies came this month, when an ultraconservative novelist, Hyakuta Naoki, who was appointed by the prime minister himself to the governing board of public broadcaster NHK, said in a speech that the Tokyo war tribunal after World War II was a means to cover up the “genocide” of American air raids on Tokyo and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The United States Embassy called the comments “preposterous.” Hyakuta’s comments came days after the new president of NHK, who was chosen last month by a governing board including Abe appointees, raised eyebrows in Washington by saying that Japan should not be singled out for forcing women to provide sex to Japanese soldiers during the war, saying the United States military did the same. Most historians say the Japanese system of creating special brothels for the troops, then forcing tens of thousands of women from other countries to work there, was different from the practice by other countries’ troops in occupied areas who frequented local brothels. The Japanese discontent with treatment by the Obama administration goes back to early last year, when a newly elected Abe tried to arrange an immediate trip to meet the president, only to be told to wait a month. More recently, Japanese officials have appeared hurt that Obama wants to spend only one night in Japan during a visit to the region in April. Some analysts say this feeling of being held at arm’s length may be driving some of the recent criticisms of the United States. “This is one of the most dangerous moments in U.S.-Japan relations that I have seen,” said Kawakami Takashi, an expert on international relations at Takushoku University in Tokyo. “Japan is feeling isolated, and some Japanese people are starting to think Japan must stand up for itself, including toward the United States.” Analysts note that many of the comments are being made by relatively minor figures, and not members of Abe’s cabinet. They also say that Japanese public attitudes remain overwhelmingly favorable toward the United States, which has been the guarantor of Japan’s postwar security with its 50,000 military personnel stationed in the country. At the same time, the analysts say, frustrations on both sides are real. In the United States, they reflect an ambivalence toward Abe, as some worry that he is returning to the agenda he pursued the last time he was prime minister – trying to revise the country’s pacifist Constitution and downplay wartime atrocities in the name of restoring lost national pride. “I think the Yasukuni visit was a turning point in U.S. attitudes toward Abe,” Daniel C. Sneider, associate director for research at the Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford University, said of the visit to the shrine. “It was a reminder that he is still trying to push his patriotic
remake of postwar Japan.” The Yasukuni Shrine visit, and the American criticism of it, also appeared to unleash the current wave of revisionist statements. American analysts and officials have faulted Abe for failing to sufficiently distance himself and his administration from the nationalistic statements. Instead, his government’s spokesman has merely said the statements represented the speakers’ “personal views” without criticizing them, though the spokesman did say the administration had asked Mr. Eto to remove the video expressing disappointment in the United States. Visiting members of Congress have also warned that revisionist statements as well as Mr. Abe’s visit to Yasukuni would only benefit China. They added, however, that the American relationship with Japan is still sound enough to be easily fixable. “There are always unfortunate statements and unfortunate comments even among the best of friends, and this is something that is going to have to be worked out and gotten over with,” said Representative Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) who was part of a group of visiting Congress members in Tokyo who met on Wednesday with Mr. Abe. “It is important that we have an economically vibrant and strong Japan to act as a counterbalance to China.” (Martin Fackler, “Nationalistic Remarks from Japan Lead to Warnings of Chill with U.S.,” New York Times, February 20, 2014, p. A-4) Honda Etsuro, a key economic adviser to Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, denied stressing that one of the main goals of “Abenomics” is for Japan to build up a more powerful military and stand up to China, as reported by The Wall Street Journal. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide quoted Honda during a daily news conference as denying the report published two days ago on the financial newspaper’s website. Suga quoted Honda as saying: “I was surprised to read the article. It’s true I was interviewed, but what I meant to say was erroneously reported. I never made a remark to the effect that a goal of Abenomics was military in nature.” The WSJ interview story states: “Beyond the imperative to raise wages and improve livelihoods, Mr. Honda says Japan needs a strong economy so that it can build a more powerful military and stand up to China. We feel a serious threat, he says.” Honda was also quoted by the paper as defending Abe’s contentious visit in December to war-related Yasukuni Shrine: “As long as a top Japanese leader refrains from visiting Yasukuni, Japan’s position in international society is very inferior. We don’t want to see a handicapped Japan, we want to see Japan as a stand-alone country.” According to Kyodo, Honda told reporters today that he just argued that “(Japan) needs to (strengthen) basic economic power to maintain the power balance in East Asia,” and he didn’t argue that Japan needs to build up a powerful military to stand up to China. The WSJ story also described Honda as “an ardent nationalist who gets emotional about his country’s wartime past.” “Tears well up in Mr. Honda’s eyes during an interview as he talks about the ‘sacrifices’ made by kamikaze pilots during the final stages of World War II,” the story states. Honda is considered one of the key economic advisors who helped Abe come up with Abenomics, a combination of super-aggressive money-easing measures, more fiscal spending and measures to promote economic growth through various deregulation measures and subsidies. (Yoshida Reiji, “Abe Advisor Says WSJ Story on Military Buildup Is False,” Japan Times, February 20, 2014)

Which of the two will North Korea choose as its partner for economic cooperation: China or South Korea? If the administration of President Park Geun-hye is to move beyond the slogan and actually achieve the “unification jackpot,” this is the question
that it must confront. Considering that Pyongyang has been showing considerable interest in foreign investment recently, there is a good chance that it will choose China as its partner for long-term development if the South Korean government hesitates or fails to take action. If this happens, it is very likely that South Korea will have to watch China win the jackpot instead. The fact that a district of Pyongyang has been designated as an economic zone illustrates just how eager North Korea is to attract foreign capital. According to a promotional video for investment produced by North Korea’s joint-venture investment committee - recently acquired by Hankyoreh - the North designated the Eunjong district of Pyongyang as a high-tech development zone. In the video, a North Korean official said that the government was planning to set up an industrial complex focused on high-tech industry in the Eunjong Science Cluster in north Pyongyang, one of the best-known science and technology clusters in the North. The video is believed to have been produced in 2013, when North Korea was actively working to attract foreign capital. While Radio Free Asia reported in January 2013 that the North was planning a high-tech industrial complex in Pyongyang, this is the first time that the details have been confirmed through a video. North Korea was planning to create a high-tech complex on 300 hectares in the Eunjong district of Pyongyang for data processing technology, nanotechnology, new materials, high-tech industrial equipment, and biotech, Radio Free Asia said in its report. “The economic development zone law became law in May 2013, and North Korea officially announced its detailed plans in November 2013,” said a businessperson who has been trading with North Korea for a long time on condition of anonymity. “These movements move well beyond the point->line->plane principle that the Chinese used in its reform and liberalization program.” The businessperson said that North Korea appears to be pursuing “line” and “plane” liberalization at the same time as “point” liberalization. This is evidence that the North Korean authorities desperately want to attract foreign capital to boost its economy. However, analysts argue that the South Korean government needs to recognize that it is very likely that this plan targets investment from China - not South Korea. “Most of the thirteen economic development zones and the new special economic zones are concentrated on the coast and on the border between North Korea and China,” said a North Korea researcher who works at the institute of a company. “In contrast, virtually the only one that we could say was made with South Korea in mind is the Kaesong high-tech development zone, which is located next to the Kaesong Complex.” In fact, North Korea appears to see little chance of attracting South Korean investment to its special economic and development zones. This becomes clearer when we look at how investors are defined in laws made public recently. the Rason Economic Zone Act and the Hwanggumpyong Island Economic Zone Act, both enacted on Dec. 3, 2011, and the Economic Development Zone Act, enacted on May. 29, 2013, define investors as “corporations from other countries, individuals, economic organizations, and ethnic Koreans living overseas.” “South Korean capital” is not included in the list of investors. In contrast with this, the Kaesong Industrial Complex Act nd the Mt. Kumgang Special Zone for International Tourism Act specify “South Korea” as possible investors. This has raised concerns that North Korea is already thinking of China as its long-term partner for economic development. Another fact that cannot be ignored is that economic cooperation between North Korea and China coincides with the interests of China. Economic cooperation with North Korea is indispensable for the economic development of China’s three
northeastern provinces. “North Korea is essential as a source of cheap labor and resources for the three northeastern provinces of China, which are experiencing more than 10% of economic growth each year, and investment is already brisk there,” said Kim Jin-hyang, director of the Korean Peninsula Peace and Economy Research Institute. One good example is how China invested in Rajin Harbor to gain rights to use wharf no. 1 and also received the right to construct wharves no. 4, no. 5, and no. 6. Taking these points into consideration, North Korea looks less like a region that will be subjected to unification and more like a master that will decide who gets to win the jackpot. Naturally, with UN sanctions and the hostile relationship between North Korea and the US continuing, the fact is that the North does not currently have much room to maneuver. In addition, it is unclear whether Pyongyang will be able to meet its foreign investment targets in the short term. But it is precisely at such a time when it is important for South Korea to take action. “If the South Korean government does not take action now, China, which is increasing its investment little by little, will ultimately win the lottery. South Korea may find itself watching this happen and unable to stop it,” said Kim Gyeong-seong, chairman of the Inter-Korean Sports Exchange Association and operator of a handmade football shoe factory in Dandong, China, that employs North Korean workers. (Kim Bo-geun, director of the Hankyoreh Unification Institute, “In Economic Development, Will N. Korea Choose China or S. Korea,” Hankyore, February 20, 2014)

China has been training for a “short, sharp war” against Japan in the East China Sea, Captain James Fanell, director of intelligence for the US Pacific Fleet said, citing a large-scale Chinese military exercise in 2013 designed to prepare forces for an operation to seize disputed islands in the East China Sea, which Japan calls the Senkaku and China the Diaoyu. “We witnessed the massive amphibious and cross military region enterprise – Mission Action 2013,” Capt Fanell said at a navy conference last week in San Diego. “We concluded that the PLA [People’s Liberation Army] has been given the new task of being able to conduct a short, sharp war to destroy Japanese forces in the East China Sea following with what can only be an expected seizure of the Senkakus,” he added. Conducting a training exercise is very different from having an actual plan to seize the islands. For years, the Chinese military has staged exercises designed to mimic a possible invasion of Taiwan. However, the comments about China’s military training plans come at a time of considerable tension surrounding the contested islands. The regular presence of both Chinese and Japanese vessels and aircraft in the region has raised the risk of an accident that could spark a wider confrontation. Although Capt Fanell’s remarks were unusually blunt in their assessment of China’s intentions, they represent a growing tide of anxiety from senior US officials about Beijing’s ambitions in both the East China Sea and South China Sea. Earlier in February, Danny Russel, the US assistant secretary of state for East Asia, warned “there are growing concerns that this pattern of behavior in the South China Sea reflects incremental effort by China to assert control over the area”. He said that China’s recent actions had “created uncertainty, insecurity and instability in the region.” Capt Fanell said that Chinese maritime training had shifted in character in the second half of 2013 to prepare for “realistic maritime combat” that its navy might encounter. Last year, it conducted nine operations in the western Pacific that were designed to “practice striking naval targets.” “I do not know how Chinese intentions
could be more transparent,” he said. When Beijing described its activities as the “protection of maritime rights”, this was really “a Chinese euphemism for the coerced seizure of coastal rights of China’s neighbors,” Capt Fanell said. At the same conference last year, Capt Fanell issued another sharp assessment of China’s naval ambitions. The country’s “expansion into the blue waters are largely about countering the US Pacific fleet”, he said. “The PLA Navy is going to sea to learn how to do naval warfare. . . Make no mistake: the PRC navy is focused on war at sea, and sinking an opposing fleet.” Although there is growing concern among US military officers and diplomats about what they believe to be China’s increasingly assertive behavior, the US Navy is also placing considerable emphasis on trying to forge a better working relationship with China’s navy. “We have got to find the common ground and figure out how we are going to operate in this big ocean of the western Pacific together without incident or miscalculation,” Rear Admiral James Foggo, assistant deputy chief of naval operations, told the same conference. He described his interactions with Wu Shengli, commander of the Chinese navy, as “the greatest and most challenging chess match of my career.” (Geoff Dyer, “China Training for ‘Short, Sharp War,’” Financial Times, February 21, 2014, p. 2)

2/21/14 DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman today gave the following answer to the question put by KCNA “refuting a ‘report’ recently released by the Commission of Inquiry (CI) on the human rights situations in the DPRK organized under the UN Human Rights Council: The Commission was set up highhandedly at the meeting of the Council last year by the U.S. and its satellite forces out of inveterate repugnance towards the DPRK. The DPRK, therefore, has never recognized its existence as it is no more than a marionette under their clutches. The DPRK categorically rejects this "report" as it does not deserve even a passing note. The "report" misrepresents the true picture of the Korean people enjoying genuine rights and is peppered with sheer lies and fabrications deliberately cooked up by hostile forces and riff-raffs such as some "elements with ambiguous identities who defected from the north", criminals escaped from it after committing crimes against the country to earn money. They are becoming frantic with their smear campaign against the DPRK while making far-fetched assertions that the ‘human rights situation’ in the DPRK should be referred to the International Criminal Court or to the UN Security Council. This is an extremely dangerous politically-motivated provocation aimed to tarnish the image of the dignified DPRK and ramp up pressure on it in a bid to bring down its social system. That is why many countries and even various Western media claim that the ‘report’ is so biased that it does not sound plausible, querying how such thing could be distributed as a document of the UN body. The U.S., the worst human rights abuser, should be brought to an international human rights tribunal as it killed innocent people in various parts of the world through aggression and intervention, causing unspeakable disasters, and systematically committed illegal wire-tapping and surveillance against citizens of other countries, to say nothing of those in its mainland, sparking uproar. The U.S. had better stop its futile anti-DPRK ‘human rights’ racket and mind its own business.” (KCNA, “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman Refutes CI’s Report,” February 21, 2014)

South Korea approved a shipment of $988,000 worth of medicine and powdered milk for North Korea and promised more humanitarian aid as the two Koreas continued the
emotional reunions of families separated by the Korean War six decades ago. The Seoul government's approval of the aid shipment by two civic relief groups came a day after the two countries began the reunions in an event widely seen as easing tensions on the divided peninsula. President Park Geun-hye has promised to increase humanitarian aid if the North improves ties through “trust building” projects like the family reunions, which were last held more than three years ago. (Choe Sang-hun, “South Korea Aids North As Families Are Reunited,” New York Times, February 22, 2014, p. A-8)

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a meeting with North Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Ri Gil Song in Tehran underlined the need for the further expansion of bilateral relations. During the meeting in the Iranian capital today, the Iranian foreign minister and the North Korean deputy foreign minister explored avenues for bolstering and reinvigorating the two countries' bilateral ties. Noting the two states’ common views over a number of regional and international issues, the Iranian foreign minister stressed Tehran’s determination to establish sustainable relations with Pyongyang, and said continued consultations and exchange of views between the two countries’ senior officials is a necessity to this end. He also reiterated Iran’s continued support for the reunification of the two Koreas, and expressed the hope that the North and the South would remove their misunderstanding through peaceful means, especially through talks. The Iranian foreign minister reminded that resolution of misunderstandings in the Peninsula would serve the interests of both nations and help preserve peace, security and stability in the region. Zarif stressed Iran’s firm stance on global nuclear disarmament, but meantime underlined all countries’ entitlement to the right to benefit from the peaceful nuclear technology. The North Korean deputy foreign minister, for his part, said that Pyongyang’s high-ranking officials pay special attention to the consolidation and expansion of ties with Iran. “The people and government of (North) Korea have always wanted the success and increasing progress of Iran; they have always supported Iran’s peaceful nuclear policy and opposed imposition of political and economic pressures on the country,” the North Korean deputy foreign minister said. Last year, Iran’s former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced Tehran’s readiness to play a mediating role in East Asia to soothe escalating tensions between the two Koreas. “I ask you as a friend to settle the problems wisely and through talks and negotiations as in the past,” Ahmadinejad said last April, addressing East Asian countries, including China, Japan and South and North Koreas. “You should be vigilant and Iran is ready to do mediation to help resolve problems through talks and negotiations,” he added. Ahmadinejad warned that enemies of East Asian states had plotted to prevent these countries’ further progress through staging a devastating war in the region, and said, “You shouldn’t allow the enemies of humanity to destroy you in a bid to improve their own conditions.” (Fars News Agency, “Iran, North Korea Discuss Expansion of Ties,” February 24, 2014)

Trade between South and North Korea fell to its lowest level in eight years in 2013 due to their strained relations, data showed. Inter-Korean trade reached US$1.15 billion last year, down a whopping 41.9 percent from the previous year’s $1.98 billion, according to the data from the Korea International Trade Association (KITA). South
Korean exports to the North nose-dived 41.1 percent on-year to $531.8 million, with imports from the communist country sinking 42.5 percent to $617.2 million. The 2013 inter-Korean trade volume was the lowest since 2005, when the figure came to $1.06 billion. The KITA attributed the tumble in inter-Korean trade mainly to the suspension of a jointly run industrial complex in North Korea. (Yonhap, “Inter-Korean Trade Hits 8-Year Low in 2013,” February 23, 2014)

A total of 357 South Koreans were reunited with 88 elderly relatives from the North on the first of three days of family reunions at Mount Kumgang, a scenic resort on the North’s east coast. The South Koreans traveled by bus to the North earlier in the day. The meetings are the second set of reunions in a week. On Saturday, 82 elderly South Koreans, accompanied by 58 family members, came back from the North’s mountain resort after three days with their long-lost loved ones. (Yonhap, “Hundreds of Koreans Hold Tearful Reunions,” February 23, 2014)

The Abe administration plans to ease Japan’s self-imposed restrictions on weapons exports by not ruling out delivery to nations involved in an international conflict, a major policy shift in the nation’s long-held “three principles” that ban such action, a government source said. Critics warn the change could undermine Japan’s pacifist stance since World War II and pave the way for Japanese-made weapons and technology to be used in global conflicts. Under new rules governing arms exports, the administration is not expected to ban exports to countries that are or may be involved in international conflicts, apparently out of consideration for the United States, Japan’s top ally, and Israel, which also has close ties with the U.S., the source said. The new rules will also stop blocking the transfer of weapons to communist states, as stated in the three principles, because this section was created during the Cold War, the source said. PM Abe Shinzo launched a review of the arms export control guidelines based on his notion that the lucrative business of exporting weapons would help boost security ties with the nation’s allies. The three principles on arms exports were adopted in 1967 to block the transfer of weapons to communist states, countries subject to embargoes under U.N. resolutions, and those involved in international conflicts. The rules became a virtual blanket ban in 1976, with some exceptions made by past administrations. In 2011, the rules were relaxed to allow exports for humanitarian and peaceful purposes, and to make it easier to participate in joint development and production of weapons. The administration will try to work out the new guidelines on arms export controls and seek Cabinet approval next month after consultations with the ruling parties, the source said Sunday. New Komeito, the ruling coalition partner of Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party, remains wary of such a move. A Kyodo News survey of 1,011 people nationwide over the weekend showed that 66.8 percent opposed relaxing arms export controls and 25.7 percent expressed support. Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori, appearing today in Gifu, said Japan’s security will be reduced if it does not engage in joint development of defense equipment with other nations. Onodera said Japan can offer its aircraft manufacturing technology to international development efforts. He also told reporters that the administration can allay concerns over efforts to relax the restrictions by emphasizing that Japan will remain a peaceful nation. The new rules will state that weapons exports will not be allowed in certain cases where it is clear that doing so would hinder efforts to maintain global peace and security, the source said.
The guidelines will also stipulate that Japan will conduct strict screening of arms exports and will only allow the transfer of weapons to a third country or use of weapons for purposes other than originally stated if they can be properly controlled, the source said. The rules will retain the clause that blocks the transfer of weapons to countries subject to embargoes under U.N. resolutions. Arms exports will also be blocked to countries violating international pacts such as the Chemical Weapons Convention. Exports to international organizations will be allowed. (Kyodo, “Abe Looks to Ease Arms Export Ban for States in Strife,” *Japan Times*, February 24, 2014)

South Korea kicked off its annual joint military exercises with the United States, despite vocal opposition from North Korea which will test a recent upswing in cross-border ties. Pyongyang had initially insisted that the joint exercises be postponed until after the reunion finishes on Tuesday, but Seoul refused and -- in a rare concession -- the North allowed the family gathering to go ahead as scheduled. The annual “Key Resolve” and “Foal Eagle” drills -- routinely condemned by North Korea as rehearsals for invasion -- will last until April 18 and involve a combined total of 12,700 US troops and many more from South Korea. "Key Resolve" lasts just over a week and is a largely computer-simulated exercise, while the eight-week “Foal Eagle” drill involves air, ground and naval field training. Seoul and Washington insist they are both defensive in nature, playing out various scenarios to combat a North Korean invasion. (Giles Hewitt, “Military Drills to Test Inter-Korean Détente,” AFP, February 24, 2014)

A North Korean patrol boat repeatedly crossed the tense western sea border with South Korea overnight Monday in the first violations of the year, the defense ministry said Tuesday. The North Korean vessel’s first intrusion across the Northern Limit Line (NLL) occurred at 10:56 p.m., and it crossed the border again at 11:46 p.m. No shots were fired and the ship finally retreated at 2:25 a.m. after the South Korean Navy repeatedly broadcast warnings, according to the ministry. The patrol ship sailed into the South-controlled waters as far as four kilometers, the ministry added. The ministry spokesman said the North’s incursion was an intentional action. “The North Korean ship’s NLL violation is seen as part of military drills or an inspection of the South Korean military,” ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said in a briefing. “It is believed that the North Korean vessel intended to test the South Korean military.” He also said that the North itself revoked its proposal on January 16 to halt all hostile military actions by both sides.

The intrusion marks the Stalinist country’s first border violation since its patrol violated the NLL on August 16. The North intruded across the border three times last year. “We are closely looking into possibilities that the North Korean intentionally violated the NLL,” Kim said, adding that the South Korean military is prepared to counter any provocations. (Kang Seung-woo, “N. Korean Patrol Boat Violated NLL,” *Korea Times*, February 25, 2014)

North Korean athletes will compete in all events at the Asian Games in South Korea later this year, North Korean officials said. Preparations are under way to compete in all events, a group of North Korean officials and reporters said during a rare lunch with South Korean pool reporters. The South Korean reporters are at a North Korean mountain resort to cover the reunions of hundreds of families separated by the 1950-
53 Korean War. North Korea will compete in “all events” and processes are under way to select athletes who can win medals, said a reporter of Minju Joson, the North’s Cabinet newspaper. (Yonhap, “N. Korea to Compete in All Events at Incheon Asian Games: Official,” February 24, 2014)

North Korea has asked the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization to help contain the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the communist country, Radio Free Asia reported. North Korean officials met with their counterparts from the U.N. agency in Italy on February 24 to discuss the issue, a day after Pyongyang made the request to the Rome-based U.N. body, the Washington-based The U.N. agency plans to quickly send a team of its officials to North Korea to assess the situation, it said. On that day, South Korea offered to ship disinfectants and preventive medicine to the North to help it combat the outbreak of the disease -- the first since April 2011. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Asks U.N. to Help Contain FMD,” February 26, 2014)

An advisory panel to Prime Minister Abe Shinzo will propose another change in the interpretation of the Constitution that will allow Japanese peacekeepers to use force in a broader range of situations. Kitaoka Shinichi, deputy chairman of the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, told Asahi Shimbun that a reinterpretation of “international disputes” will be included in a report submitted to Abe as early as April. If the government accepts that proposal, members of the Self-Defense Forces in U.N. peacekeeping operations would be able to use weapons, for example, to rescue foreign troops on the same mission who come under attack in distant locations. “It may be a more important proposal in our report than (one calling for lifting a ban on) exercising the right to collective self-defense,” Kitaoka, president of the International University of Japan, said. Under Article 9 of the Constitution, Japanese “forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.” The clause is understood to mean all international disputes. But Kitaoka said, “In light of the history of international law, the words ‘international disputes’ should be interpreted as those in which Japan is involved.” If the government changes its interpretation of “international disputes,” Kitaoka said, the use of weapons in peacekeeping operations would not constitute force prohibited under the Constitution because Japan would not be a party to the international dispute in question. The United Nations allows peacekeepers to use weapons for two purposes: (a) to protect personnel and (b) to deter and confront obstructions to mandate implementation. Until now, Japan has allowed SDF members in U.N. peacekeeping operations to use weapons only to protect personnel, such as its own and foreign peacekeepers and employees of international organizations who are nearby. Kitaoka said SDF members would be able to use weapons for deterrence and confrontation purposes if the government changes its interpretation of “international disputes.” He also emphasized that the government must establish standards for weapons use under law even if constitutional restraints are removed. However, the scope of situations in which SDF members can use weapons could expand unlimitedly because any administration can change the standards simply by revising the SDF Law or through other means. The Abe administration is already working to change the government interpretation of the Constitution to lift Japan’s self-imposed ban on exercising the right to collective self-defense. The panel’s report is expected to include
five conditions to allow for that right. “A careful judgment will be made because mobilizing troops is an act of national importance,” Kitaoka said. The first condition is that a nation with close ties to Japan comes under attack. Kitaoka said “a nation with close ties” is not limited to an ally. Some panel members have said Australia, as well as members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea, will be included. “If the nation (with close ties) launches an attack, Japan will not come to its rescue,” Kitaoka said. The second condition is that a situation left unattended will have a major impact on Japan’s security, such as a military conflict on the Korean Peninsula, among other places. A fifth, related condition says Japan must gain the permission of a third country other than the nation under attack if the SDF passes through its territory or territorial waters. “(The SDF) may pass through South Korean territorial waters if it is to rescue U.S. warships that come under attack along the coast of the Korean Peninsula,” Kitaoka said. Touching on the second condition, Kitaoka reiterated that he does not expect “an incident on the other side of the world” to bring a national security crisis to Japan. Still, the condition appears open to interpretation. Kitaoka acknowledged that suspension of oil transportation from the Persian Gulf to Japan would “have a major impact on Japan’s security.” He said that to prevent abuse of the right to collective self-defense, the panel agreed on a third condition that the nation under attack must clearly request that Japan exercise that right. The United States and the former Soviet Union cited the right to collective self-defense as a pretext for intervention when an unfriendly regime was about to be born. The fourth condition is that the prime minister will consider the situation in a comprehensive manner and gain Diet approval. Lawmakers, however, could end up confirming the government decision after the fact. Kitaoka said it would be desirable for the government to seek Diet approval before exercising the right to collective self-defense, but later approval would be acceptable if there is no time beforehand. However, Yanagisawa Kyoji, a former assistant chief Cabinet secretary who is calling for caution in exercising the right to collective self-defense, said strict procedures, such as requiring prior approval for all cases, are necessary. Meanwhile, Komatsu Ichiro, director-general of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau, indicated that he intends to support Abe’s policy to lift the ban on exercising the right to collective self-defense. “Our bureau is a division of the Cabinet,” Komatsu told reporters as he returned to office after being hospitalized for one month for tumor treatment. “We will do what we should do in accordance with the prime minister’s policy.” The Abe administration picked Komatsu to head the bureau, which is tasked with providing opinions to Cabinet members on legal issues and examining all government-proposed legislation. After receiving the report from the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, Abe will discuss the new interpretation of the Constitution with the ruling parties and decide a government policy to change the interpretation at a Cabinet meeting. In the process, Komatsu is expected to state his opinions in line with the government policy on the interpretation. (Asahi Shimbun, “Advisory Panel Seeking Wider Weapons Use for SDF Peacekeepers,” February 26, 2014)
director in charge of the military in the Workers Party's Organization and Guidance Department, who accompanied Kim 12 times. Second was Army Chief Ri Yong-gil (eight times). But Choe Ryong-hae, who heads the Army Politburo and was widely seen as having replaced Jang Song-taek as the North's eminence grise, only came third with seven times. (Chosun Ilbo, “Powerful N. Korean Hardliner Fading from View,” February 25, 2014)

Rodong Sinmun: “The U.S. and south Korean warmongers finally started the large-scale Key Resolve joint military exercise in south Korea on Monday [February 24]. The exercise is supposed to last till March 6 and will be followed by Foal Eagle joint military drill to be staged in the land, sea and air under the simulated conditions of an actual war till April 18 with huge troops of the U.S. aggressor forces and south Korean army and latest offensive means and war hardware including nuclear submarines involved. This saber-rattling is a blatant challenge to the DPRK’s sincere efforts for mending the north-south ties and defusing the tension on the Korean peninsula. They claim that the on-going war exercises are ‘annual and defensive ones’ as they did in the past. However, this is nothing but a third-rate tactics for covering up their provocative and aggressive nature. It is the U.S. invariable strategy to realize its scenario for dominating Korea by keeping the Korean nation into two and inciting the north-south confrontation. … The U.S. is sadly mistaken if it calculates it can get anything by pushing the situation on the peninsula to a war. The DPRK has already made every possible effort for peace and stability on the peninsula. It will make sustained efforts to ensure peace on the peninsula by exercising self-restraint and patience in the future, too. But if the warmongers at home and abroad misinterpret the DPRK’s will for peace and launch a preemptive attack, the DPRK will resolutely counter it to protect its national security and dignity.” (KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Denounces Start of Key Resolve,” February 25, 2014)

On September 8, 2012, Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko sat across from U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Vladivostok, Russia. She asked if it was really necessary. Clinton was referring to the decision made by the Noda administration two months earlier to have the central government purchase the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea from a private owner. The meeting with Noda was held Clinton was standing in for President Barack Obama, who was attending the Democratic Party national convention. Clinton went on to ask Noda how he foresaw the situation playing out. Reading from notes prepared by Foreign Ministry officials, Noda explained that more stable maintenance and management of the islands would be possible if the central government owned the islands rather than the Tokyo metropolitan government. He added that it was China that had initiated the first change to the situation surrounding the Senkakus. However, Clinton did not look convinced. During a dinner reception that very same day, Nagashima Akihisa, a special adviser to Noda who sat in on that day’s meeting with Clinton, tried to explain the Japanese position to Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. The Obama administration was skeptical about the course that Japan had decided on. On July 8, Campbell met with Nagashima at the Hotel Okura in Tokyo. Campbell asked Nagashima, “Is this the best way? Do you believe that is the only way forward?” In its previous day’s edition, Asahi Shimbun
reported that the Noda administration planned to bring the Senkakus under state ownership. Noda had also formally announced the decision on July 7. The fact that no Japanese official informed Campbell or other high-ranking U.S. government officials beforehand was one of the reasons for the suspicions held by Washington. “Japan told us that they believed that they had gotten ‘the understanding of the Chinese,’” Campbell said. “We doubted that. We did not think that was likely to be accurate.”

Campbell and two of his subordinates met separately with Sugiyama Shinsuke, head of the Asian and Oceania Affairs Bureau at the Foreign Ministry. Sugiyama also mentioned that a certain level of understanding could be reached with China. That stance left doubts in the minds of the U.S. diplomats. According to Nagashima, he interpreted Campbell’s strong suggestion that Japan take alternatives as a message that the United States did not want to be dragged into any military encounter between Japan and China. Campbell reflected on the U.S. position at that time and said, “I don’t think anyone ever said anything like that. Our primary concern was that Japan was not understanding what was going to happen in Japan-China relations, not that we would be dragged in.” While the Obama administration may not have come out in direct opposition to the decision to purchase the islands, it did try to do everything possible to avoid a direct encounter between Japan and China. One U.S. official even asked, “Is it possible to say to (then Tokyo Governor Shintaro) Ishihara ‘no, it is illegal to buy these islands.’”

However, central government officials could not find any legal problems to the Tokyo metropolitan government purchasing the islands. On September 11, 2012, the Noda administration signed a contract with the private owner to purchase the three islands of Uotsurishima, Kita-Kojima and Minami-Kojima. As tensions between Japan and China rose dramatically, several moves were also going on simultaneously between Japan and the United States. Shortly after the purchase, officials at the Foreign Ministry received a report that Japanese activists were planning to land on Kubashima island, another of the Senkakus. Then and now, the Japanese government has not allowed any private individual to land on the Senkakus on the grounds that it would interfere with the stable maintenance and management of the islands. If activists were allowed to land on one island, Japanese officials were concerned that would give China the opening to argue that it was Japan that had changed the situation surrounding the islands. Moreover, Kubashima was under the control of the U.S. military, which referred to the island as the Kobisho firing and bombing range. It was another of the U.S. military facilities in Japan, much like the U.S. bases. Officials from the relevant Japanese government agencies discussed how to handle the matter. Among the most likely scenarios were applying either the special criminal law in line with implementation of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement, which prohibits unlawful entry into areas under the control of the U.S. military, or a misdemeanor charge of unlawful entry. However, an official with the National Police Agency said, “It will be difficult to crack down unless there are clear signs that say the island is under the control of the U.S. military.” Informally, Japanese officials asked their U.S. counterparts about the possibility of erecting signs on Kubashima that said it was under the control of the U.S. military. Those officials felt there was a need for such signs to prevent landings on the island and for its stable maintenance and management. However, the Obama administration was cautious because officials surmised that Japan’s true intent was to involve the United States in the issue in order to gain its strong support. There were even some in the administration who suspected it was all a
scheme drawn up and enacted by the Japanese government. There were some in the Japanese government who held expectations that they could show China that it had U.S. support by having Washington clearly display that Kubashima was under U.S. military control. One official who was involved in the discussions in Japan said, “We felt it was only natural for the United States as an ally to take the position of protecting Japan.” However, without taking up the matter with key Obama administration officials, the decision was made and passed on to Japan that no sign was needed on Kubashima. Campbell said he never heard about any such plan. Among the reasons given by U.S. officials for not installing a sign were that the island had not been used for training since 1978 and that under U.S. regulations, there was no obligation to install such signs on an island that was used for firing and bombing exercises from the air. U.S. officials further told their Japanese counterparts that Japanese law enforcement officials were welcome to detain anyone who tried to land on the island. After the government took over ownership of the islands, China repeatedly intruded into Japanese territorial waters and tensions in the East China Sea heightened quickly. While the Obama administration wanted to avoid becoming involved in an encounter between Japan and China, there were calls from within the administration as well as Congress to clearly express U.S. support for Japan as a means of deterring China. In October 2012, a counselor with the Japanese Embassy in Washington explained the Senkakus issue to staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the invitation of Michael Schiffer, who served as a senior adviser to the committee. Many within the Japanese government initially thought that China’s intrusions into Japanese waters would end after a short period of time. However, there were no signs of any letup even in October. The Japanese Embassy counselor laid out the analysis of the Japanese government, which was that China’s aim was to argue it was demonstrating administrative control over the Senkakus through a constant presence in the waters. The further aim was to create a rift within the United States, which had recognized Japanese administrative control over the islands. During the question-and-answer session, Schiffer raised his hand and asked if there would be any significance to having Congress express its opinion on the issue. The Japanese counselor responded there would be major significance. That led Schiffer to begin compiling a draft statement. The standard position of the Obama administration had been to “oppose any unilateral action to change the status quo.” That stance did not clarify if it was China or Japan that was trying to make such a change. On the other hand, the draft by Congress included the wording “The unilateral action of a third party will not affect the United States’ acknowledgement of Japan over the Senkaku Islands.” It was clear that the “third party” was a reference to China. The draft turned into an amendment that was submitted by Democrat Sen. Jim Webb of Virginia, among others, and approved unanimously on November 29 as an attachment to the National Defense Authorization Bill. Subsequently, officials of the East Asian and Pacific Affairs Bureau of the U.S. State Department also began coordinating with their Japanese counterparts on what new message to transmit abroad. State Department officials were aware of information that China was trying to find a gulf between Japan and the United States, which led them to be cautious about creating any such opening. At the same time, not everyone within the Obama administration was on the same page. Some senior White House officials were critical of Japan’s decision to purchase the Senkakus. Amid that background, State Department officials began working on
their own document. In the end, it contained wording different from the congressional amendment in part due to points raised by the legal adviser. In particular, the inclusion of the word “will” in the amendment raised concerns among officials who felt it would bind the United States even into the future. That wording also was not considered consistent with other wording that said Washington “(does) not take a position on territorial disputes.” Meanwhile, in Japan, a change in government brought Abe Shinzo back as prime minister. The decision was made to have Clinton refer to the Senkakus issue when newly installed Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio visited Washington. At a joint news conference held on Jan. 18, 2013, at the U.S. State Department, Clinton said, “Although the United States does not take a position on the ultimate sovereignty of the islands, we acknowledge they are under the administration of Japan and we oppose any unilateral action that would seek to undermine Japanese administration.” The strongly worded comment by the United States led to Japanese government officials describing Clinton’s statement as “extremely major and significant.” The Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed its strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition. The sharp response only highlighted the importance of what Clinton said. Clinton stepped down as secretary of state in February. While Japan held hopes that her successor, John Kerry, would make the same statement, he did not go as far as Clinton when he met Kishida for the first time in Washington in February. However, Clinton’s statement that the United States opposes “any unilateral action that would seek to undermine Japanese administration” became the Obama administration’s policy after U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel made a similar statement. However, the differences between the more confrontational Japan-China relationship and the direction of U.S.-China ties only widened. In June 2013, Obama met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Sunnylands, Calif. When Obama met Xi again in September, the U.S. president told reporters, “We had excellent meetings in Sunnylands earlier this year. And we agreed to continue to build a new model of great power relations based on practical cooperation and constructively managing our differences.” Beijing had long sought to create a new model of “great power relations.” U.S. views of Japan also began to become more complicated as the Senkakus issue became intertwined with historical recognition issues. In December, Abe visited Yasukuni Shrine. Washington expressed its “disappointment,” but that criticism had its roots in the spring of 2013. In April, Deputy Prime Minister Aso Taro visited Yasukuni shortly after a meeting with Vice President Joe Biden. The White House was incensed because Biden had made a point of asking Japan to deal with historical issues cautiously. Abe also visited Yasukuni less than a month after a meeting with Biden. The Obama administration was shocked by the visit because it was under the impression Abe would not make such a visit as Washington had asked Japan to show restraint. One factor behind the unprecedented U.S. criticism is the Senkakus issue. Thomas Berger, associate professor of international relations at Boston University, said, “Our view is changing on this partly because the territorial issues have become more serious, especially the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue. I mean, this is a qualitative shift. There is a fundamental change in how international relations in East Asia is working.” He was referring to the name used by Beijing to refer to the islands. Campbell said the Senkakus issue was “one of the most challenging” for him as assistant secretary. At a January 15 seminar at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Campbell said about Abe’s Yasukuni visit, “I think it hurts us; it puts us in a difficult position. But I think, more importantly, it creates substantial
challenges for Japan. The tension level between Japan and China is very high. It is also very high between Japan and South Korea.” On January 17, Yachi Shotaro, the first head of the newly established National Security Secretariat, met his U.S. counterpart, Susan Rice, Obama’s national security adviser, at the White House. After the meeting, a Japanese government official who accompanied Yachi to Washington repeatedly told Japanese reporters “The objective of the meeting was not to discuss the Yasukuni visit.” Although the issue was not a major one on the agenda, Rice did refer to Abe’s Yasukuni visit and asked that Japan improve its relations with its neighbors. One U.S. government official with knowledge of what transpired in the meeting said, “We believe that constructive relations between countries in the region promote peace and stability and are in the interests of the United States.” While concerned about China’s rise and still requiring Japan as an ally, the United States is also seeking relaxation of tensions and stability in the region. That means when Washington focuses its attention on the Asia-Pacific region, it cannot but be concerned about the Senkakus. (Oshima Takashi, “Reality Check: What the Senkakus Issue Entail for Washington,” Asahi Shimbun, February 25, 2014)

The “unification preparatory committee” announced by President Park Geun-hye in her address today appears to be an advisory body for fleshing out the “unification-as-jackpot” idea that she announced in her New Year’s press conference last month. It is also being described as a sign that the President, emboldened by improved ties with North Korea after the divided family reunions and strong public support for her administration’s North Korea policy, is committed to working more actively on reunification. It is not yet clear exactly what the committee’s role will be. Blue House spokesperson Min Kyung-wook stressed that it was still in its “early stages,” adding, “Our next step now is to establish the organization and develop a concrete action plan.” He added, “We anticipate there will be an announcement once it is ready.” From what Park said in her address, the committee is expected to be a kind of social consensus body aimed at hearing opinions on unification and inter-Korean relations and seeking the public’s support for government ideas. The President described it as “civilian experts in all areas of foreign affairs, national security, the economy, society, and culture, working together with civic groups and various other representatives of society to reflect the public’s unification debate and draft a concrete blueprint for a unified Korean Peninsula.” This suggests that the committee’s role would not be specialized information collection and research, as with the National Intelligence Service or Ministry of Unification, but as a channel for explaining major developments in unification and inter-Korean relations to the public and seeking its support. And with opinions on specific unification steps divided sharply along political and philosophical lines, another of the committee’s aims would be to mediate opinions and resolve conflicts. (Seok Jin-hwan and Park Byong-su, “Pres. Park’s Vague Plans for a ‘Unification Preparatory Committee,” Hankyore, February 26, 2014)

Secretary of State John Kerry has described North Korea as an “evil, evil place” during a television interview on MSNBC. Kerry asserted that North Korea is “one of the most closed and cruel places on earth,” before going on, “There’s no question about it. There’s evil that is taking place there that all of us ought to be deeply and are deeply concerned about.” “This is an evil, evil place. And it requires enormous focus by the
world in order to hold it accountable,” he said. “I think every aspect of any law that can be applied should be applied.” (Chris Green, “Top U.S. Official Slams ‘Evil’ North Korea,” Daily NK, February 27, 2014)

North Korea appears to have recently reinstated two key officials in charge of economic projects with China, a diplomatic source said, in a sign Pyongyang may try to restore business partnership with Beijing. Kim Ki-sok and Kim Chol-jin, chief and deputy chief of the North’s State Economic Development Commission, had been sacked in connection with the purge and execution of leader’s uncle, Jang Song-thaek, in December last year, but have been reinstated after undergoing an “ideology re-education,” the source said. "Kim Ki-sok and Kim Chol-jin were forced to resign from the posts after being involved in the case of Jang Song-thaek, but reinstated as they were considered not so close to Jang," the source said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Reinstates Key Officials on Economic Projects with China,” February 26, 2014) A senior North Korean economic official recently paid a secret visit to China to attract investment. The trip by Kim Ki-sok, chairman of the State Commission for Economic Development, was the first visit to China by a high-ranking North Korean official since the execution last year of eminence grise Jang Song-taek, who spearheaded business relations with China. A source in Beijing said Kim visited Beijing, Shenzen, Singapore and Malaysia last week. He met with businesspeople interested in developing North Korea’s special economic zones. Kim also met with Chinese officials who had experience in developing special economic zones, the source said. In Singapore, Kim discussed the development of a tourism zone in Wonsan. But he apparently returned empty-handed. (Chosun Ilbo, “N. Korean Official Secretly Courts Chinese Investments,” February 26, 2014)

Ireson: “While there has been periodic speculation since Kim Jong Un took power about his appetite for reform, a recent development may foretell substantial changes for North Korea’s agricultural sector. On February 6-7, 2014, North Korea held its first national conference of farm sub-work team leaders in Pyongyang. …Kim’s personal attention and the presence of other high ranking officials strongly indicates that the policies previewed at the meeting represent the direction of agricultural development for at least the immediate future. Implementation remains uncertain, but Kim’s letter suggests game-changing modifications to farm policy. …A renewed call to implement a revolution in seeds is accompanied for the first time with a clear statement that high yield is not the only criterion for selecting good seed: a short growing period, efficient uptake of available fertilizer and pest resistance are now also listed as considerations. These criteria have actually been used by some DPRK plant breeders for several years, but are now given Kim’s public stamp of approval. This should lead to seed varieties that are more suited to the environmental conditions and less dependent on super high fertilizer applications. With regard to Juche farming, long described as planting the right crop in the right field at the right time, Kim says that every land parcel is different, and that the crop grown as well as the timing of farming tasks (planting, harvest, etc.) must be in accordance with the conditions of that particular parcel and the weather of that year, rather than dictated in general by rigid county or province plans. This change by itself could give farmers much needed flexibility to adapt their cropping strategy to changing local conditions. Organic farming is extolled as the
future of productive agriculture, and farmers who erroneously believe they cannot do their job without chemical fertilizer are criticized. In the North, “organic farming” means increased use of organic methods, but not necessarily 100 percent organic production. In that context, Kim strongly calls for more balanced fertilizer application, specifically including phosphate, potash and micro-nutrients. This has long been recommended by the international aid community to little effect either at the farm level or in the supply chain, but now stands a chance of being implemented if appropriate fertilizers can be produced or procured. Integrating animal husbandry and crop farming is also recommended, in order to have enough manure to apply to the fields, though there is no discussion of how that can be practically managed or how enough livestock feed will be produced locally. Agroforestry and the protection of sloping lands is strongly recommended (a good thing), but is linked to increased grain production, a contradictory idea as annual grain crops should not be grown on hillsides because of erosion. Another contradiction is seen in the call to increase production of vegetables and fruit, while in the same breath farmers are told to “reduce the area of cultivation of non-cereal crops…” Technical concerns about North Korean farming, however, have in the past been far outweighed by institutional obstacles. Farmers have been paid only a small fraction of the open market value for any surplus grain production and, lacking both convertible currency and access to a market for agricultural supplies, have been unable to make investments in improved productivity even when they did produce a surplus or profit. Kim’s letter at least partly acknowledges this situation. He criticizes the distribution of inputs and assignment of targets to work units without taking into consideration the characteristics of their fields, and calls on farmers to “remove the tendency to insist on old experience and make light of science and technology.” Kim goes on to hint at some significant changes. First, sub-work team leaders now appear to be empowered for practical farm management, both by virtue of this large-scale meeting as well as five specific tasks named by Kim. They are exhorted to “become active defenders, propagators and implementers of our Party’s agricultural policies and Juche farming method.” They should be better versed than anyone in Juche policies, be masters of their sub-work teams and work harder than anyone else. They should be knowledgeable in modern scientific agriculture and bold in introducing new methods. They should be “dutiful caretakers of public property of their farms.” And finally they should become the elder brothers and sisters of their team members, looking after them as their own kin (which they likely are). Kim then appears to begin to unveil a policy that if actually implemented, could be a game-changer. He argues that the superior sub-work team system created by President Kim Il Sung and implemented by Kim Jong Il, “encourages farmers to take part in production and management as befitting masters with the feeling of attachment to the collective economy.” (The Korean translated as “masters” can also mean “owners,” but here seems to refer to control and mastery rather than property rights.) Kim Jong Un adds that a “field responsibility system” has been created within the sub-work team management system “so as to inspire farmers with enthusiasm for production.” No further details are given, but the term 포천, referring to a specific field or plot, suggests that families may be given long-term responsibility for production on designated plots of land. It appears that Kim is trying to motivate the grass-roots with economic as well as ideological incentives. Kim continues with a statement that requires quoting as a whole: What is important in operating the sub-work team management system is to
strictly abide by the socialist principle of distribution. *Equalitarianism in distribution* [평균주의, literally “mean average-ism”) has nothing to do with the socialist principle of distribution and has a harmful effect of diminishing farmers’ enthusiasm for production. Sub-work teams should assess the daily work-points of their members accurately and in good time according to the quantity and quality of the work they have done. And they should, as required by the socialist principle of distribution, share out their grain yields to their members mainly in kind according to their work-points after counting out the amounts set by the state. The state should define reasonable amounts of grains for compulsory delivery on the basis of accurate calculation of the country’s demand for grains, *interests of farmers and their demands for living*, thereby ensuring that they make redoubled efforts with confidence. (Emphasis added.) Does this mean that farmers will receive food and cash in accordance with their production? Will the state’s share be moderated enough to provide an incentive for farmers to work harder? At this point we do not know and history has taught us to be cautious. But this policy statement comes unambiguously from the top and appears to legitimate economic incentives to individuals to increase effort and production. Every cooperative farm is called upon to identify model sub-work teams which others should strive to out-do. Local competition seems to be encouraged. Farmers and team leaders are directed to be “masters” of their farms, with a sense of management control and independent action, and therefore of enthusiasm. But before we skip giddily down the path crying “reform,” other important questions need to be answered. Will farms actually receive the resources they need? In the KCNA article on February 7, which reports the closing of this conference, the ministers of the metallurgical and chemical industries committed to producing the steel and agrochemicals needed. But serious issues of industrial capacity have to be addressed before that can happen as well as how much grain the state will require from the farms and what sub-work teams will be allowed to do with any surplus production. Will they be allowed to legally sell it, and if so, at what prices? Will they be allowed to seek resources (i.e. equipment, seed, fertilizer, etc.) on the market? Under the field responsibility system, will a team have enough confidence that it will farm the same parcel(s) of land for many years that it will be willing to make the long-term investment in improving the soil in those fields? Despite all these concerns, the government appears serious about changing key policies for the farm sector. Some of the changes listed above have reportedly been implemented in select areas of the country over the last two years. Have they had the desired effect, and is there now a commitment to move forward more widely? The number of grass-roots leaders involved, the presence of important political leaders, and the timing of the conference (far enough before spring planting that sub-work teams can actually implement the new system this year) all suggest a commitment to change. That may not be enough, however. The changes (which are bound to be disruptive and unevenly implemented in the short-term) will have to be given enough time to have an effect on the rural economy, rather than being second-guessed and pulled back after only one season. But for now, it is time to be hopeful that some of the structural obstacles to agricultural modernization will be removed. (Randall Ireson, “Game-Changing Agricultural Policies for North Korea?” 38North, February 26, 2014)
the Gitdaeryeong area starting at 5:42 p.m., which prompted the South to beef up its vigilance. “Originally, we thought they were an improved version of the KN-02 ground-to-ship missiles but we now believe they were Scud missiles because their range was longer than 200 kilometers,” a ministry official said. “However, we don’t exclude the possibility that they could have been the latest KN-02 or a new ground-to-air missile. We need additional analysis to reach a final conclusion.” The North has not fired a Scud missile since July 4, 2009. It has three types of Scuds with ranges of 300, 500 and 700 kilometers, respectively. Defense officials said that the missile test might have been a response to the ongoing ROK-U.S. Key Resolve joint military exercise along with its recent infringement of the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the West Sea. Key Resolve is a regular computer-based command post exercise, which will continue through March 6, and involves 10,000 South Korean and 5,200 American troops. The North has claimed repeatedly that it is a prelude to an invasion. Domestic experts came up with different analyses on the unexpected military action by the belligerent regime. “In consideration of its short range, the Scud missile is about South Korea, not Japan or the United States. The North may want to give some signal to the South timed for the joint drill with the U.S.,” said Shin In-kyun, head of the Korea Defense Network. “The chances are that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un wasn’t aware of the missile launch in advance. I am worried that inter-Korean relations will worsen in the future.” In contrast, others refused to regard the case in an overly serious manner. “I think it is just a military drill by the North, which might want to show that it can carry out its own exercise while the South is doing so with the U.S.,” said Jang Yong-seok, a researcher at the Institute of Peace and Unification Studies affiliated with Seoul National University. Yang Moo-jin at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul concurred. “You may think that it is serious because it coincided with the family reunions. But it is nothing. The North can fire its missiles into its own sea at any time and that’s it,” he said. (Kim Tae-gyu, “N. Korea Fires Four Missiles,” Korea Times, February 27, 2014) "Given its timing, we believe that the North’s missile launch was very intentional and a kind of provocation," Seoul's defense ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said in a regular briefing. Noting that the government believes what the North fired "were Scud type ones," he said Pyongyang "made the plan deliberately" to resist the joint military exercises between South Korea and the United States that kicked off on Monday. The launch was the North’s first firing of a Scud missile since 2009, which "poses a threat to South Korea as the whole Korean Peninsula is in range," he added. On the first day of the drills, North Korea briefly violated the tense western sea border three times, following last week's firing of what military sources believed to be a new type of rocket larger than 300 mm caliber from a multiple rocket launcher. Though the defense ministry spokesman said no signs of additional missile launches or other types of provocation have been detected, sources here said the North has banned its fishing boats from operating in the East and Yellow Sea, and put its troops in the border region on "special alert." “Since earlier this week when the military drills began, the North has kept its ground and naval forces in the border regions on special alert,” a senior government source said. "We also can see the North’s reinforcement of artillery exercises in response to the joint drills." Another military source also speculated that "chances are that the North would provoke further given that the authorities have controlled fishing boats in the East and Yellow Sea border regions." Still, the South Korean government expressed hope that the North’s latest missile launch won’t affect
inter-Korea relations and Seoul’s move to hold further reunions. “We expect family reunions and inter-Korean relations to fare well down the road,” without being affected by the missile launches, said Kim Eui-do, the spokesman for the unification ministry in charge of inter-Korean relations. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Says N. Korea’s Missile Launch ‘Intentional Provocation,’” February 28, 2014)

A South Korean Baptist missionary who was arrested more than four months ago on suspicion of trying to establish underground Christian churches in North Korea told reporters yesterday that he is sorry for his “anti-state” crimes and appealed to North Korean authorities to show him mercy by releasing him from their custody. Kim Jung-wook told a news conference held in Pyongyang yesterday that he was arrested in early October after entering the North from China and trying to make his way to Pyongyang with Bibles, Christian instructional materials and films. He said he received assistance from South Korea’s intelligence agency. Kim said he was unsure what punishment he would face. He asked for the mercy of North Korean authorities and requested the media show his family that he is in good health. He also claimed that he was arrested on October 8, the day after he crossed into the North. Kim, in his first public appearance since his arrest, said he had met numerous times with South Korean intelligence officials before crossing into the North from Dandong, China, and claimed he had received thousands of dollars from them for his service. He also said he wanted to go into North Korea to establish a series of underground churches to spread Christianity there. “I was thinking of turning North Korea into a religious country, and destroying its present government and political system,” he said. “I received money from the intelligence services and followed instructions from them, and arranged North Koreans to act as their spies. “And I also set up an underground church in China, in Dandong, and got the members to talk and write for me to collect details about the reality of life in North Korea; and I provided this to the intelligence services.” At the news conference, Kim said his actions constituted a crime against North Korea’s state and called himself a “criminal.” He added that he has not been mistreated during his incarceration. In the past, however, similar statements have been recanted once prisoners have been let go. North Korea’s state media reported in November that the country had arrested a South Korean spy. But South Korea’s top spy agency, the National Intelligence Service, denied it had sent such an agent to the North, calling the allegation “a groundless claim.” South Korea called for the identification of the alleged South Korean spy that Pyongyang claimed to have detained last November, though the regime refused that demand. Following the press conference, the South Korean government officially confirmed Kim’s identity and called his detention “an anti-humanitarian act.” “We think it is regrettable for North Korea to unilaterally detain one of our citizens without any prior explanation,” Kim Eui-do, the spokesman of South Korea’s Ministry of Unification, said at a briefing yesterday. “Our government strongly calls for the immediate release of our citizen and his repatriation to our side.” (Ki Heejin, “Detainee in N. Korea Claims NIS Assisted Him,” JoongAng Ilbo, February 28, 2014) The South’s Unification Ministry said on February 28 it had attempted to send a written demand for Kim Jeong-Wook’s immediate release through the border truce village of Panmunjom. But North Korean officials refused to accept the message, the ministry said. (AFP, “N. Korea Snubs South Request on Detained Missionary,” February 27, 2014)
The World Food Program has provided emergency food aid worth $3.2 million for children and pregnant women in North Korea earlier this month, Radio Free Asia reported, citing a spokesman handling North Korean affairs. The U.N. body has said earlier that it will close five out of its seven factories within this month that produce nutritious biscuits for lack of funding. The WFP said in November that food production in the North is estimated to have been around 5.03 million metric tons in 2013, up 5 percent from the previous year. Still, the food security situation remains serious, with 84 percent of all households having borderline or poor food consumption, according to the U.N. food agency. (Yonhap, “WFP Provides $3.2 Million Emergency Aid to N. Korea,” Korea Herald, February 27, 2014)

Japan will re-examine a landmark apology it made two decades ago to women forced to work in Japanese wartime military brothels, chief cabinet secretary Suga Yoshihide said, in a move that could further outrage South Korea, where many of the women came from. Suga said a team of scholars would examine what historical evidence had been used in composing the apology, known as the Kono Statement. The statement, issued in 1993 by the chief cabinet secretary at the time, Yohei Kono, acknowledged for the first time that the Imperial military had been at least indirectly involved in coercing those known euphemistically as “comfort women” to provide sex to Japanese soldiers during World War II. Suga did not say whether the inquiry could possibly lead to a scrapping of the statement, an action that would most likely draw an explosive reaction from South Korea, where the women are seen as an emotionally potent symbol of their nation’s brutal early-20th-century colonization by Japan. It was also unclear whether Suga was offering to form the team simply as a way to deflect pressure from Prime Minister Abe Shinzo’s supporters in the political far right. They have argued that the statement should be scrapped because, they say, there is insufficient objective evidence supporting the testimony of the women that the Japanese military forced them to provide sex. (Most scholars reject that, saying the military was at least indirectly complicit because it allowed the brothels to operate.) Officials in the Abe administration have said that Suga does not support discarding the statement because he is well aware that such a move would be condemned in nations like the United States, which view the matter as a human rights issue. Visiting American officials have repeatedly urged Abe, an outspoken conservative, not to engage in historical revisionism that might isolate Japan in the region. Recently, nationalist lawmakers have demanded that the government look into whether the Kono Statement was based on inadequate evidence. A former official who helped draft it was called in to testify that the main evidence was the testimony of 16 former sex slaves and that no documents were found to corroborate their stories. That testimony seemed to confirm the position of the lawmakers, who have questioned the women’s testimonies, accusing them of being politically motivated. They say the women were not coerced but were prostitutes who worked in the brothels to earn money. Suga appeared to bow to that pressure, saying that a team of researchers would work in secret, apparently to avoid political interference. “We’d like to launch a team to re-examine and understand the background” of the statement, Suga told a parliamentary budget committee. “It will be extremely difficult, but it’s important to review and see what the situation was.” Scholars say that tens of thousands of Korean and other women worked in Japanese military brothels, and many of the survivors, now in their
80s and 90s, say they were tricked or coerced into laboring in wretched conditions that left them sterile for the rest of their lives. (Martin Fackler, “Japan to Revisit Apology to Wartime Sex Slaves,” New York Times, March 1, 2014, p. A-5)

3/1/14 DPRK FoMin spokesman “blasting U.S. Secretary of State Kerry’s recent malignant mud-slinging at the DPRK: Kerry in an interview on February 26 dared term the DPRK an "evil place" and next day he again pulled it up when he was releasing the U.S. Department of State’s ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013.’ This is another vivid expression of the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK. The U.S. secretary of State obsessed with hostility toward the DPRK can hardly understand supreme leader Kim Jong Un’s politics based on his love for the people and the situation of the DPRK where his people-first principle is being strictly observed thanks to it. Such hostile elements like Kerry would not like to see them though all other people in the world will be able to understand them in the future. Kerry’s malignant invectives against the social system in the DPRK are no more than a manifestation of his frustration and outbursts let loose by the defeated as the DPRK is winning one victory after another despite the whole gamut of pressure upon it over the nuclear issue. Before blaming others, Kerry had better ponder over what to say of the U.S., tundra of human rights, as it commits horrible genocide in various parts of the world in disregard of international law under the signboard of ‘liberty’ and ‘democracy.’ The above-said reports do not deserve even a passing note as they are peppered with all lies and hypocrisy. No matter what a wicked hypocrite he is, he should bear in mind that no pressure is workable on the DPRK. No problem can be solved between the DPRK and the U.S. as long as the U.S. persists in its hostile policy toward the DPRK. The DPRK will keep going its own way.” (KCNA, “FM Spokesman Refutes Remarks of U.S. Secretary of State,” March 1, 2014)

3/3/14 North Korea fired two short-range missiles into the sea off its east coast, Seoul's defense ministry said, in its latest provocation seen as a reaction to the ongoing joint military drills between South Korea and the United States. One missile was fired from the Gitsaeryeong area and the other from Wonsan, both on the North’s southeastern coast, in the northeast direction beginning at 6:19 a.m. "The missiles are evaluated to have flown over 500 kilometers," ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said in a briefing, adding they were believed to be of the Scud-C type. It is the second such launch of the short-range missiles in a week. "North Korea is taking a two-faced approach, showing the reconciliatory peace gesture on the surface, while launching provocations on the other hand," the spokesman said in a briefing. "We sound a serious warning to North Korea, urging it to stop provocations." Kim said Pyongyang’s missile launches are a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions that ban use of the ballistic missile technology, though the missiles were fired into its territorial waters. "In light of the border trespassing and short-range missile launches, South Korean and U.S. forces have stepped up their surveillance status to closely watch the North Korean military’s latest moves," Kim said. "We are ready to strike back if provoked." Another government official echoed Kim’s stance, saying that Seoul will consult with related countries about how they will proceed after the North’s U.N. resolution violation. "North Korea’s latest short-range missile launch constitutes a violation of the U.N. Security Council’s resolutions against the North," the government official said. "We will
discuss with related countries (how to handle the violation).” According to an analysis of the missiles’ trajectory, both of them fell within Japan’s air defense identification zone. One fell in a region 400 km northwest of Wajima, Ishikawa Prefecture, while the other landed in a region 456 km northwest of the same area. “North Korea fired the missiles into an area where civilian airlines and ships pass by. Not proclaiming a no-sail, no-fly zone (before the missile launch) is a violation of international regulation,” a senior government source said, asking for anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue. Military officials say there are chances of additional missile launches considering that the North has been controlling fishing boats in both East and Yellow Sea border regions. “Considering that the North fired the missiles into the sea, it is deemed a low-level provocation,” a senior military official said, asking for anonymity. “But it is worrisome that (the missile launch) could negatively affect inter-Korean relations when hopes are high for better ties in light of the family reunions.” (Kim Eun-jung, “N. Korea Fires Two Short-Range Missiles,” Yonhap, March 3, 2014)

North Korean and Japanese Red Cross officials started talks in China on the possible repatriation of the remains of Japanese nationals who died in the communist country during World War II. The talks, the first of their kind since August 2012, are scheduled to last two more days in Shenyang. The four-member North Korean delegation includes two North Korean diplomats handling Japanese affairs in the foreign ministry, which spawned speculation that some additional issues may be discussed at the meeting. Japan sent Ono Keiichi, chief of its Northeast Asia division, to the talks. The Japanese delegation is led by Tasaka Osamu, director general of the International Department at the Japanese Red Cross. (Yonhap, “N. Korea, Japan Red Cross Hold Talks in China,” March 3, 2014) A four-member delegation from each side gathered in the northeastern city of Shenyang for the three-day meeting led by Ri Ho-rim, secretary-general of the North Korean Red Cross’ central committee, and Osamu Tasaka, director-general of the Japanese Red Cross’ international department. “There has been much change and progress since the talks in Beijing,” Ri said as the meeting convened, citing a number of working-level governmental dialogues and a visit to Pyongyang by some families of deceased Japanese nationals. “This meeting bears a greater importance and higher social interests in light of the participation of government officials from the two countries.” Yu Song-il, director of Japanese affairs at the North Korean Foreign Ministry, and his Japanese counterpart Ono Keiichi are also taking part in the talks. Tasaka, in response, highlighted the significance of bilateral Red Cross projects, expressing appreciation in particular over the North’s donation of $1 million after the 2011 earthquakes and tsunami that ravaged eastern Japan. “The funds greatly helped stabilize the livelihoods of the victims and smoothly carry out relief programs,” he added. (Shin Hyon-hee, “Pyongyang, Tokyo Hold Talks over Remains of Japanese,” Korea Herald, March 3, 2014) Government officials from Japan and North Korea held informal talks Monday in Shenyang, northeastern China, raising hope for the resumption of bilateral negotiations that have been suspended since November 2012. The two-hour talks on the sidelines of a meeting of the two countries’ Red Cross societies involved Ono Keiichi, director of the Northeast Asia Division of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, and Ryu Song Il, chief of the Japanese affairs section of the North Korean Foreign Ministry, according to a Japanese official. (Kyodo, “Japan, N. Korea Officials Hold Informal Talks,” March 3, 2014) Ri Ho-rim, secretary general of the
North's Red Cross Society who heads the Pyongyang delegation, described today's talks as "productive." "Both North Korean and Japanese sides reached common ground that we need to continue to meet in the future to resolve the issue of the remains of Japanese," Ri told reporters after ending six hours of talks. "This round of talks becomes more important as government officials from the two nations attended," Ri said. "The talks were underway in a serious mood and were productive." (Yonhap, "North Korea, Japan Red Cross Hold 'Productive' Talks in China," Korea Herald, March 3, 2014) Japanese Red Cross Society officials will meet with their North Korean counterparts today in Shenyang, China, a move that could lead to direct talks between the two governments. The repatriation of remains of Japanese who died in North Korea during World War II and its immediate aftermath and permission for Japanese to visit graves in North Korea are expected to be the main points on the agenda, the Japanese Red Cross Society said February 27. Officials of the two Red Cross organizations last met in August 2012 in Beijing. Later that month, government discussions resumed between Japan and North Korea. In the background of next week's Red Cross talks is Pyongyang's aim to resume government-level discussions with Japan. According to officials of the Japanese Red Cross Society and the Foreign Ministry, a fax from the North Korean Red Cross was received on the evening of February 24 requesting the meeting. "The proposal was unexpected," a Japanese Red Cross official said. The fax also asked that North Korean Foreign Ministry officials be allowed to sit in. Osamu Tasaka, head of the International Department at the Japanese Red Cross, will attend the discussions, accompanied by Keiichi Ono, director of the Northeast Asia Division at the Foreign Ministry. The latest proposal indicates that Pyongyang is eager and may have the way to resolve the longstanding issue of Japanese abducted by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the Red Cross officials are not expected to discuss the abduction issue or Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and missile development programs. And actually arranging government-level talks could prove difficult under the current circumstances, with North Korea becoming increasingly isolated in the international community. Japan will likely step up the pace of secret meetings with North Korea on the abduction issue. According to several sources, three officials, including Junichi Ihara, director-general of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceania Affairs Bureau, visited Hanoi on January 25 and 26. It was later confirmed that North Korean Foreign Ministry officials were in the Vietnamese capital at the same time. That led to speculation that the two sides held secret talks. There were also reports that a second round of secret talks was held in Hong Kong on February 22-23. Japan has officially denied any contact was made between government officials of the two nations in Hanoi, and directly informed the United States and South Korea on the matter. However, extreme confidentiality is needed during the negotiation process because any resolution of the abduction issue will require political decisions at the highest levels. The negotiations that led to the first meeting of Japanese and North Korean leaders in 2002 were also kept secret from Washington. "Some steps will likely be taken to allow for the development of trust between Japan and North Korea, which hold mutual distrust toward each other," said a source knowledgeable about North Korean matters. (Suzuki Takuya and Makino Yoshihiro, "Red Cross Meeting between Japan, North Korea Could Set Stage for Government Talks," Asahi Shimbun, February 27, 2014)
North Korea released a 75-year-old Australian Christian missionary who was arrested last month for committing a “criminal act” by distributing religious material. KCNA reported the decision to release and deport evangelist John Short was made “in full consideration of his age” and because he had “deeply apologized for what he had done.” (Kyodo, “N. Korea Releases Australian Missionary Arrested Last Month,” March 3, 2014)

A frustrated Japanese academic and a former diplomat decided to distribute a book to politicians to bolster Japan’s security policy and end the nation’s sense of helplessness experienced in the 1990s. The two agreed in the summer of 2001 that something should be done to put Japan on a more equal footing with its superpower ally, the United States. When asked who should be the first person to receive the book about the right of collective self-defense, the former diplomat named a promising young politician only in his third term as a Lower House member. “Abe Shinzo, because he does not waver,” the former diplomat said. More than a decade later, Abe is forging ahead with his plans to change the interpretation of the pacifist Constitution to lift Japan’s self-imposed ban on exercising the right of collective self-defense. Using long-time supporters, he has stacked the deck in his favor and gained the backing of those worried about China’s maritime expansion and North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missile development programs. And now, with tensions high between Japan and China over sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, the proponents of changing the constitution are even citing the unreliability of Japan’s main ally.

A Foreign Ministry survey of U.S. public opinion released late last year showed 67 percent wanted the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty to be maintained, a drop of 22 percentage points from the previous year. Washington, however, has repeatedly assured Tokyo that it will come to its defense in the event of a conflict arising in the region. Under the current interpretation of the Constitution, Japan would only be able to exercise its right of individual self-defense for a military encounter on the Senkakus. It would be the United States that exercised the right of collective self-defense in coming to the rescue of the SDF members. However, the United States has increasingly scaled back its role as the world’s police officer following the heavy burden it bore in the fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. Doubts have risen among the U.S. public on whether U.S. troops should become involved in any military skirmish over the Senkakus. “The United States does not want to fight for such islets,” said a member of an advisory panel related to national security issues for the Abe administration. “Unless Japan shows that it is prepared to fight together with the United States when the time comes, the United States will say to Japan about defense of its outlying islands, ‘OK, sayonara.’” The logic is that Washington will only defend the Senkakus if Tokyo is willing to allow the SDF to fight in wars involving the United States. And the only way to do this is to allow for Japan’s exercise of the right of collective self-defense. However, opponents of the change say a reinterpretation would only further antagonize China and exacerbate mutual distrust between the countries. They say greater efforts should be made to prevent the need for using the right of individual self-defense, such as defending the islands if armed fishermen land on them. “Is allowing for the exercise of the right of collective self-defense really something that is of top priority for Japan?” a high-ranking Defense Ministry official asked. Changing the government interpretation would fundamentally alter Japan’s exclusively defensive
posture and open the door to allow SDF members to use armed force abroad. All administrations since the end of World War II have banned the use of force by SDF members. “Is Japan currently prepared to allow SDF members to be sacrificed for the sake of defending other nations?” a high-ranking GSDF officer asked. Abe, who was heavily influenced by his grandfather, Kishi Nobusuke, has long criticized the government interpretation concerning collective self-defense. “Individuals judged to be incompetent have the right to property, but they cannot exercise that right,” Abe has said. “The government interpretation is an extremely embarrassing one that effectively states that Japan is also judged to be incompetent.” When Kishi served as prime minister from 1957 to 1960, he worked to revise the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty because he considered it unequal. Before the revision, the treaty allowed the U.S. military to be called upon to quell domestic strife in Japan. Abe feels that Tokyo would become an even more equal partner to Washington if it could also exercise the right of collective self-defense and help protect the United States. He has not been alone in his work to change the government interpretation. Ishihara Nobuo, deputy chief Cabinet secretary during both the 1991 Persian Gulf war and the nuclear crisis involving North Korea in 1993-94, said the interpretation effectively handcuffed Japan. “There was very little we could do in the form of cooperation because of the barrier created by the interpretation by the Cabinet Legislation Bureau of Article 9 of the Constitution that such acts would constitute an exercise of the right of collective self-defense,” Ishihara said. Diplomats with bitter experiences dealing with the United States in the 1990s also wanted a change in the interpretation. In summer 2001, Okazaki Hisahiko, a former Japanese ambassador to Thailand, called Masamori Sase, a former professor at the Japan National Defense Academy. It was Sase’s book on the right of collective self-defense that Okazaki suggested they use to educate Japanese politicians, starting with the young Abe. Okazaki, Sase and other like-minded individuals saw their chance in 2006, when Abe became prime minister for the first time. Reiichi Miyazaki, who was director-general of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau at the time, came under fire for insisting that the government’s interpretation be maintained. “Do you realize how long we have had to put up with the wrong interpretation made by the bureau?” a high-ranking Foreign Ministry official close to Abe told Miyazaki. “We have finally reached this stage.” The bureau was considered an “evil empire” among those seeking to allow for the exercise of the right of collective self-defense. As prime minister, Abe frequently called Miyazaki to his office to discuss the issue. Miyazaki would invariably say there was no logic that would allow for changing the government interpretation. Although Abe said he understood Miyazaki’s words, it was apparent that he was not convinced. Abe later told his close associates, “I want to change the interpretation through my responses in the Diet.” However, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matoba Junzo put a stop to that move, saying Abe had to solidify his overall standing first. Matoba had heard rumors that Miyazaki would resign in protest if Abe went ahead to allow Japan to exercise the right. Matoba felt that such a development would be fatal to the Abe administration, which was already reeling from scandals and gaffes by his Cabinet ministers. Abe followed Matoba’s advice, but the prime minister also began preparations to form an advisory panel to look into the possibility of changing the government interpretation. Among the members Abe had in mind for that panel were Okazaki and Sase. That move also led to resistance. In April 2007, Abe called to his office Yanagisawa Kyoji, a former Defense Ministry official who was then assistant chief
Cabinet secretary. Abe wanted Yanagisawa to head the secretariat for the advisory panel. Abe proposed the panel study Japan’s need to exercise the right of collective self-defense for a number of specific examples that he provided, including how the SDF would respond if a U.S. naval ship came under attack. Yanagisawa told Abe such cases could be handled under Japan’s right of individual self-defense. Abe asked about the possibility of Japan intercepting ballistic missiles heading toward the United States. “With the current technology, it would be impossible to physically shoot down such a missile,” Yanagisawa told Abe. Having spent years working on defense policy, Yanagisawa explained why the right of collective self-defense did not have to be used. However, Abe told him: “I am thinking about a time in the future when it would be possible to intercept such missiles.” Even today, following advances in defense technology, Yanagisawa feels that the examples being used by Abe are unrealistic. “If any nation should fire missiles on the United States, it would face a devastating retaliation from the United States,” he said. “What nation would dare fire missiles?”

After the LDP suffered a major defeat in the 2007 Upper House election, Abe stepped down as prime minister before the advisory panel could reach any conclusion. But his determination to change the interpretation regarding collective self-defense did not subside. In June 2013 in the prime minister’s office, Abe told Okazaki he was planning to nominate Ichiro Komatsu as director-general of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau. A career Foreign Ministry official, Komatsu had come out in favor of changing the government interpretation of the Constitution. Nominating Komatsu would break a tradition extending more than half a century of appointing the director-general from among those who had worked in the Cabinet Legislation Bureau. Abe also appointed close associates as staff members to prepare the way for changing the interpretation. For example, after the National Security Council was established in December 2013, Abe appointed Yachi Shotaro as the first head of the newly established National Security Secretariat. Another career Foreign Ministry official, Yachi worked with Komatsu during Abe’s first stint as prime minister to provide advice on the specific examples of collective self-defense the advisory panel was to consider. Acting like he is making up for the six years between his terms as prime minister, Abe has accelerated the pace at which he is seeking to change the government interpretation, even suggesting at one point that he alone has the power to do so. A former Cabinet Legislation Bureau director-general, Akiyama Osamu, has criticized the prime minister’s moves. “If exercise of the right is allowed, it would set a precedent that would let those in power freely change interpretations of the Constitution,” Akiyama said. “The Constitution also contains such fundamental elements as respect for basic rights, freedom of expression and separation of state and religion. What is most worrisome is that administrations could move toward unilaterally changing the interpretation of such elements as well.” (Sonoda Koji and Kuramae Katsuhisa, “The Deep Roots of Abe’s Drive for Self-Defense,” Asahi Shimbun, March 3, 2014)

North Korea fired seven short-range projectiles from its east coast using a multiple rocket launcher, Seoul’s defense ministry said, the latest in a series of provocations by the communist country as the U.S. and South Korea entered the second week of joint military drills. The North fired off three short-range projectiles using a 240 mm multiple rocket launchers at around 6 a.m from Wonsan on its southeastern coast, the ministry said. They flew about 55 kilometers in the northeast direction. It launched four more
beginning at 4:17 p.m. using a longer-range rocket launcher from the same region, with the range of about 155 km, it said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Fires Seven Additional Sort-Range Projectiles,” March 4, 2014) North Korea tested a new multiple-rocket launcher with a range long enough to strike major American and South Korean military bases south of Seoul, South Korean military officials said. Four rockets were launched Tuesday afternoon from Wonsan, a coastal city east of the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, flying 96 miles to the northeast before crashing into the sea between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, a South Korean Defense Ministry spokesman said. The spokesman said his ministry had determined that the rockets were fired from a new multiple-rocket launcher that North Korea had been developing. Earlier today, North Korea tested an older multiple-rocket launcher, firing three rockets that flew 34 miles off its east coast, the spokesman said. “We believe this is an intentional provocation to raise tensions,” the South Korean ministry spokesman said. South Korea recently deployed Israeli-designed Spike missiles and their mobile launchers on its western border islands. The Spike missiles, with a range of 12 miles, target North Korean coastal guns and rocket batteries. But the range of North Korea’s new 300-millimeter multiple-rocket launcher means that the North can keep the launchers outside the range of the Spike missiles and still be able to hit Seoul, officials here said. (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Tests Launcher with Range beyond Seoul, South Says,” New York Times, March 5, 2014, p. A-10)

The Pentagon said North Korea has at least six Hwasong-13 road-mobile long-range missile launchers, as the U.S. updated the assessment of the secretive nation’s military power. It said the Hwasong-13 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) have a range of more than 3,400 miles, but its capability has yet to be tested. The Hwasong-13 has not been flight-tested and “their current reliability as weapon systems would be low,” the Pentagon said in its annual report, titled “Military and Security Developments involving the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea 2013.” In the previous version, the U.S. Department of Defense did not mention the Hwasong-13, but said the launchers of the Taepodong-2 long-range missiles have “not yet deployed.” In this year’s document, the department noted launches of the Taepodong-2 have been observed from both east and west coast launch facilities. The report also carried the U.S. military’s formal view on the recent purge and execution of Jang Song-thaek, who was once the No. 2 leader in the North. Jang’s death is unlikely to lead to major changes in defense policy or internal stability in the near term, the Pentagon said. “His absence will most likely be felt in the economy,” as Jang was in charge of several high-profile initiatives, particularly with China, to attract foreign currency and investment to the North, it added. (Lee Chi-dong, “Pentagon: N. Korea Has at Least 6 Road-Mobile ICBM Launchers,” Yonhap, March 6, 2014)

The United States is asking the U.N. Security Council to take action against North Korea for firing two rounds of ballistic missiles in the past week in “clear and calculated violations” of U.N. sanctions. A report by the United States to the council committee monitoring sanctions against North Korea, which was seen by the Associated Press today, asks its members and experts to examine the Scud missile launches and take “appropriate action” in response to the violations of multiple Security Council resolutions. Under U.N. sanctions dating back to 2006, North Korea is prohibited from
carrying out any launches that use ballistic missile technology. Subsequent U.N. resolutions require the North to abandon all ballistic missile programs. The report said that according to U.S. government information, North Korea launched two Scud short-range ballistic missiles from its southeastern coast on Feb. 27 and two more Scud missiles from the same coast on March 3. It said all four missiles flew in a northeasterly direction and landed in the sea. “Both the February 27 and March 3 launches clearly used ballistic missile technology and were therefore prohibited,” the report said. (Edith M. Lederer, “U.S. Wants U.N. to Act against N. Korea for Missile Tests,” Associated Press, March 6, 2014)

South Korea proposed holding Red Cross talks with North Korea next week to arrange regular reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War. Seoul offered the proposal through the inter-Korean liaison telephone channel in the border village at 11:15 a.m., according to sources. “The government plans to propose holding a working-level contact next Wednesday on the South Korean side of the truce village of Panmunjom,” unification ministry spokeswoman Park Soo-jin said earlier in a briefing. “(South Korea) expects North Korea’s speedy response to our proposal, given the pain and agony of the separated families.” The planned overture comes after South Korean President Park Geun-hye proposed Saturday that the Koreas hold family reunions on a regular basis, saying time is running out for the elderly waiting to see their long-lost relatives. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Offers Red Cross Talks to North,” March 5, 2014)

South Korea may be able to use the North Korean port city of Rason for logistical purposes as early as early next year, the unification ministry said. “The flow of goods through the Rason region may become possible around next spring if things go smoothly,” Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae said in a lecture to a group of former lawmakers. “In early February, South Korean companies paid an on-site visit to the Rason area and if this (cooperation project) goes smoothly, major progress would take place around September this year,” the minister said of Seoul’s push to join the Rajin-Khasan development project between Pyongyang and Moscow. The project is designed to develop Rajin, the northeastern North Korean port city now reintegrated into Rason, into a logistics center linked to Russia’s Trans-Siberian Railway. In a summit meeting last November, South Korean President Park Geun-hye signed an agreement with Russian President Vladimir Putin to help South Korean companies join the joint North Korea-Russia logistics project. In a follow-up step to the summit agreement, officials of three South Korean firms -- Korea Railroad Corp. (KORAIL), top steelmaker POSCO and No. 2 shipping company Hyundai Merchant Marine Co. -- visited the North Korean port city for a feasibility study. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Port of Rason to Be Open to S. Korea As Early As 2015: Minister,” March 5, 2014)

KPA Strategic Force spokesman’s statement “blasted the U.S. and its allies for misbehaving, steeped in enmity toward the DPRK, resorting to a malignant smear campaign from the moment when its rockets soared into the sky, and clarified the following principled stand of the force: Units of the Strategic Force of the Korean People’s Army successfully conducted rocket-launching drills from February 21 to March 4 according to the regular training plans of fire power units. The rockets made the safest flights without the slightest deviation northeastward from the launching
points and accurately struck the targets in the designated waters, demonstrating the highest-ever rate of hits. The drills were smoothly conducted with no slight impact not only on the regional peace and security but on international navigation order and ecological environment as they were based on a scientific calculation of the whole course of the rocket launching and the scrupulous advance security measures for flight orbit and targets in the designated waters, in particular. The U.S. and its followers should dare not make much fuss, terming the DPRK’s just rocket launching drills ‘provocation’ and ‘threats.’ As far as provocation is concerned, it is the brigandish Key Resolve and Foal Eagle joint military exercises kicked off by the U.S. against the DPRK and base remarks made by such guy as U.S. Secretary of State Kerry, who labeled the DPRK ‘closest closed country,’ ‘evil place’ and ‘country of evil.’ It is the brazen-faced judgment of American style to label the just self-defensive drills in one’s own land as “provocation” and it is the shameless standard of American style to describe its war exercises for aggression to serve a sinister purpose in the land of other country as ‘defensive’ and ‘annual.’ The U.S. and its followers should bear in mind that if their reckless provocation against the DPRK goes beyond tolerance limit, its defense rockets in the process of drills will lead to a retaliation of the most powerful attack rocket launching in a moment. The U.S. and its followers should no longer resort to such a foolish act as escalating tensions under the pretext of the DPRK’s rocket launching. Whenever an opportunity presented itself, the U.S. has deliberately screwed up and escalated the situation on the Korean peninsula under the groundless pretext. In recent years alone, the U.S. termed the DPRK’s satellite launch a missile launch and fabricated UN resolutions on ‘sanctions,’ bringing the situation to the brink of war. This time, too, it is seeking to opt for such reckless way as escalating tensions again, vociferating about ‘such sanctions as those against Iran and ‘more stringent blockade’ under the pretext of the DPRK’s rocket launching drills. It was prompted by the U.S. displeasure with recent signs of the north-south dialogue and the DPRK-Japan contact thanks to the DPRK’s positive steps. The U.S. should clearly realize that its acts of kicking off frantic war maneuvers for aggression and aggravating the situation under the pretext of the DPRK’s regular rocket launching drills can neither work nor can be overlooked. The U.S. and its followers should dare not let loose foolish sophism persistently taking issue with the DPRK over its nuclear issue with its rocket launching drills as a momentum. The U.S. is now spreading rumors that it ‘does not recognize not only the DPRK’s rocket launch but its access to nuclear weapons,’ ‘the south-north relations can be mended only when the north dismantles its nuclear weapons first’ and ‘the U.S.-north dialogue and the U.S.-north relations are possible only when the north moves first.’ This is rather an absurd jargon than ignorance. The nuclear force of the DPRK is by no means something to which it had access in the hope of ‘recognition’ by the U.S. and its followers. It is the self-defensive treasured sword to defend the whole Korean nation and preserve the regional peace and security from the U.S. increasing nuclear threats and blackmail. Nothing is more serious miscalculation than to assert that the DPRK’s nuclear deterrence exists if anyone recognizes it and disappears if anyone does not recognize it. The U.S. had better coolly judge the situation and drop the bad habit of deliberately taking issue with others.” (KCNA, “U.S. Ought to Drop Bad Habit of Deliberately Blaming Others: KPA Strategic Force Spokesman,” March 5, 2014)
OSD Annual Report: “Under Kim Jong Il, DPRK strategy focused on internal security; coercive diplomacy to compel acceptance of its diplomatic, economic, and security interests; development of strategic military capabilities to deter external attack; and challenging the ROK and the U.S.-ROK Alliance. We anticipate these strategic goals will be consistent under North Korea’s current leader, Kim Jong Un. …North Korea fields a large, forward-deployed military that retains the capability to inflict serious damage on the ROK, despite significant resource shortfalls and aging hardware. … At the beginning of his second year in power, Kim sought to use another coercive campaign to advance the longstanding goals of gaining international recognition and de facto acceptance as a nuclear state. …As of October, North Korea continued to repeat publicly that it was open to resuming dialogue with the United States and the region, but it was unlikely to make significant concessions on relinquishing its nuclear program. … Kim Jong Un’s decision in December 2013 to purge and execute his powerful uncle, Jang Song-taek, is unlikely to lead to major changes in defense policy or internal stability in the near-term. …His absence will most likely be felt in the economy, as Jang was in charge of several high-profile initiatives, particularly with China, to attract foreign currency and investment to North Korea. Jang was believed to be a relatively pragmatic advisor to Kim Jong Un, but his influence probably waned in 2013. …Jang’s execution is the most significant step to date in Kim’s establishment of his authority, eliminating arguably the most influential senior Party official remaining from his father’s era. The sudden and brutal purge sends a strong message to regime elites that the formation of factions or potential challenges to Kim Jong Un will not be tolerated. … North Korea uses limited provocations—even those that are kinetic and lethal in nature—such as military actions and small-scale attacks to gain psychological advantage in diplomacy and win limited political and economic concessions, all while likely believing it can control escalation. … Although North Korea is unlikely to attack on a scale it assesses would risk its survival by inviting overwhelming counterattacks by the ROK and the United States, North Korea’s calculus of the threshold for smaller, asymmetric attacks and provocations is unclear. North Korea’s special operations forces (SOF), artillery, and growing missile force provide significant capabilities for small-scale attacks that could rapidly spiral into a larger conflict. North Korea is making some efforts to upgrade its large arsenal of mostly outdated conventional weapons. It has reinforced long-range artillery forces near the DMZ and has a substantial number of mobile ballistic missiles that could strike a variety of targets in the ROK and Japan. However, the DPRK’s emphasis will likely be on defensive and asymmetric attack capabilities, and it will attempt to leverage the perception of a nuclear deterrent to counter technologically superior ROK and U.S. conventional forces. North Korea will seek to continue to develop and test-launch missiles, including the TD-2 ICBM/SLV. Missile tests and programs to improve denial and deception, electronic warfare, road-mobile ICBM development, and SOF, are driven by North Korea’s desire to enhance deterrence and defense, and to improve its ability to conduct limited attacks against the South. … As the NKAF’s aircraft continue to age, it increasingly relies on its ground-based air defenses and on hiding or hardening of assets to counter air attacks. During a 2010 military parade, North Korea displayed a new vertical launched mobile surface-to-air missile (SAM) launcher and accompanying radar. It bore external resemblance to the Russian S-300 and Chinese HQ-9. North Korea publicized a March 2013 military live-fire drill that for the first time featured an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) in flight.
The drone appeared to be a North Korean copy of a Raytheon MQM-107 Streaker target drone. ...North Korea displayed what it refers to as Hwasong-13 missiles, which appear to be intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), on six road-mobile transporter-erector-launchers (TELs) during military parades in 2012 and 2013. If successfully designed and developed, the Hwasong-13 likely would be capable of reaching much of the continental United States, assuming the missiles displayed are generally representative of missiles that will be fielded. However, ICBMs are extremely complex systems that require multiple flight tests to identify and correct design or manufacturing defects, and the Hwasong-13 has not been flight-tested. Without flight tests, its current reliability as a weapon system would be low. North Korea continues to develop the TD-2, which could reach the United States if configured as an ICBM. In April and December 2012, North Korea conducted launches of the TD-2 configured as a Space-Launched Vehicle (SLV). The April launch was a failure but the December launch was a success. ... North Korea has several hundred Toksa, SCUD SRBM and No Dong MRBM missiles available for use against targets on the Korean Peninsula and Japan. The developmental IRBM, though untested and unreliable as a weapon, could also be launched at targets in the region. North Korea leverages information collected by four intelligence organizations ... The Ministry of State Security (MSS) is North Korea’s primary counterintelligence service and is an autonomous agency of the North Korean government reporting directly to Kim Jong Un. The MSS is responsible for operating North Korean prison camps, investigating cases of domestic espionage, repatriating defectors, and conducting overseas counterespionage activities. The United Front Department (UFD) overtly attempts to establish pro-North Korean groups in South Korea such as the Korean Asia-Pacific Committee and the Ethnic Reconciliation Council. The UFD is also the primary department involved in managing inter-Korean dialogue and North Korea’s policy toward the South. North Korea’s Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB) is responsible for clandestine operations. The RGB includes six bureaus charged with operations, reconnaissance, technology and cyber, overseas intelligence, inter-Korean talks, and service support. The 225th Bureau is responsible for training agents, infiltrating South Korea, and establishing underground political parties focused on fomenting unrest and revolution. ... Cell phone subscription increased beyond 2 million with the growth of Koryolink, North Korea’s 3G cellular network. Mobile phone users consist primarily of high-ranking officials in Pyongyang and their families, though ownership is beginning to spread into smaller cities and towns. Most cell phones cannot access the Internet and can only make calls within North Korea.” (Office of the Secretary of Defense, Military and Security Developments Involving the DPRK, Annual Report to Congress, March 2014)

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North Korea rejected South Korea’s proposal to hold Red Cross talks to discuss regular reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War as Seoul’s point man on Pyongyang called for the sides to build mutual trust. The North’s Red Cross said in a message to its South Korean counterpart that an appropriate atmosphere has not been created for the proposed talks, according to the unification ministry. The North did not elaborate on what it meant by atmosphere, though it may have referred to its displeasure with the ongoing joint military drills between South Korea and the United States. Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae called for confidence between the two Koreas for possible exchange and cooperation projects. He also asked South Koreans to view
potential unification with North Korea from the broader perspective that it can bring benefits to Northeast Asia as well as the international community, not just the Koreas. In the latest sign of lingering tensions, however, the North's powerful National Defense Commission sent a message to South Korea's presidential office yesterday and took issue with the latest leaflets flown into the reclusive country criticizing its leader Kim Jong-un, the ministry said, without elaborating. The North's complaint came three weeks after South and North Korea agreed to halt slander against each other during their first high-level talks in seven years. But South Korea has said there are no legal grounds to prevent activists from floating the leaflets, citing freedom of expression.

(Yonhap, “N. Korea Snubs South’s Offer of Red Cross Talks,” March 6, 2014) North Korea apparently indicated willingness to engage in a higher-level dialogue in the future. "Given the current state of inter-Korean relations, such a critical humanitarian issue as regular family reunions is not a matter to be resolved through consultations between the two sides’ Red Crosses,” it said via a border telephone line. The South expressed regret, urging again for the North to reconsider. "As we have said repeatedly, the separated families issue is something that the two Koreas should resolve preferentially without linking it to any other issue, and will provide a major opportunity for developing inter-Korean relations,” the Unification Ministry said in a statement. (Shin Hyon-hee, “N.K. Passes up Seoul’s Offer of Talks on Family Reunions,” Korea Herald, March 6, 2014)

China expressed “concern” over North Korea’s firing of an artillery shell that happened minutes before a Chinese passenger jet passed through the trajectory of the shell. North Korea has fired short-range missiles for days into the East Sea and launched a volley of artillery shells into the sea two days ago, in an apparent show of force against ongoing joint military drills between South Korea and the U.S. Minutes after North Korea fired an artillery shell into the sea on Tuesday, a China Southern Airlines Co. airplane carrying 220 people, which was heading from Tokyo to the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang, passed through the airspace, according to South Korea’s defense ministry. Asked about the incident, China’s foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang told reporters during a regular press briefing that, “I want to stress that we attach great importance to the safety of national civil airlines.” Nations must take “necessary measures in accordance with international practices to ensure the safety of civilian aircraft and ships in relevant airspace and maritime space” when they conduct military drills, Qin said. “China will verify the relevant situation with the relevant party and express concern over that,” Qin said. Today’s comments by Qin were compared with a somewhat muted reaction yesterday when Qin replied, “We have noted the relevant report.” “China urges relevant parties to stay calm and exercise restraint, be discreet in words and deeds, avoid a repeat of the scenario where there is a progressive escalation of tensions and jointly maintain the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula,” Qin said. (Yonhap, “China Expresses ‘Concern’ over N. Korea Shell Fired Near Passenger Jet,” Korea Herald, March 6, 2014)

Experts’ Panel Report: “There have been no signs that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea intends to respond to the Security Council’s calls to abandon its nuclear, ballistic missile and other weapons of mass destruction programs. On the contrary, it is persisting with its arms trade and other prohibited activities in defiance of
Security Council resolutions, while activities related to its nuclear and ballistic missile programs continue. At the present time, the Panel does not see new measures as necessary in order to further slow the prohibited programs of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, to dissuade it from engaging in proliferation activities or to halt its trade in arms and related materiel. Rather, the Panel believes that Member States already have at their disposal adequate tools. … Other incidents show that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea remains dependent on foreign procurement for certain items, especially some that figure in nuclear and ballistic missile programs. In particular, it lacks sufficient domestic precision machine tool manufacturing capability and it purchases off-the-shelf items for its ballistic missile-related programs. The Panel also assesses that it will likely seek out foreign suppliers for components it will need to fabricate fuel rods for its reactors. … During the period under review, the Panel submitted nine incident reports to the Committee and has taken account of these incidents in the present report, as well as providing information regarding cases still being investigated. The Panel held consultations with 13 Member States, three United Nations bodies and other interested parties. Such consultations included seven visits to gather information about various incidents of non-compliance, including two for cargo inspection, seven to discuss the implementation of sanctions and 11 to attend conferences and seminars to raise awareness of the resolutions. … The extension of a building reportedly housing the uranium enrichment workshop, identified by IAEA as having started in March 2013, seemed to show progress throughout the year. This extension will almost double the size of the original building. Here also, additional construction or refurbishment work on nearby buildings and landscaping alteration of an adjacent area could be observed during the second half of 2013. Further activities were observed in the Yongbyon nuclear complex. In particular, old buildings north of the pilot fuel fabrication plant were converted into a new larger one and construction work continued in the area north of the reported uranium enrichment workshop. No major developments were observed at the exterior of the light water reactor since the IAEA report. The Agency stated that external work on the building appeared to have been completed in June 2013 and construction activities on and around the building included installation of a ventilation stack, construction of an electrical switchyard and excavation of trenches, apparently to accommodate water pipes for cooling the reactor. Using satellite imagery, the Panel also observed various activities at the Punggye-ri nuclear test site such as excavation, building demolition and renovation, and new construction. While the purpose of these activities cannot be determined through satellite imagery alone, some analysts suggested they could be related to the sealing of the tunnel used for the last nuclear test, the maintenance of other available tunnels and/or excavation of new tunnels. Operation of the light water reactor would need a large quantity of fuel rods that may require the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to expand its nuclear fuel fabrication capacities. Nuclear experts indicated to the Panel that they suspected it might not yet have the domestic capacity and might have to procure the necessary equipment and technology abroad. In general, such equipment would include pilger milling machines and their mandrels, dies and lubricants for zirconium alloy tubes production, as well as ultrasonic test equipment for inspection. The Panel recommends that Member States exercise due vigilance on export to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea of the above-mentioned items. … The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea conducted further tests of large liquid
rocket motors at the test stand of its West Coast facility. Commercial satellite imagery shows that several tests were conducted in the past year. As with previous tests, these could be of either the first stage of the Unha-3 rocket, or of the KN-08 road mobile missiles (which remain non-flight tested), or related to the development of new and more powerful rockets. …The Panel also investigated the foreign-sourced items found in the Unha-3 debris, which revealed the use of off-the-shelf items or items just below prohibited parameters, which are then assembled or integrated into systems or subsystems. Information about the new acquisition of computer numerically controlled machine tools and their components also indicates that the precision manufacturing capability of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea remains dependent on foreign procurement. …In March 2013, Japan reported to the Committee that it had seized five aluminum alloy rods found onboard the container ship Wan Hai 313 (IMO number 9248708) in August 2012. Japanese authorities determined that the rods originated from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and met the criteria of IAEA document INFCIRC/254/Rev.7/Part 2. According to information published by Japan, they were shipped via Dalian, China, and were bound for a third country. …In January 2014, in response to the Panel’s inquiry, Chinese authorities confirmed that the shipment had originated from the port of Nampo and said that the declared destination port was in Myanmar. They also reported that the declared consignor was an entity named Korea Kumpyo Trading. The Panel continues its inquiries and has requested further information from Myanmar. …Financial measures in the resolutions, along with the strengthening of standards governing international finance, have combined to change fundamentally the financial environment in which the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea operates. In particular, it has become much more difficult to make direct use of its banks to remit earnings and make payments for transactions in prohibited goods, training and technology. The long-term trajectory of changes to improve standards promoted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) promises it will face even more difficulty in future. The technical efforts of FATF, especially recent steps taken to help counter the financing of proliferation, complement Security Council actions. Consequently, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has had to adapt, explore and perfect ways to evade detection and circumvent constraints on the financing of prohibited programs and activities. All evasion techniques involve higher risk, extra cost and loss of timeliness. The Panel has begun to examine more deeply the institutional frameworks and operational techniques it employs. It is experienced in using foreign-based individuals, front companies and shell companies and joint ventures engaged in legitimate business to mask illicit activities associated with sourcing nuclear, ballistic missile and other weapons of mass destruction programs. Ownership structures often are complex and opaque and take advantage of lax rules in some Member States regarding the identification of beneficial owners. …In the light of paragraphs 11 to 13 of Security Council resolution 2094 (2013), the Panel has begun to examine how funds may be stashed abroad or remitted in ways that obscure ownership of the accounts or transactions associated with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. It has identified some commercial operations and banking practices that offer such opportunities. …An example of a transaction being financed in an unusually complex manner was an Air Koryo contract in 2012 to purchase new aircraft. Payments were structured through eight Hong Kong, China-registered companies, which asserted that they were trading partners of Air Koryo and were wiring funds they
owed it. The resolutions do not prohibit the purchase of civilian passenger and cargo aircraft. The Panel, however, was dubious of the explanation that debts were the source of the funds; some companies appear to be recently formed shell companies. It also finds remarkable the coincidence of all eight firms owing significant amounts to Air Koryo at the time funds were contractually due to be paid to the seller of the aircraft. The names of shells and activities of others appear to share a connection with gold trading. The Panel is suspicious that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea may be using or considering the use of precious metal sales on credit terms to create “accounts payable”. Such sources for funds would not necessarily show as being under its control and even could be swapped with other firms to further distance its connection and thereby better evade sanctions and enhanced due diligence by banks.” (U.N. Security Council, Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Resolution 1874, March 6, 2014)

3/7/14 China said that it has conveyed its “concerns” to North Korea over reports that Pyongyang had fired a volley of long-range artillery shells into waters off its east coast without advance warning, threatening the safety of a Chinese passenger jet that happened to be passing through the affected airspace. “We have already contacted the DPRK side to express our concerns,” China’s foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang told reporters during a regular press briefing. (Yonhap, “China Conveys Concerns to N. Korea over Shells Fired near Airplane,” March 7, 2014)

3/9/14 North Korea held its first parliamentary elections under the leadership of Kim Jong-un, who was expected to use the polls and a newly elected legislature to elevate officials loyal to him and further consolidate his power. North Korea’s Supreme People’s Assembly has served as a rubber-stamp Parliament, endorsing whatever decisions were made by the top leader and his inner circles. In the last parliamentary election, held five years ago when Mr. Kim’s father, Kim Jong-il, was still alive, a single candidate ran unopposed in each of the 687 districts, and all the deputies were elected with 100 percent support. The government reported voter turnout of 99.98 percent. The North Korean authorities run parliamentary elections as an effective political census, a chance to check up on the whereabouts and the political allegiance of citizens, as well as the ability of local Workers’ Party officials to mobilize residents. People pile into voting booths casting unmarked ballots in rapid succession. Those who oppose the state-selected candidate are supposedly allowed to pause to cross out the candidate’s name, effectively making the process a monitored event, according to defectors from the North. (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Uses Election to Reshape Parliament,” New York Times, March 10, 2014, p. A-6) The results of the election released by KCNA showed that most officials believed to be close to Jang, including Kim Yang-gon, Pyongyang’s point man on inter-Korean relations, were elected to the legislature. North Korea’s ambassador to China, Ji Jae-ryong, was also elected as a new deputy to the legislature. Ji’s political fate had been the focus of intense media attention because he was considered one of the closest aides to Jang. However, two other officials close to Jang -- Mun Kyong-duk, a senior Workers’ Party official in Pyongyang, and Ro Song-sil, former chairwoman of the Central Committee of the Democratic Women’s Union of North Korea -- were removed from the rubber-stamp legislature. Mun, who was last seen in public in a massive rally on Jan. 6, appears to have been dismissed from his
post or purged, said Cheong Seong-chang, a senior research fellow at the Sejong Institute, a private security think tank near Seoul. Cheong said the election results "indirectly confirmed that there aren’t as many of Jang’s proteges in the North’s leadership as believed by the outside world." Other high-profile officials who were elected to the rubber-stamp parliament include Choe Ryong-hae, the director of the General Political Bureau of the Korean People’s Army, and Won Dong-yon, the deputy head of the United Front Department, who represented North Korea during last month’s high-level talks with South Korea. Those elected may also possibly include Kim Kyong-hui, a senior party secretary and Jang’s wife. The unification ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, said it remains unclear whether the Kim Kyong-hui who was elected is the leader Kim’s aunt or a different person with the same name. Choe, meanwhile, had disappeared from state media reports for more than two weeks, touching off rampant speculation that the North Korean military’s top political officer might have been taken into custody. Last Friday, the North’s state media reported that Choe had accompanied Kim in an inspection trip to an air force unit, quelling speculation of any change in Choe’s political fate. Kim’s inspection trips, which are accompanied by top officials, offer rare glimpses into the rise and fall of his aides. In 2012, Jang accompanied the leader on 106 occasions, followed in a distant second by Choe with 85. A year later, Jang accompanied Kim on 52 occasions while Choe accompanied the leader on 153 occasions, according to the unification ministry. Some old military officials, including Hyon Chol-hae, a former first deputy director of the People’s Armed Forces, were removed from the legislature in the latest sign of a power shift in the North. Kim Yo-jong, who received the media spotlight for accompanying her elder brother Kim Jong-un on Sunday when he cast his ballot in Pyongyang, was not elected to the parliament. The younger Kim, 27, was listed among senior officials of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers’ Party who accompanied Kim Jong-un on Sunday, according to the KCNA. (Yonhap, “Most Officials Close to Jang Elected to N. Korea’s Parliament,” March 11, 2014) North Korea’s state-run media on Tuesday revealed the names of the 687 members of the country’s rubber-stamp parliament who were elected unanimously amid a 99.97 percent voter turnout. The election saw 55 percent of the Supreme People’s Assembly members replaced, suggesting that new officials were elected to support North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The previous elections five years ago replaced 45 percent of members. (Chosun Ilbo, “New Faces Make up Halp of N. Korea’s New Parliament,” March 12, 2014)

Japan will not revise a landmark apology to women forced to work in military brothels during World War II even as it moves ahead with a review of the testimony used to create that apology, Suga Yoshihide, the chief cabinet secretary, told reporters. “We have no intention to rethink the Kono Statement,” he said. The apology admitted for the first time that the Imperial military played at least an indirect role in forcing the women, known euphemistically as “comfort women,” to provide sex to Japanese soldiers. Suga was responding to rising criticism from South Korea of an announcement made two weeks ago by Suga that the government would form a panel of experts to review the evidence used to back up the statement, mostly testimony made two decades ago by 16 aging former sex slaves. (Martin Fackler, “Japan Won’t Alter Apology to World War II Sex Slaves,” New York Times, March 11, 2014, p. A-9)
Japan insists it will uphold the 1993 statement of apology to wartime "comfort women," but the Abe administration still plans to investigate doubts raised on its veracity. The review is intended to determine if South Korea played a role in producing the Kono statement and to check the accuracy of testimonies provided by former Korean comfort women. The investigation can also be seen as a counterstrike against Seoul’s demands for official redress and a gesture to appease conservatives in Japan who slam the statement for its conciliatory tone. Prime Minister Abe has long called for a review of the statement, but he knows that any revisions will hurt Japan’s relations with the United States and further strain ties with South Korea. (Asahi Shimbun, “Japan Vows to Uphold Kono Statement But Pledge to Review It Anyway,” March 12, 2014)

North Korea has continued to export weapons and other prohibited items despite the international community's tough sanctions, according to an annual report written by a UN Security Council Panel of Experts established under Resolution 1874, North Korea has persisted with arms trades with countries in the Middle East or Africa in “perfect ways to evade detection.” “The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea exports weapons and ammunition, but it also exports services or assistance related to the manufacture and maintenance of arms and related materiel,” said the report, which was dated on March 6 but released today. “Since 2009, the Panel has gathered evidence showing that it is active in the refurbishment of arms produced in the former Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s, such as jet fighters, surface-to-air missile systems or anti-aircraft cannons, submarines, main battle tanks, armored personnel carriers, howitzers, multiple-rocket launchers and mortars.” The suspected trading partners of North Korea include Myanmar, Syria and also some African countries, the report said. “The Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group recently obtained and published new evidence that a shipment of machine tools in May 2011 may have been part of ongoing arms-related cooperation between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Eritrea,” the report said. “In July and December 2013, the United States designated two individuals and three entities … involved in arms trading between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Myanmar.” In July 2013, a North Korea cargo vessel named Chong Chon Gang was caught by Panamanian authorities, concealing arms beneath more than 200,000 bags of sugar, the report mentioned. “Although the precise income it earned from this trade is subject to debate, there is no question that it is one of the country’s most profitable revenue sources,” it said. (Kim Hee-jin, “Pyongyang Keeps Exporting Arms, Says U.N. Panel,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 12, 2014) Recent inspections and seizures of banned cargo have shown that North Korea is using increasingly deceptive techniques to circumvent international sanctions, a panel of experts said in a report to the United Nations Security Council. In its latest annual report, posted today on the United Nations website, the panel of eight experts said that North Korea has persisted in defying those resolutions not only by continuing its nuclear and ballistic missile programs but also by engaging in illegal arms trade. “It is experienced in actions it takes to evade sanctions,” the panel said. “It makes increasing use of multiple and tiered circumvention techniques.” The panel said the case of the North Korean cargo ship Chong Chon Gang had provided unrivaled insight into some of those techniques. The vessel was stopped by the Panamanian authorities in July 2013 while carrying undeclared weapons that had been hidden under 10,000 tons of sugar from Cuba. An investigation showed that the North Korean crew had used secret
codes in communications, falsified the ship’s logs and switched off an electronic system that would otherwise have provided real-time information on the ship’s location to the international maritime authorities, the panel said. It added that it suspected the North Korean embassies in Cuba and Singapore of helping to arrange the arms shipment. The hidden cargo amounted to six trailers associated with surface-to-air missile systems and 25 shipping containers loaded with two disassembled MIG-21 jet fighters, 15 MIG-21 engines, and missile and other arms components, the panel said. Cuba has acknowledged that it was sending Soviet-era weapons to be repaired in North Korea. The Chong Chon Gang case helped confirm that one of North Korea’s most profitable sources of revenue remains weapons exports, as well as technical support to manufacture and refurbish arms produced in the former Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s, the panel said. (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Ably Evades Its Sanctions, Panel Says,” New York Times, March 12, 2014, p. A-6)

South Korea and Japan held vice ministerial level talks to discuss their strained relations, raising hopes for a diplomatic thaw. The meeting of South Korea’s newly named Vice FM Cho Tae-yong with his Japanese counterpart Saiki Akitaka is the first high-level talks between the neighbors following Japanese Prime Minister Abe’s much-denounced visit to the controversial Yasukuni war shrine last December. “It is an occasion to test whether South Korea-Japan relations would work out in the future,” Cho told reports before the talks held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ headquarters in central Seoul. (Yonhap, “Seoul, Tokyo Vice Ministers Discuss Mending Ties,” March 12, 2014) The government is trying to arrange a trilateral summit with South Korea and the United States for this month in a bid to thaw Tokyo’s frozen relations with Seoul, an official said. But Seoul appears cool to the idea of a meeting between Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, President Park Geun-hye and President Barack Obama on the sidelines of a global nuclear security summit in The Hague, Netherlands, on March 24 and 25. (Reuters, “Abe Pitches Trilateral Meet to Kick-Start Chilly Ties with Seoul,” Japan Times, March 12, 2014)

North Korea has joined hands with a Hong Kong-based company to develop the country’s northwestern border city of Sinuiju into a special economic zone, a North Korean official said. Sinuiju, which borders China’s Dandong city, has drawn much attention from foreign investors for its geographical advantage as North Korea’s western gateway to China, Ri Chol-sok, vice chairman of North Korea’s economic development committee, said in an interview in the March issue of Kumsugangsan magazine, a North Korean government mouthpiece. “Now a joint development company has been established for the development of (Sinuiju) and is striving to win back lost opportunities,” said the North Korean official. Hong Kong-based conglomerate Great China International Investment Groups Ltd. reportedly signed the deal with North Korea. (Yonhap, “N. Korea, Hong Kong Firms to Develop Border City of Sinuiju,” Korea Herald, March 12, 2014)

North side delegation spokesman for the for north-south high-level contact made public a statement “clarifying the DPRK’s principled stand concerning the grave hurdle lying in the way of implementing the hard-won agreement made at the north-south high-level contact. It said: The south Korean authorities have talked a lot about
improving the north-south relations and laying a foundation for national reunification through ‘confidence-building’ whenever an opportunity presented itself. However, they have gone the lengths of daring slander even the election of deputies to the Supreme People’s Assembly of the DPRK. 1. The south Korean authorities should not deliberately wag their tongues. It is none other than the south Korean authorities that take the lead in mud-slinging at the DPRK in gross violation of the agreement made at the north-south high-level contact. The minister of Foreign Affairs is persistently letting loose such very provocative and reckless remarks as the north is conducting a dialogue offensive ‘but, in actuality, it is busy with such provocations’ as demanding a halt to the joint military exercises ‘while showing no sign of change.’ The minister of Unification is obsessed with such accusations against compatriots that he is letting loose base and disgusting outbursts that ‘even soup would not be offered’ to the north in case it fails to keep a promise. What he uttered is lashing the service personnel and people in the north into fury. It is no exaggeration to say that it is none other than the bosses of ministries and agencies in charge of the north affairs of south Korea who recklessly wag their tongues to turn its whole into a theatre of anti-DPRK smear campaign. If they are truly concerned for the improved north-south relations, the authorities should stop their reckless mud-slinging, though belatedly, as it is the root cause of all disasters. 2. The south Korean conservative media had better behave themselves. When Choson Ilbo, JoongAng Ilbo, Dong-A Ilbo and other conservative newspapers release misinformation on the basis of sheer lies, KBS, MBC, SBS and other broadcasting services kick up a smear campaign by adding silly stories to it. Mass media in south Korea should not act as organizations of hack writers inciting distrust and enmity and fostering division after being reduced to waiting maids serving the wrong regime but act as a patriotic guide contributing to national reconciliation and peaceful reunification. 3. The south Korean authorities should stop resorting to such foolish acts as protecting despicable human scum by force of arms and hurling them into scattering anti-DPRK leaflets. As far as human scum called ‘defectors form the north’ are concerned, they are good-for-nothings worse than dogs as they took to flight, forsaken even by their kith and kin for perpetrating all kinds of evils such as murder, robbery, a dissipated and corrupt life and scandals. How poor and mean the south Korean authorities’ attitude is as they use such disgusting dregs of the times for their smear campaign and confrontation with the north. The DPRK sent meaningful warning notices to Chongwadae twice that south Korea would get nothing in future if it doesn’t stop such mud-slinging as scattering leaflets against the DPRK. The south Korean authorities should bear deep in mind that the more persistently they insist that ‘they cannot restrict the mud-slinging at the north as long as there is no clear reason,’ making absurd excuses such as ‘freedom of expression, rally and association,’ the more clearly they will reveal their incompetence, much less shirking their responsibility for bedeviling the north-south relations. Although the north-south high-level contact was held and a precious national agreement was reached amid the great expectation and concern of all Koreans, the situation prevailing at present less than a month since then is so beyond imagination. The south Korean authorities should bear deep in mind that there can be confidence-building touted by them and a bright prospect for improving the inter-Korean relations when they respect the other party and honestly implement the agreement. The present time does not allow fooling the nation with an
empty talk. The DPRK will closely watch the attitude and moves of the south Korean authorities.” (KCNA, “DPRK Clarifies Principled Stand,” March 12, 2014)

3/13/14

An inter-Korean panel on the arbitration of legal disputes discussed details of arbitration procedures and rules at its meeting today, the unification ministry said. The meeting at the jointly run factory park in the North’s western border city of Kaesong is the first of its kind since 2000 when the rival Koreas adopted a deal on solving legal disputes through arbitration. “The two sides shared the view that the arbitration system has an important meaning as one of the ways of solving disputes in the Kaesong industrial complex and exchanged opinions focusing on the details of arbitration procedures and the delivery of the list of arbitrators from North Korea," it said. (Yonhap, “Koreas Discuss Arbitration Procedures for Kaesong,” Korea Herald, March 13, 2014)

The Korean Council for Reconciliation and Cooperation, an association of civic groups working for unification, abruptly canceled an ambitious plan to send fertilizer to North Korea, raising suspicions of pressure from the government amid strained inter-Korean relations. The council was supposed to hold a special event in central Seoul yesterday to promote its campaign to send 1 million bags of fertilizer, totaling 20,000 metric tons (22,046 short tons), to North Korea to help its farmers and boost its food supply. But at 8:22 a.m., Hong Sa-duk, chairman of the council, sent text messages to reporters saying the ceremony has been postponed due to lack of preparation. “With my apology, I inform you that we postponed the event scheduled to be held at Dangun Shrine, Seoul, this afternoon,” Hong said in the text. “The biggest problem was that I pushed forward with the event despite concerns raised at yesterday’s board meeting. Due to the delayed updating of our home page, we could not properly arrange the tools for promotion,” he said. “We sent invitations to the event to more than 1,000 guests and heads of 187 organizations by email or texts in the early morning on the day of the occasion. There was too much trouble for us.” An official of the council said: “There was no pressure from outside or communication with the government over the cancelation. There was no change in our principle to move forward with the plan to send the fertilizer.” According to the council’s website, the group intended to raise up to 12 billion won ($11 million) for the fertilizer campaign. But concerns were growing in the government about the campaign as fertilizer is a banned item under the so-called May 24 sanctions imposed by the Lee Myung-bak administration in 2010. The sanctions only approve the sending of humanitarian aid to North Korea, such as medicine or milk powder for underprivileged people. It bans the sending of rice, corn or fertilizer, which could go to the regime’s military. The campaign was also ill-timed because the fourth anniversary of the sinking of the South Korean Navy ship Cheonan falls on March 26. The sinking provoked the May 24 sanctions. On March 7, Unification Ministry spokesman, Kim Eui-do said at a briefing, “We see the council’s plan [for the fertilizer aid] is far from a purely humanitarian assistance,” implying the aid would not be approved. (Lee Young-jong and Kim Hee-jin, “Aid for North Is Abruptly Called off,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 13, 2014) At her New Year’s address, President Park Geun-hye pledged to “expand private humanitarian aid to North Korea.” But now a tug-of-war is under way between private groups who want to donate fertilizer to the North and a government that is insisting on slowing things down. “This is not to time to send
fertilizer to North Korea,” Minister of Unification Ryoo Kihl-jae said March 19, after a lecture at a forum organized by the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses. The Korean Council for Reconciliation and Cooperation (KCRC), an umbrella organization including 187 progressive and conservative civic groups, said on March 18 that it is continuing on with its campaign to send one million bags of fertilizer to North Korea, even after it canceled an announcement event after government calls to “slow down.” The million bags would amount to a sizable 20,000 tons, worth the equivalent of US$12 million. By the afternoon of Mar. 18, five days after launching its fundraising campaign, the KCRC said it had already gotten 77,040 bags. “We’re planning to make our first shipping request to the government once we reach 100,000 bags,” explained Lee Woon-sik, secretary-general of KCRC, adding that this would “probably be this weekend or early next week.” (Choi Hyun-june, “Tug-of-War Underway over Fertilizer Aid to the North,” Hankyore, March 19, 2014)

The Red Cross societies of Japan and North Korea will hold a two-day meeting from March 19 in Shenyang, northeastern China, with the participation of government officials from the two countries, the Foreign Ministry said. Along with Foreign Ministry officials, Japan plans to send Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare officials to the meeting, which will be a follow-up of the previous session March 3 in Shenyang, according to the ministry. Foreign Ministry officials from the two countries are expected to hold a meeting on the sidelines of the upcoming session. Japan and North Korea have no diplomatic ties. (Kyodo, “Japan, N. Korea to Hold Red Cross Talks March 19-20 in China,” March 13, 2014)

Toloraya: “The reunification of Crimea with Russia might have unexpectedly turned a page in modern history, ushering the world into a new era of geopolitical competition. There is little doubt that the West is seeking to contain Russia as a re-emerging global player, using this controversial action as a de facto casus belli (hopefully, just a cold variety of it). This shift in the geopolitical paradigm will surely affect almost all the problem zones in the world, including the Korean peninsula. After all, the Cold War never ended there and the possible reemergence of it would only bring global realities closer to those of the peninsula. The most immediate loss is probably the drying-up (at least temporarily) of Russian-American cooperation on the North Korean issue. The first sign was the cancellation in early March by the US side of the April Vladivostok meeting of the North-East Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD)—the unique Track 1.5 format uniting scholars and officials including diplomats and defense officials in a private capacity from the Six Party process countries (US, China, Russia, Japan and the two Koreas) sponsored by the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). This forum, in which North Koreans participate regularly (they agreed to come to Vladivostok), has served as a back-channel venue for high-level US-DPRK dialogue in the past. It also has been a de facto substitute for the defunct Six Party Talks, permitting the sides to exchange views and probe the intentions of each other. …Hopefully the pause in exchanges, such as the cancellation of the April NEACD meeting, will not last since it is the duty of academics to play a proactive role in helping advance understanding and possible solutions that governments might use. However, it can be predicted that Russians will now be less receptive to US arguments that North Korea should be pressured and isolated as well as denied access to global trade and
financial systems because of its nuclear and missile programs. The Ukrainian experience of the US going to extremes to oppose what most Russians see as a just cause will weigh heavily on any sincere exchange of views. Furthermore, North Korea’s “nuclear deterrent” theory might seem more justified for Russians now than ever before. In short, Russia, as a member of the Six Party Talks (although the prospects for their renewal are dimmer than ever), the UN Security Council and other international bodies dealing with the North Korea problem, will likely be less inclined to support measures of pressure or sanctions against DPRK. I doubt, for example, that the next North Korean rocket launch will cause as much indignation in the Kremlin as the last one did in December 2012. After all, many Russian experts even then argued that the ban on all ballistic missile launches, denying the country the possibility of developing its space programs, was rather artificially tied to the sanctions for the nuclear test in UN Security Council Resolution 1718 of October 2006. They argued that this ban was only introduced because of the possible danger of the DPRK ballistic missile program to the US and Japan, while there was no threat to Russia. The next time the controversy over North Korea’s missile program arises, such logic may well play into Pyongyang’s hands.

Of course, further development of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program is unacceptable to Russia. But given current developments in Ukraine, Moscow will press harder than ever for a more measured response, targeting only dangerous DPRK activities, not sanctioning the entire country and its population. I personally doubt the ban on “luxury goods” exports, designed to cause dissatisfaction among North Korea’s elite, was consistent with Russia’s aims at developing dialogue with this same constituency. Moreover, it sometimes resulted in ridiculous episodes like banning pianos or the delivery of embassy cars. Also, Russia is concerned with what North Koreans are doing at their ‘peaceful’ nuclear facilities, as the safety of the indigenous experimental light water reactor being built now raises many questions. This is a direct environmental challenge to Russia’s Far East and the need for control is obvious. Therefore, Russians feel the need for measured cooperation with North Korea in the nuclear field (of course, in accordance with IAEA standards), especially as it has ample experience in peaceful nuclear energy program development in the DPRK and a ready market. Therefore, a political decision to increase economic cooperation with the DPRK on more lenient terms may follow. Several high-level economic exchanges with the DPRK are planned for the coming months, starting with the meeting of chairmen of an intergovernmental commission in Pyongyang later this month. The issue is financing since the government has not encouraged investing in North Korea. Given what may be decreased possibilities for Russian businessmen to invest in the West due to differences over Ukraine, they might explore even such exotic markets as North Korea since concerns about possible “punishment” from the US will also decrease. In the past, for example, almost all Russian banks refused to deal with the DPRK—even for humanitarian projects—for fear of being blacklisted by US banks through which the transfers would transit. That may change if the Russian Rouble would be used for bilateral settlements. For example, a Russian company “Mostovik” is planning to invest in North Korean coal deposits and modernize the railroad along the North’s western coast for exporting the coal abroad. The Russian Railways (“RAO ZHD”) state company will also continue its Hasan-Rajin transit cargo project and may expand it. The possibility of modernizing the obsolete North Korean industrial infrastructure, based on Soviet technology, using money from the debt compensation investment fund
placed in the North Korean Foreign Trade Bank (about US$ 1.1 billion) is also possible. I do not even rule out the possibility of resuming limited military cooperation between the two countries—even an ally like North Korea is better than none. A more general consequence with regard to North Korea is the change of perception of US intentions in Russian public opinion and political circles. When General Martin Dempsey, the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that he does not exclude the possibility of US military intervention in Ukraine, this suddenly resonated with US threats to North Korea. This type of rhetoric may induce a more sympathetic attitude toward the DPRK among a broader Russian audience. My old warning of the possibility of returning to a confrontation of “continental” and “ocean” powers on the Korean peninsula (a China-Russia-DPRK triangle against a US-Japan-ROK one) may, unfortunately, become more realistic. North Koreans will surely use the opportunity to emphasize their view of the US as “aggressors” to Russian counterparts who would have less reason to oppose such a view. The game on the Korean peninsula might once again become a multilateral “zero-sum” one. Another consequence is that Russia’s position will probably shift closer to China’s views in the Six Party Talks, losing its sought-after status of an ‘honest broker.’ Regrettably, that will limit Russia’s foreign policy maneuverability in Asia. As the Korean issue is much more important to China than to Russia, I would not be surprised if Moscow would just trade off its unequivocal support for Beijing on Korean matters in return for Chinese support on more vital issues. These developments will make North Korea even less inclined to make diplomatic concessions. Any chance of denuclearizing the Korean peninsula will move over the horizon as US policy faces new challenges in Northeast Asia. At the same time, the “strategic partnership” between Russia and South Korea may, for the time being, remain just wishful thinking. Of course, Seoul has disapproved of, although cautiously, Russia’s actions in Crimea. But even before that Russia was offended by the refusal (some people suspect prompted by the US) of President Park to come to the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Sochi. That looked strange not only because South Korea is hosting the next Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang in 2018, but also because the Chinese and Japanese leaders were in attendance. The North’s nominal head of state, Kim Yong Nam, also attended and met with President Putin, even though DPRK athletes had not passed the qualifications and were absent. The hastily arranged ROK Prime Minister’s visit to the closing ceremony helped just marginally. The controversy with Korean figure skater Yuna Kim winning the silver medal instead of the gold also created a negative attitude in Korea, tarnishing Russia’s image. Given the ROK’s strong alliance commitment to the US, I doubt South Korea will share Russian views on vital international issues. It is unlikely that we will see an upsurge of bilateral political relations or greater understanding by Russia of South Korean priorities with regard to inter-Korean relations in near future. However, the sheer scope of economic relations between the two countries would preclude any real controversy. Also, skillful diplomacy and more exchanges between Russia and South Korea should be initiated to compensate for any negative fallout. As Russia’s ties with the West will probably suffer as a result of the current political situation, Moscow will have even more reason to “turn to the East” and more actively pursue its policy interests in Asia. It should be noted that Russian experts argue that Northeast Asia is the gateway for Russia into Asia and the Pacific. They see the Korean peninsula as is the key to this region, so its
importance to Russia may grow.” (Georgi Toloraya, “A Tale of Two Peninsulas: How Will the Crimean Crisis Affect Korea?” 38North, March 13, 2104)

3/14/14 National Defense Commission statement “in connection with the fact that the U.S. hostile policy towards it and its recent moves pursuant to the policy have gone to such a grave pass that they cannot be overlooked any longer: It is none other than the U.S. which has deliberately infringed upon the sovereignty of the DPRK, the life and soul of its people, century after century. It is again the U.S., the sworn enemy, which has resorted to crafty and foolish moves to undermine the ideology of the DPRK and bring down its social system. The National Defense Commission of the DPRK clarifies the following principled stand on the U.S. hostile policy towards it, representing the unanimous will of the Workers’ Party of Korea, state, army and people: 1. The U.S. should make a policy decision to roll back its hostile policy towards the DPRK and lift all the measures pursuant to the policy, though belatedly. The above-said policy is the harshest one aimed at undermining the ideology of the DPRK and bringing down its social system by dint of U.S.-style democracy and market economy, and swallowing up all Koreans and the whole of Korea by force of arms for aggression. The U.S. would be well advised to lift by itself all unjust measures in all fields before facing the disastrous consequences to be entailed by its anachronistic hostile policy towards the DPRK. 2. The U.S. should have a proper viewpoint and stand on the DPRK’s nuclear deterrence and stop behaving foolishly, letting loose a string of reckless remarks that the ‘DPRK’s dismantlement of its nukes first’ is the ‘keynote’ of the hostile policy towards it. The U.S. should properly understand that Pyongyang’s nuclear deterrence is neither a means for bargaining nor a plaything to be used by it keen on dialogue and blinded by the improvement of relations. Moreover, the DPRK’s nuclear deterrence is by no means a ghost-like means which does not exist when it is not recognized by the U.S. or remains when it is ‘recognized’ by it. The U.S. is resorting to what it calls ‘patience strategy,’ hoping the DPRK to move and make changes first, but such things desired by Washington will never happen. It is the stand of the DPRK to wait with a high degree of patience for the time when the White House is bossed by a person with normal insight and way of thinking. The U.S. should bear in mind that the efforts of the army and people of the DPRK to bolster up its nuclear deterrence for self-defense will go on and additional measures will be taken to demonstrate its might one after another as long as the U.S. nuclear threat and blackmail persist as now. 3. The U.S. should stop at once its groundless ‘human rights’ racket against the DPRK which began as part of its new hostile policy towards the latter. National sovereignty is more important than human rights. Probably this is the reason why the U.S. has kept more prisoners than any other countries in the world, mercilessly brandishing sharp swords against any forces opposed to the state and endangering its existence. The DPRK also does not show any mercy and leniency towards a tiny handful of hostile elements doing harm to the ideology and social system chosen by all its people who are the masters of the sovereignty. The U.S. would be well advised to mind its own business, being aware of where it stands, before talking nonsense about others’ affairs. The U.S. had better roll back its worn-out hostile policy towards the DPRK as soon as possible and shape a new realistic policy before it is too late. This would be beneficial not only to meeting the U.S. interests but also to ensuring the security of its mainland. The
North Korea fired 25 short-range missiles toward the East Sea late today, according to the Ministry of National Defense. According to the defense ministry, the first salvo of 10 missiles was launched around 6:20 p.m., followed by an additional eight at 8:03 p.m. and seven more at 9:28 p.m. The launches from the eastern coastal city of Wonsan lasted 10 minutes each and the missiles flew about 70 kilometers before landing in the sea. “Following the North’s launch, our military has been watching closely for further provocations,” the ministry said in a statement. “We urge Pyongyang to stop provocative actions that will heighten military tension in neighboring countries.” The ministry assumed that the weapons were FROG short-range surface-to-surface missiles. This is the fifth missile test by North Korea this year. (Kwan Mee-yoo, “North Korea Fires 25 Missiles into East Sea,” Korea Times, March 17, 2014)

The parents of Megumi Yokota, who was abducted by North Korean agents in 1977 at the age of 13 and became a symbol of Pyongyang’s kidnapping of Japanese nationals, met for the first time their granddaughter earlier this month in Mongolia, the Foreign Ministry said Sunday. According to the ministry, Shigeru and Sakie Yokota met 26-year-old Kim Eun Gyong, who was born to Yokota Megumi and Kim Young Nam, a South Korean man abducted by Pyongyang, last March 2-7 in Ulan Bator. The meeting, one of the sticking points in the issue surrounding North Korean abductions of Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 1980s, could clear the way for the resumption of long-stalled intergovernmental talks between the two nations. (Kyodo, “Parents of Abductee Yokota Megumi Meet Granddaughter for First Time,” Japan Times, March 16, 2014)

Japanese and North Korean foreign ministry officials are expected to resume talks soon to discuss bilateral issues, including North Korea’s past abductions of Japanese nationals, according to government sources. The sources said that the Japan-North Korea talks will be agreed upon at an unofficial meeting of foreign ministry director-level personnel to be held over a two-day period, probably March 19 and 20, in Shenyang, northeast China. At the meeting, the officials will likely agree to resume the meetings at the director general level. At the projected director general meeting, normalization of diplomatic ties between the two countries will be one of the main items on the agenda. North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons and missiles would also figure prominently. The bilateral talks would be held in a third country, possibly China or Mongolia, with Ihara Junichi, director general of the Foreign Ministry’s Asian and Oceania Affairs Bureau, likely to represent Japan. From North Korea, Song Il Ho, ambassador in charge of Japan-North Korea negotiations, will likely participate. (Yomiuri Shimbun, “High-Level Talks with N. Korea to Resume,” March 17, 2014)

North Korea’s per-capita gross domestic product rose 4.8 percent on-year in 2013 from an improved grain harvest and expanded investment in the mining, utility and other segments, according to a report released by the Hyundai Research Institute (HRI). The North’s per-capita GDP for last year is estimated at US$854, up $39 from a
year earlier. The North’s 2013 per-capita GDP amounts to a mere 3.6 percent of South Korea’s per-capita GDP of $23,838 for the same year, it said. The communist state’s grain production is estimated to have grown some 5 percent last year from a year earlier. The country saw an 8.5 percent on-year rise and 10 percent gain in its grain production, respectively, in 2011 and 2012. Also, the reclusive nation increased its budget spending for railroads, metal and power generation sectors, which contributed in boosting its economy, the report showed. Trade between North Korea and its strongest ally China jumped 10.4 percent on-year to reach $6.5 billion last year, while inter-Korean trade sank 42 percent to $1.1 billion due to a five-month halt of an jointly run industrial park. It is the lowest since 2005 when the comparable figure was $1.06 billion. (Yonhap, “N. Korea’s Per Capita GDP Grows 4.8% in 2013: Report,” March 15, 2014)

3/17/14
North Korean Ambassador to the UN Ja Song-nam said Pyongyang is making efforts to improve its relations with South Korea. In a meeting with UN General Assembly President John Ashe, Ja added that Pyongyang’s priority is to raise the quality of life of the North Korean people by expanding welfare and developing infrastructure. Ashe asked Ja about the details of measures the regime has taken to make inter-Korean relations better. The remarks suggest that North Korea is hoping to tackle economic hardship and diplomatic isolation by improving inter-Korean relations. Huh Moon-young at the Korea Institute for National Unification said, “The regime knows that if they fail to solve economic difficulties, they won’t be able to stay in power for long. In order to solve economic problems, they are probably trying to improve their relationship with the South first, and then aim to get the UN and U.S. to lift sanctions.” (Chosun Ilbo, “N. Korea Keen to Improve Cross-Border Relations,” March 19, 2014)

3/18/14
China strongly hinted that it would veto a United Nations resolution holding North Korea’s leadership responsible for crimes against humanity, dashing hopes for the international community to act on the North’s grim human rights record. Asked whether China would veto a U.N. resolution on North Korea’s human rights abuses at the Security Council, China’s foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei told reporters that Beijing would “oppose politicizing the issue of human rights and intervening in the internal affairs of a country.” Hong reiterated China’s stance, saying, “To bring the human right issues to the International Criminal Court does not help improve a country’s human rights conditions.” (Yonhap, “ChinaHints at Veto of U.N. Action on N. Korea Human Rights,” Korea Herald, March 18, 2014)

DoS: “On March 18, 2014, the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Korea concluded an agreement extending the duration of the existing U.S.-R.O.K. Agreement for Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation until March 19, 2016. The agreement entered into force immediately. The United States and the R.O.K. are pleased that the extension of the existing agreement will allow our two sides to continue our extensive and long-standing bilateral cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in an environmentally responsible manner. The two-year extension will also provide additional time for the two sides to complete negotiations on a successor nuclear cooperation agreement.” (Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson,
A trilateral summit among South Korea, the United States and Japan has become highly likely following the Japanese leader’s acknowledgment of a previous government apology made to Korean women who were forced into sexual slavery during World War II, sources in Seoul said. "A bilateral summit is difficult for now, but considering the U.S. requests for reconciliation between South Korea and Japan, and Japan’s tokens of sincerity, it appears that a trilateral summit would be possible," said a government source in Seoul, asking that he not be identified. "Once our government decides on its position, we will carry out negotiations over the agenda." (Yonhap, “S. Korea-U.S.-Japan Summit Highly Likely: Sources,” March 19, 2014)

At the behest of the United States, the leaders of Japan and South Korea will meet on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit March 25 in The Hague. But that does not mean a sudden patching up of bilateral differences. The primary issue--different interpretations of history--that has bedeviled relations between Japan and South Korea will likely not be discussed. According to a high-ranking Abe administration official, U.S. Ambassador Caroline Kennedy broached the topic of a three-way meeting to those close to Abe in late February. Obama himself touched upon the subject during a phone conference with Abe on March 7. Despite the strong sense of mistrust within the Abe administration toward South Korea, officials agreed to the proposal because Abe has left himself little room to move. When he visited Yasukuni Shrine in December, not only did China and South Korea express outrage, but even the United States said it was "disappointed" that Abe had chosen to visit a shrine that memorializes Japan's war dead along with 14 Class-A war criminals. The expression by a close aide to Abe of disappointment at the Washington reaction only added fuel to the diplomatic fire enveloping the prime minister. To make matters worse for Abe, he also had to abandon his previous course of seeking closer ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin and join the leaders of Western nations in condemning Russia’s annexation of the Crimean region of Ukraine. Abe needs the strong backing of the United States in dealing with China over the territorial dispute over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea as well as in negotiating with North Korea over the abduction of Japanese nationals. The scheduled April visit to Japan by Obama was an opportunity to again display the strong alliance with the United States. However, Japan may have very little to offer Obama when he visits. It is still unclear whether an agreement will be reached by then in talks related to the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade arrangement. The fact that Obama will only spend one night in Japan also makes it difficult to welcome him in the same way as a state visit with all the formal trappings involved. With that as background, Abe was forced to maintain the relationship with Washington by demonstrating that he was making an effort to improve ties with Seoul. In attempting to bring about a three-way summit meeting, the Abe administration dispatched Vice Foreign Minister Saiki Akitaka to Seoul on March 12 for talks with First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yong. Sources said Cho presented conditions that would have to be met before South Korea could agree to a meeting with Japan and the United States. One condition was to have Abe clearly state his intention to maintain the 1993 statement released in the name of Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono that offered an apology to the "comfort women" who provided sex to wartime Japanese military
personnel. Other conditions mentioned were a new approach to dealing with the comfort women issue and restraint on the part of those close to Abe regarding statements about historical understanding. The Obama administration had also lobbied Japan informally to not review the Kono statement. At the March 14 Upper House Budget Committee session, Abe clearly stated that he had no intention of revising the Kono statement. Japanese officials also used diplomatic channels to inform their South Korean counterparts beforehand about Abe's comment. While such efforts led to the agreement on the three-way meeting in The Hague, the Abe administration continues to be wary of Seoul. Abe himself told close associates that he had become fed up with the hesitancy shown by South Korea before agreeing to the three-way talks. Abe administration officials also apparently do not have high expectations that the meeting will provide a breakthrough for bilateral ties with South Korea. Regarding the significance of the meeting, one high-ranking official said, "The most important element politically will be to have a photo taken of the leaders meeting each other." For South Korea, the persistent lobbying by the United States was a major factor behind its decision to agree to the three-way talks. The moves by Abe also helped convince Seoul. His comment about not touching the Kono statement was the deciding factor. South Korea was also heartened by Japan's agreement to talks on the comfort women issue among officials at the level of ministerial bureau director. One South Korean government source described the difficult position Seoul faced. "It ended up being a two-against-one situation with Japan and the United States on one side and South Korea on the other," the source said. "South Korea's position would have been hurt if it had rejected the three-way meeting." Due to concerns about the reaction from the South Korean public, government officials also announced that Japanese and South Korean officials would discuss the comfort women issue in the same statement released about the three-way meeting. South Korean officials also made clear that any future bilateral meeting between Park and Abe would depend on the level of sincerity shown by Tokyo. Park also plans to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit and there is the possibility that she might raise the historical recognition issue at that meeting. (Emman Ryota, Suzuki Takuya, Kaise Akihiko, "At U.S. Insistence, Japan, South Korea Agree to 3-Way Talks," Asahi Shimbun, March 22, 2014)

The Belgium branch of Handicap International earmarked $1.12 million for this year to support medical and rehabilitation facilities in North Korea to promote the health and wellbeing of the disabled there, the Voice of America reported, citing an e-mail from the agency's official Dominique Delvigne. The budget is also to be spent for such projects as nurturing teachers in charge of special education for visually- and hearing-impaired people, and assisting the (North) Korean Federation for the Protection of the Disabled, the official added. (Yonhap, "Belgium-Based NGO to Spend $1.1 Million for Disabled N. Koreans," Korea Herald, March 19, 2014)

Jeffrey Lewis: "In recent weeks, a number of news outlets have reported that North Korea may be readying for another nuclear weapons explosion at its test site. The stories resulted from a remark by the South Korean Minister of Defense, who told lawmakers in Seoul that North Korea had finished preparations for another test at its Punggye-ri nuclear test site—although he added that no test was imminent. The
Minister’s statement matches closely the reports that have appeared at 38 North—one in October 2013 noting the presence of new tunnel entrances, followed by reports in December 2013 and February 2014 showing a significant acceleration in excavation of one of the new sites. (North Korea appears to be digging into the same mountain on the north side of its test site—usually called the West Portal area—where it conducted its 2009 and 2013 nuclear tests, while stopping excavation at another mountain south of the site—the South Portal—where digging is either done or on hold.) We generally think of North Korea as digging tunnels and then conducting a single test in each tunnel in 2006, 2009, and 2013. The pattern of excavation at Punggye-ri, however, raises a disquieting possibility. What if North Korea’s recent excavations are not for new tunnels that will be used only once, but represent an effort to transform the mountains north and south of the site into complexes that could allow it to conduct multiple tests—two or more—in drifts off a single main tunnel with multiple entrances. If and when North Korea has a steady supply of fissile material in the form of highly enriched uranium from facilities at Yongbyon (and who knows where else) as well as a steady but smaller supply of plutonium from its reactivated five megawatt reactor, might the North prepare to conduct nuclear explosions on a much more regular basis?

After North Korea’s first nuclear test in 2006 under a mountain to the east of the test complex, Pyongyang began digging a tunnel under a different mountain to the north, referred to as the West Portal. After its second nuclear test in 2009, the North Koreans began digging a tunnel into a third mountain to the south of the site—but there was a surprise. North Korea’s third nuclear test occurred under the same mountain to the north as the 2009 detonation. Now, imagery reveals a new entrance again at the northern mountain, while the tunnels or tunnel complex under the southern mountain appear complete. It is possible that each entrance into the West Portal is for a separate tunnel that runs parallel to the others. But an alternate hypothesis suggested by patterns of US, Russian and Chinese underground nuclear testing is that, rather than parallel tunnels, North Korea may be conducting tests in drifts that branch off a main tunnel. This is how those three countries conducted underground nuclear tests. Here are diagrams from “P-tunnel” at the Nevada Test Site (now known as the Nevada National Security site). If North Korea is not digging parallel tunnels, but is rather opening multiple entrances to the same main tunnel, then it is probably planning to conduct more than one additional test under the north mountain (West Portal), in addition to the two that have already been conducted there. The continuing excavation at the south mountain looks rather different in this light. If the South Portal is a tunnel complex, rather than simply two or three tunnels, North Korea might have plans to conduct more than two or three additional detonations in that area alone. If his hypothesis proves correct, it would represent a change in how we view North Korea’s nuclear weapons testing program. Tom Schelling once told me that, for North Korea’s first few nuclear explosions, the term “test” was perhaps less accurate than “demonstration.” Schelling’s insight was that North Korea’s nuclear explosions were political events to demonstrate capabilities or perhaps Pyongyang’s resolve, not technically-driven events intended to result in successively better capabilities. Of course, that is just one wonk’s opinion and it is difficult to discern the balance between the need to demonstrate and technical goals in Pyongyang’s calculus. But it is clear that the pace of testing to date appears to have been constrained—either by political pressure, a lack of fissile material or both. What would happen if North Korea were to
acquire an ample supply of fissile material and political pressures were to subside? Pyongyang may soon have ample material if it does not already. And, although China may have pressured North Korea to refrain from nuclear tests in past years, its influence on Pyongyang seems to have waned. In November 2012, a Chinese delegation arrived in Pyongyang carrying “a letter from China’s new leader, Xi Jinping, which is said to have contained a simple message: Do not launch a ballistic missile.” KCNA released a picture of the Chinese handing over the letter. Then, the next day, KCNA announced the Unha launch. Pyongyang also executed Beijing’s preferred interlocutor, Jang Song Thaek, for various crimes including selling “coal and other precious underground resources at random”—a veiled reference to his business dealings in China. As of right now, Beijing’s track record when it comes to pressuring Pyongyang isn’t so hot. If the North does step up its nuclear testing program, in the near-term, Pyongyang will probably seek to continue developing smaller nuclear weapons that can arm the country’s ballistic missiles. They claim to have developed a miniaturized device, but we do not know how small these weapons are. Perhaps further miniaturization is needed to arm more than Scud or Nodong missiles; certainly this is the case for longer-range delivery systems. Thermonuclear weapons—something the Chinese were able to achieve within six tests—are a worrisome possibility. But the good news is that Punggye-ri appears unsuitable for very large explosions above more than tens of kilotons in yield. This is because the mountains can only contain so much explosive power as well as the fact that a major cross-country railway runs relatively near to the test site, probably causing concern about the impact of large explosions on the rail tunnels. North Korea would probably need another test site to conduct very large nuclear tests in vertical boreholes—something we have yet to see. The bad news is that our current North Korea policy of malign neglect may be more costly than we imagine. The current rate of one nuclear test every three or four years is unpleasant, but manageable. We muster outrage over these tests long enough to send Pyongyang a sternly worded letter and maybe sanction some iPads, before returning to years-long periods of ignoring them. After all, historically, North Korea—perhaps constrained by a small stockpile of fissile material—couldn’t stage nuclear temper tantrums all that often. However, this may be about to change. North Korea may soon have access to regular amounts of fissile material if it doesn’t already and could be preparing Punggye-ri for a number of nuclear tests if the above analysis is correct. What if North Korea conducts a nuclear test, or even two, on an annual basis? Have we really considered the implications of an increase in the frequency of tests for our current policy of strategic patience? Have we prepared our allies for such a change? The answer is, of course, “No, we will cross that bridge when we come to it.” (Jeffrey Lewis, “The Tunnels at Punggye-ri: An Alternative View,” 38 North March 20, 2014)
would be made with government officials and experts from the two sides attending the talks." Ryu Song-il, a North Korean diplomat dealing with Japanese affairs who also join the talks, declined to comment on the possibility of reopening director-level government negotiations between Pyongyang and Tokyo. "It is bad manners to speak anything before the talks begin," Ryu told reporters. (Yonhap, "N. Korea, Japan Resume Talks in China," March 19, 2014) Japanese and North Korean diplomats have agreed to work toward the resumption of formal intergovernmental talks for the first time since November 2012, at an early date, an official said March 20. (Karube Takuya, "Japan N. Korea to Restart Govt. Dialogue at an Early Date," Kyodo, March 20, 2014) The agreement was reached at an informal meeting between Ryu Song-il, head of Japanese affairs division at North Korea’s foreign ministry, and Ono Keiichi, director of the Northeast Asia Division at Japan’s foreign ministry, Ono told reporters at the end of the two-day meeting here. "Both sides agreed on the resumption of formal government-to-government talks," Ono said, adding a date for the new talks has not been set. The two-day Red Cross talks were led by Ri Ho-rim, secretary general of the North’s Red Cross Society, and Tasaka Osamu, director general of the International Department at the Japanese Red Cross. After seven hours of talks on the 19th, Tasaka told reporters, "I think there is progress if you compare with the things that were being discussed during the previous round of talks." Describing the mood at the talks as "very good," Tasaka said he "felt sincerity" from the North Korean side. At the end of the two-day talks on the 20th, the North’s chief delegate Ri said the two sides held "very constructive and useful" discussions. "Both sides held in-depth talks in a serious and candid manner," Ri said, adding the two sides agreed to continue talks on the issue of repatriating Japanese remains in the future. (Yonhap, "N. Korea, Japan Decide to Restart Government Talks," March 20, 2014) "It’s an important step," Abe said at a news conference, referring to the agreement. "I'd like to resume talks as soon as possible." "Our goal is to properly settle outstanding issues of both sides," Ryu Song-il, identified as the official in charge of Japanese affairs at the North Korean Foreign Ministry, was quoted as saying by Kyodo. “I believe it is important that relations between the two countries can be improved soon.” Last May, speaking a day after a top aide returned from a secretive visit to Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, Abe told Parliament that he would consider meeting with Kim to resolve the issue of abducted Japanese. Analysts now say that visit may have laid the groundwork for the recent warming in relations. Abe first rose to national prominence at this time, when Koizumi, his political mentor, put him in charge of the emotional abduction issue. Analysts have said that Abe may be hoping to resume where Koizumi left off by reaching an accord that could finally open the way for normalizing ties. "I was overwhelmed with emotion. I’m very glad the meeting came about," Abe said on March 17, speaking of the meeting between Yokota’s parents and her daughter. “We are determined to resolve the abduction issue at any cost.” (Martin Fackler, “Japan and North Korea Said to Agree to Formal Talks,” New York Times, March 21, 2014, p. A-6) Japan and North Korea will hold intergovernmental talks in Beijing on March 30 to 31. (Kyodo, “Japan, North Korea to Hold Governmental Talks in Beijing March 30-31,” March 21, 2014)

On February 25th, a year after President Park’s inauguration, the public opinions on the international relations of the former Lee administration and that of Park
government were compared. The most prominent difference between the February 2013 and 2014 results was the assessment on the relationship of the North and the South. Whereas merely 1.4% responded that inter-Korean relations have improved over the five years during which the former President Lee was in the office, as much as 33.9% of those surveyed (up by 32.5%) responded that the relations of the two Koreas have improved over the one year of President Park’s administration; showing a considerable increase with statistical significance. The aforementioned results can be seen as the byproduct of the resumption of family reunions, indicating the ameliorating ties between the two Koreas and the growing discussions regarding the reunification issue in 2014, after the president’s remark on reunification as ‘Dae-baak’ (a Korean term for ‘bonanza’) in her new year’s press conference. However, although the results regarding relations with China jumped up 20.4%, from 17.5% in Feb. 2013 to 37.9% a year after, many deemed the relations with the US ‘similar (2013: 55.2% → 2014: 56.9%).’

‘Due to the Japanese prime minister’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, aggressive anti-Korean protests that took place in Japan and the ‘cyber warfare’ between the two countries regarding the installation of a comfort woman statue in the U.S., a large proportion of respondents answered that the relations with Japan have ‘worsened,’ at 70.7% compared to 58.5% in 2013; but it was not a statistically significant level. At the end of 2013, concerns over the conflicting relations between the U.S. and China in the Northeast Asia region in line with China’s self-declared Air Defense Identification Zone (CADIZ) had heightened. Against such diplomatic upheaval, the so-called “Sandwich Theory,” urging South Korea – being squeezed between two superpowers, the U.S. and China – to side with one country, has been raised. In response, based on TNS’s self-imposed omnibus poll, respondents were asked, “Which country will you support if conflicts occur among South Korea’s neighboring countries in the future?” When Sino-U.S. relations were assumed to exacerbate, those who answered to support the U.S. were 64.4% and 67.2% in Oct. 2013 and Dec. 2013, respectively, appearing to be higher than those who supported China (11.6% in Oct, 5.4% in Dec.). On the contrary, when conflicts between Japan and China were assumed, those who responded to side with China were quite high at 71.2% (Oct. 2013) and 69.7% (Dec. 2013), but the support rate for Japan amongst respondents in the two consecutive studies appeared to be less than 10%. Depending on the response rate only, the support rate for China seemed to have somewhat decreased in Dec., but no significant difference was observed statistically. Amid the confrontational and adversarial tensions between the U.S. and China, concerning the countries being favored, a meaningful difference was identified between Japan and China, but even when the U.S. was supported, a majority of respondents (more than 70%) appeared to side with China over Japan. However, more than half of the respondents answered that ‘China will side with the North’ (Oct. 58.6%, Dec. 68.2%) if the ties between the two Koreas remain extremely tense in the future, indicating that there is still a strong perception that China is a close ally to North Korea as opposed to South Korea. Those who answered that ‘China will side with the South’ appeared to be 19.0% (Oct. 2013) and 16.7% (Dec. 2013), and those who answered that ‘China will remain neutral’ were less than 10%. On the other hand, in regards to the U.S.’s stance toward the tensions between South Korea and Japan, ‘the U.S. will side with South Korea’ was answered at 38.5%, and those who claimed that ‘the U.S. will side with Japan’ was 35.3%; also, ‘the U.S. will remain neutral’ was responded at 15.1%, making
it harder to clearly determine the predominance regarding the presence of South Korea and Japan as allies to the U.S. (TNS Perspective, “Korea’s International Relations upon President Park’s First Anniversary, March 21, 2014)

3/22/14
North Korea launched 30 short-range rockets into waters off its east coast early Saturday, South Korea's military said, in what appeared to be its latest show of force against Seoul and Washington. North Korea fired three bursts of rockets between 4 a.m. and 6:10 a.m. from a coastal area near Wonsan, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It said the projectiles appeared to be FROG surface-to-surface rockets, noting that they are estimated to have flown around 60 kilometers. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Launches 30 Rockets into Waters Off Its East Coast,” Korea Times, March 22, 2014)
North Korea did not give a warning to vessels in the region in advance like the previous launch, Seoul said. (Kim Hee-jin, “North Fires 46 Short-Range Rockets into the East Sea,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 24, 2014)

3/23/14
North Korea fired 16 short-range rockets from its east coast for a second straight day, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said, the latest in a series of provocative launches that are in apparent protest of ongoing joint military drills between Seoul and Washington. The North fired 30 FROG ground-to-ground rockets from the eastern city of Wonsan, the same test site, early yesterday, without making a pre-announcement for civilian flights or vessels. The North launched the same type of rockets over two times between 00:52 a.m. and 2:31 a.m., which flew about 60 kilometers into the sea, according to the military. “The military has maintained vigilance against additional launches,” the JCS said. (Yonhap, N. Korea Launches Rockets for Second Straight Day,” March 23, 2014)

Amid rising military threats from North Korea, South Korea conducted its own missile test, successfully launching a newly developed ballistic missile capable of striking most of North Korea, its Ministry of National Defense said on April 4. The new missile, with a range of 310 miles and a payload of 2,200 pounds, was launched on March 23 from a test site in Taean, a coastal town 68 miles southwest of Seoul. “The test was successful,” Kim Min-seok, a spokesman for the South Korean Defense Ministry, said during a media briefing. Kim declined to comment on when South Korea planned to deploy the new missile. But Yonhap quoted an unidentified government official as saying that the missile will be deployed next year. (Choe Sang-hun, “South Korea Tests Missile That Can Target Most of North,” New York Times, April 5, 2014, p. A-5) The Ministry of National Defense said yesterday it fired the indigenously built missile from Taean on the coast of South Chungcheong and it accurately hit its intended target, which wasn’t specified. It added that South Korea plans to develop longer-range ballistic missile that can fly 800 kilometers. With a capacity to strike any part of North Korea, the newly developed ballistic missile with a payload of one ton trumps its precursor, the domestically developed Hyunmoo ballistic missile, which has a range of 300 kilometers and a 500-kilogram payload. “Because there is great danger in regards to North Korea's nuclear and missile threats as well as WMD (weapons of mass destruction), South Korea and the U.S. determined that there is a need for South Korea-made ballistic missiles with a reach of 800 kilometers,” said Kim. (Sarah Kim and Jeong Yong-su, “Seoul’s 500-Km. Missile Passes First Test,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 5, 2014)
President Park Geun-hye stressed in a keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the third Nuclear Security Summit this afternoon that the Korean Peninsula should be the starting point for the world to realize a goal of “no nuclear weapons.” “I believe that as long as North Korea remains a nuclear challenge, a world without nuclear weapons will not come,” she said during the address as the leader of the host country of the summit’s previous edition, which was held two years ago in Seoul. “And so it has been my long-held conviction that the journey toward a world without nuclear weapons should start from the Korean Peninsula. I look forward to working with everyone here to make that vision a reality.” Citing a recent report by an international research institute, President Park also noted in her speech the potential dangers posed by the Yongbyon nuclear facility in North Korea. “North Korea’s Yongbyon is home to such a dense concentration of nuclear facilities that a fire in a single building could lead to a disaster potentially worse than Chernobyl, according to the report,” she said. “By any measure - whether non-proliferation, nuclear security or safety - North Korea’s nuclear programs are cause for enormous concern. The peace and security of the world demand no less than their dismantlement.” Park was apparently referring to the IHS Jane’s Defence Weekly in January. The report noted that North Korea’s decision to restart its 5 megawatt electric reactor at the Yongbyon nuclear scientific research complex threatens Northeast Asia with a disaster potentially worse than Chernobyl, citing two nuclear academics. However, some other experts later refuted the theory, arguing that the reactors in Yongbyon and Chernobyl are different in scale and structure. Her speech was immediately followed by a warning from North Korea. Pyongyang’s deputy United Nations Ambassador Ri Tong-il said at a news conference Monday in New York that as long as the United States continues “nuclear blackmail,” Pyongyang will continue to take “additional measures” to demonstrate the power of a defensive nuclear deterrent. Although Ri did not specify what the additional measures would be, he seemed to be suggesting a fourth nuclear weapons test. Ri also said the North’s nuclear weapons are not a “political bargaining chip.” (Seo Ji-eun, “Park Addresses Security Summit,” JoongAng Ilbo, March 26, 2014)

North Korea will take additional “nuclear measures” if the United States continues its current approach toward Pyongyang, the communist nation’s senior envoy here said. Speaking at a news conference, Ri Tong-il, the North’s deputy ambassador to the U.N., warned his nation is set to demonstrate its nuclear capability. “We are ready to take a series of additional nuclear measures to demonstrate the power of the self-defense nuclear deterrent,” he said. But Ri would not specify what those additional steps might be. “I think you can wait and see later,” he said, adding it is entirely up to Washington’s attitude down the road. He accused the Obama administration of deliberately continuing a hostile policy towards Pyongyang, citing the ongoing South Korea-U.S. joint military drills as an example. He also took issue with Secretary of State John Kerry’s recent description of North Korea as an “evil” place. (Yonhap, “N.K.’s U.N. Envoy Threatens Further Nuclear Measures,” Yonhap, March 25, 2014) North Korea called on the U.S. to stop isolating it politically, militarily and economically, citing the totalitarian regime’s recent engagement with South Korea as proof of a commitment to relieving tensions. In dealings with neighboring countries starting last month, North Korea participated in the first high-level talks with South Korea since 2007, allowed family reunions between the two Koreas and made plans to hold talks next week with
Japan for the first time since November 2012. "The DPRK did not hesitate to accept the request from South Korean authorities on holding the separated families' reunion," even though "in view of the harsh conditions of the political environment," the situation "was not mature yet," Ri Tong Il, a top North Korean diplomat at the United Nations, told reporters in New York. The U.S. must "roll back" its "hostile policies" and stop raising tensions through continued military drills with South Korea and orchestrating "conspiracies" on the North's human rights situation, Ri said. (Sungwon Yoon, "N. Korea Citing Improved Ties with South Urges U.S. to Engage," Bloomberg, March 24, 2014)

The South Korean Navy has beefed up the combat capabilities of its warships to counter rising threats from North Korea in the wake of a deadly torpedo attack that sank a corvette four years ago, military officials said. "Following the Cheonan incident, the South Korean Navy has deployed the advanced escort vessels and guided-missile high-speed ships and additionally acquired maritime patrol aircraft for improved combat capabilities," R. Adm. Choi Yang-sun, who oversees the Navy's weapons program, told reporters during his visit to the Second Fleet Headquarters in Pyeongtaek, south of Seoul. In the past years, South Korea has armed its warships and submarines with cruise missiles that have a range of over 1,000 kilometer and additionally deployed 2,300-ton naval escort ships. About 20 more naval ships will replace the existing fleet of patrol ships in the next 10 years, while 15 guided-missile destroyers with advanced sonar systems capable of detecting submarines have been deployed in the east and western seas. In response, the North has increased the operations of its submarine fleets and the training of coastal artillery units, conducting amphibious landing operations targeting the South in the past years. Most recently, North Korea has been building a new high-speed, wave piercing craft called Very Slender Vessel (VSV), which Seoul officials believe is aimed at infiltrating the inter-Korean sea boundary to quickly occupy South Korean border islands in case of war. The communist state has already deployed about 70 air-cushion vehicles on its west coast and 60 of the amphibious vehicles in the east at its four hovercraft bases. Pyongyang has also put in place 200-ton new combatant ships with guns of longer ranges, while adding one or two submarine midgets every year to the fleet of 70 submarines. The need to strengthen naval capabilities has grown even larger in light of China's increasing assertiveness and Japan's military buildup. South Korea currently operates one naval task group with three Aegis-equipped guided missile destroyers. It plans to deploy three more 7,400-ton Aegis destroyers from 2023 to 2027. The defense reform plan for 2014-2030 calls for reorganizing naval task groups. Ahead of the fourth anniversary of the sinking of the Cheonan, South Korea’s Navy on March 19 carried out a large-scale drill in waters off the Yellow Sea under a scenario in which a North Korean submarine crosses the maritime border. The 7,700-ton Aegis destroyer, King Sejong the Great, destroyers and patrol escort ship as well as seven other naval vessels and a Lynx helicopter participated in the exercise. (Kim Eun-jung, “S. Korea Strives in Naval Build-up Following Cheonan Sinking,” Yonhap, March 23, 2014)

President Park Geun-hye said that South Korea is open to studying various options to restart six-party talks on North Korea’s nuclear program if there is guarantee of real
progress in the negotiations. Park made the remark during one-on-one talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping in The Hague, just days after Beijing’s chief nuclear envoy returned from a visit to North Korea on a mission aimed at mediating the resumption of six-party talks on ending Pyongyang’s nuclear program. Park’s remark may suggest that South Korea could soften its position that North Korea should first take concrete steps demonstrating its denuclearization commitment. “President Park said that various options can be studied with regard to dialogue resumption if there are guarantees that real progress can be made in denuclearization efforts and that North Korea will be prevented from advancing its nuclear capabilities,” her office said in a statement. (Chang Jae-soon, “Park: S. Korea Open to Various Options to Restart Six-Party Talks,” Yonhap, March 23, 2014)

Japan will announce today that it will turn over to Washington more than 700 pounds of weapons-grade plutonium and a large quantity of highly enriched uranium, a decades-old research stockpile that is large enough to build dozens of nuclear weapons, according to American and Japanese officials. The announcement is the biggest single success in President Obama’s five-year-long push to secure the world’s most dangerous materials, and will come as world leaders gather here for a nuclear security summit meeting. Japan’s agreement to transfer the material – the amount of highly enriched uranium has not been announced but is estimated at 450 pounds – has both practical and political significance. For years these stores of weapons-grade material were not a secret, but were lightly guarded at best; a reporter for the New York Times who visited the main storage site at Tokaimura in the early 1990s found unarmed guards and a site less-well protected than many banks. While security has improved, the stores have long been considered vulnerable. The nuclear fuel being turned over to the United States, which is of American and British origin, is a fraction of Japan’s overall stockpile of more than nine tons of plutonium stored in various locations. It is scheduled to open in the fall a new nuclear fuel plant that could produce many tons more every year. American officials have been quietly pressing Japan to abandon the program, arguing that the material is insufficiently protected even though much of it is in a form that would be significantly more difficult to use in a weapon than the supplies being sent to the United States. (Michael D. Shear and David E. Sanger, “Japan to Let U.S. Assume Control of Nuclear Cache,” New York Times, March 24, 2014, p. A-1)

Osaka Mayor Hashimoto Toru cruised to re-election in a snap contest supporters and critics criticized as a waste of time and taxpayer money. The voter turnout rate was a pathetic 23.59 percent – the city’s lowest ever. Combined with the tally for early voting, that means about a quarter of Osaka’s voters went to the polls, more than 30 points less than in the 2011 mayoral election. The snap election, called by Hashimoto in February after a city assembly committee refused to endorse his plan and timetable for integrating the city of Osaka with the prefecture, pitted the mayor and his Osaka Ishin no Kai (One Osaka) political group against three minor nonaligned candidates who opposed the merger plan. (Eric Johnston, “Hashimoto Wins Snap Mayoral Election Amid Record Low 23.6% Turnout,” Japan Times, March 23, 2014)
The political and historical war of words between Japan and South Korea has found another battleground: the United States. One of the first volleys in the battle for America’s sympathies was played out in a park in New Jersey in 2010, where Korean-Americans in Palisades Park won the right to install a plaque memorializing “comfort women,” many of them Korean, who were forced to work in Japanese military brothels during World War II. Since then, more Korean communities – sometimes backed by activists and even diplomats from South Korea – have begun their own campaigns either to acknowledge the suffering of the comfort women or, more recently, to win recognition for the country’s arguments that a nearby sea should not automatically be named after Japan, its onetime colonial ruler. Legislators in Virginia passed a bill this month requiring books mentioning the Sea of Japan to also use its Korean name, the East Sea. New York is considering a similar measure. The ambassadors of South Korea and Japan visited the governor of Virginia in January to press their countries’ cases. Japan also hired four lobbyists to argue that the name change was unnecessary. “There is not one tenured professor on the East Coast who has not been contacted” by one or both of the countries, said Jonathan Berkshire Miller, chairman of the Japan-Korea Working Group at the Center for Strategic and International Studies Pacific Forum in Honolulu. (Martin Fackler, “U.S. Emerges As Central Stage in Asian Rivalry,” New York Times, March 23, 2014, p. 13)

South and North Korea should pour continued efforts into national unification without being swayed by changes in cross-border relations, Seoul’s unification minister said. “We need to strive to improve the inter-Korean relations, but it is wrong if it causes our discussions for the reunification to be neglected,” Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae said during a meeting of the Central Association for National Unification of Korea in Seoul. “Better inter-Korean ties do not always guarantee national reunification ... and for decades, we’ve paid little attention to the crucial and comprehensive issue of unification,” he pointed out, stressing it should be "a main, regular issue on the table." (Yonhap, “Unification Efforts Should Not Be Swayed by Inter-Korean Ties: Minister,” March 24, 2014)

The building that has served as North Korea’s de facto embassy in Tokyo is expected to be handed over to a real estate agent after years of wrangling over its sale, a move likely to deal a severe blow to operations of the pro-Pyongyang Chongryon that has occupied the property. The Tokyo District Court gave permission today for the Tokyo headquarters of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, better known as Chongryon, to be sold to Kagawa-based real estate developer Marunaka Holdings Co. for ¥2.21 billion. While Chongryon has already appealed today’s court decision, a public safety agency source said the group presumably has an exit strategy and the court action is probably a step to buy time until its May general assembly. “The Chongryon head office is a de facto embassy. If you are going to force us out, we have no choice but to harden our attitude,” a Chongryon executive said following the court’s approval of the sale of the property to Marunaka Holdings, the runner-up that emerged as the buyer after the top bidder was disqualified for a second time. (Kyodo, “Pro-North Korean Group Waging Last-Ditch Fight over De Facto Embassy in Japan,” Japan Times, March 25, 2014)
The south Korean puppet military group Monday [March 24] committed such hideous provocations as firing bullets and shells from the five islands and in their vicinity in the West Sea of Korea including Paekryong Island and Taeyonphyong Island and scattering leaflets hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership and the social system in the DPRK. The Secretariat of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea in its information bulletin 1058 issued [today] said that such reckless actions of the puppet military gangsters can never be tolerated as they are a very serious case pushing the north-south relations to an uncontrollable catastrophe. The above-said leaflets-scattering operation carried out on the five islands and in their vicinity in the West Sea of Korea, the biggest hotspots, is an extremely reckless action that can be perpetrated only by the puppet military hooligans steeped in confrontation hysteria to the marrow of their bones, the bulletin noted, and continued: With no rhetoric can the south Korean authorities justify the hideous provocative act of hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership and the social system in the DPRK committed by the puppet military group. The south Korean chief executive had better put under control something serious happening inside south Korea, not resorting to the charade of misleading the public opinion at home and abroad by creating impression that she is interested in the improvement of the inter-Korean relations with such words as ‘confidence’ and ‘unification.’ The reality goes to clearly prove that there can be neither improved inter-Korean relations nor peace on the Korean peninsula as long as the diehard military gangsters are allowed to dare hurt the inviolable dignity of our supreme leadership. Our army and people will never pardon even the slightest act of hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership and the social system in the DPRK but deal merciless sledgehammer blows at its perpetrators. The provocateurs will be held entirely accountable for the disastrous consequences caused to the inter-Korean relations in the future.” (KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities Accused of Scattering Leaflets Hurting Dignity of Supreme Leadership of DPRK,” March 25, 2014)

The leaders of the U.S. and China differed over the resumption of the long-stalled multilateral talks on North Korea’s denuclearization despite their shared opposition to Pyongyang’s possession of nuclear arms. During their meeting on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague, Netherlands, U.S. President Barack Obama remained cautious about reopening the talks when Pyongyang shows no willingness to abandon its nuclear programs. Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed hope that the aid-for-denuclearization talks could resume at an early date. “Any discussions or dialogue among the six parties around the situation in North Korea needs to be based upon actions taken by North Korea, which has not yet demonstrated its willingness to come to the table seriously,” Ben Rhodes, deputy U.S. national security adviser, told reporters after the bilateral summit. Obama also stressed the need for close coordination in sending a clear message that there should be denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, according to the White House official. Rhodes also told reporters that Obama spoke of the need for the two global leaders to continue to insist that Pyongyang abide by its obligations and change its course toward nuclear armament. During his talks with President Park on March 23, Xi said that Beijing had been trying to persuade Pyongyang to come to the negotiating table and guide it in the way the international community wants it to go. Apart from the North Korea issue, the two leaders also discussed ways to promote mutual cooperation over various bilateral and
global issues including climate change and developments on the Crimean Peninsula. “I think it is fair to say that this bilateral relationship has been as important as any bilateral relationship in the world, and we’ve made great strides,” said Obama before the summit began. “I believe ultimately that by working together, that China and the U.S. can help to strengthen international law, respect for the sovereignty of nations, and establish the kinds of rules internationally that allow all people to thrive.” Xi, in return, said that China was committed to its position of “no confrontation, no conflict, mutual respect, and win-win cooperation” with the U.S. “We will adopt a more positive attitude and more vigorous actions to strengthen cooperation with the U.S., and also to effectively manage our differences and sensitivities and make sure the China-U.S. relationship will continue to move forward in a healthy and steady fashion,” said Xi. (Song Sang-ho, “Obama, Xi Differ over Resuming Six-Party Talks,” Korea Herald, March 25, 2014)

The leaders of South Korea, the United States and Japan stressed the importance of trilateral unity in dealing with North Korea, as they sat together on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague. “The North Korean nuclear issue poses a grave threat to regional peace and stability and I think it is very important for the international community, including South Korea, the United States and Japan, to fashion a united response,” South Korean President Park Geun-hye said at the start of talks with U.S. President Barack Obama and Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. Park added it is meaningful itself for the three leaders to meet and discuss the North Korean nuclear issue. Should Pyongyang take steps toward denuclearization, it will also help resolve the hardships of the North Korean people, she said. Obama agreed to the need to continue close coordination among the three regional powers, saying it has succeeded in “changing the game” with North Korea. It has sent a strong signal to Pyongyang that its provocations and threats will be met with a unified response and that the U.S. commitment to the defense of South Korea and Japan is unwavering, and that a nuclear North Korea is unacceptable, he added. In particular, Obama said he expects discussions on specific steps to deepen tripartite cooperation both diplomatically and militarily. “That includes joint exercises and on missile defense,” Obama said. The Japanese prime minister said it’s “extremely important” to continue close trilateral partnerships on the North Korea issue. “The three countries would like to cooperate so that North Korea will be able to take a positive stance with regard to nuclear and missile issues and also humanitarian issues, such as the separated families of the Republic of Korea,” he said. The meeting was set up after Abe promised earlier this month to honor Japan’s two previous apologies for the colonial rule -- known as the “Kono Statement” and the “Murayama Statement.” Park welcomed the pledge, saying she hopes it will lead to better ties between the two countries. On March 24, however, a special adviser to Abe, Koichi Hagiuda, angered South Korea again by suggesting that Japan replace the “Kono statement” with a new one if it finds any new evidence on the sexual slavery. Seoul denounced the remark as “very inappropriate” and “very regrettable.” Japan’s government said March 25 the country remains committed to upholding the 1993 statement. (Chang Jae-soon, “Park Calls for United Response to N. Korean Nuclear Issue,” Yonhap, March 26, 2014)
China for the first time will likely have subs equipped with long-range nuclear missiles later this year, part of an increasingly potent submarine fleet. The head of US Pacific Command, Admiral Samuel Locklear, said the latest class of Chinese subs would be armed with a new ballistic missile with an estimated range of 4,000 nautical miles (7,500 kilometers). "This will give China its first credible sea-based nuclear deterrent, probably before the end of 2014," Locklear told the Senate Armed Services Committee. Locklear was referring to the production of China’s JIN-class nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine and the new JL-2 missile on board the vessel. "China's advance in submarine capabilities is significant. They possess a large and increasingly capable submarine force," the admiral said. In October, Chinese state media for the first time showed images of the country’s nuclear-powered submarines, touting it as a “credible second-strike nuclear capability.” Locklear said China’s submarine modernization effort was impressive. "I think they’ll have in the next decade or so a fairly well modernized force of probably 60 to 70 submarines which is a lot of submarines for a regional power,” he said. (AFP, “China to Have Nuclear Missiles on Subs Soon: U.S. Admiral,” March 25, 2014)

North Korea test-fired two Nodong ballistic missiles into the sea off its east coast as the leaders of South Korea, the U.S. and Japan held a summit in the Netherlands to pressure Pyongyang to denuclearize. Seoul condemned the launch as a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions and vowed to take countermeasures against the latest “provocations.” North Korea fired the midrange missiles -- one at 2:35 a.m. and the other at 2:42 a.m. -- from the Sukchon region, north of Pyongyang, which flew about 650 kilometers before dropping into the East Sea, defense ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said in an emergency briefing. "North Korea’s ballistic missile launch clearly violates U.N. Security Resolutions and is a grave provocation to Republic of Korea (South) and the international community,” Kim said. The trajectory indicated that the missiles were of the Nodong class, as they flew over at altitudes of more than 160 km and with a top speed of over Mach 7.0, the spokesman noted. The foreign ministry said the "government will begin to take countermeasures against the North’s latest provocations through close collaboration with allies and the United Nations Security Council." The foreign ministry also denounced the ballistic missile launches as grave threats to international navigation activities and civilian safety, warning the North against further provocative actions. "The missile launch constitutes provocations that violate the UNSC resolutions and add tensions on the Korean Peninsula and in the Northeast Asian region," the ministry said in a statement. "The government calls on the North to immediately halt such provocations and fully comply with its obligations and promises with the international community.” The missiles, which were fired without a preannouncement, fell within 10 km of Japan’s air defense identification zone, a senior military official said, citing analysis of their trajectory. "Although there were no airplanes flying near the trajectory of the missiles before and after the launch, launching missiles without declaring a no-fly, no-sail zone is a violation of the international regulations,” the official said. (Kim Eun-jung, “N. Korea Fires Two Ballistic Missiles into Sea,” Yonhap, March 26, 2014) North Korea’s firing of two ballistic missiles early yesterday morning was a protest against a three-way summit between South Korea, the U.S. and Japan in The Hague that affirmed a united front against Pyongyang, pundits believe. The missiles were fired at the same time that the summit
was taking place. (Chosun Ilbo, “N. Korean Missiles Were Protest at 3-Way Summit,” March 27, 2014) North Korea’s test-firing of two midrange Rodong ballistic missiles on March 26 seems to have been aimed at testing if its midrange ones could target South Korea by skirting South Korean and U.S. interception systems, military sources here said. Though the missiles have an estimated range of 1,000 kilometers to 1,500 km, those in March flew about 650 km before dropping into the East Sea. “North Korea fired the Rodong missiles at a higher than usual launch angle in order to shorten their maximum range,” a senior military officer here said, requesting anonymity. Though Rodong-class missiles mostly target American bases in Japan, while parts of China and Russia are within their range, shooting them in the way that was adopted in March could cause them to hit South Korea. “By carrying out such a test, North Korea appears to have come up with a way not to be caught by either the South Korean or American missile interception system when launching an attack against South Korea with its midrange missiles,” he added. “At that time, the Rodong missiles flew at altitudes of more than 160 kilometers and with a top speed of over Mach 7.0. In that case, it is not easy for Patriot PAC-3 missiles to shoot them down,” Seoul’s defense ministry spokesman said at a regular briefing. South Korea now has a missile interception system with Patriot PAC-2 missiles, and the U.S. Forces Korea employs PAC-3 missiles. Both PAC-2 and PAC-3 missiles target Scud short-range missiles with a range of up to 500 kilometers. They also can intercept missiles at an altitude of under 40 kilometers. “That’s why we have been developing our own long-range surface-to-air missiles (L-SAM) with our indigenous technology,” the spokesman said, reaffirming the government’s earlier stance that it will not buy the U.S. Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery. THAAD, which can shoot down missiles at an altitude of up to 150 kilometers, is an integral part of the U.S.-led missile defense (MD), and South Korea has said it will not join the air defense system that Japan takes part in and aims to counter a rising China in the region. (Yonhap, “N.K.’s March Missile Test Aimed at Evading Interceptor Systems: Sources,” June 19, 2014) The missiles North Korea test-fired into the East Sea this year ascended to an altitude of 130 to 150 km, and some were fired to a higher altitude to reduce their range, according to data. Saenuri Party lawmaker Yoo Seung-min revealed military data on the range on November 4, 2014, altitude, maximum speed and flight time of the 13 ballistic missiles the North test-fired from February to July. They show that a Rodong missile fired from Sukchon, South Pyongan Province on March 26 ascended to an altitude of 150 km and flew a distance of 650 km in seven minutes and 30 seconds at a top speed of Mach 8. That means it could strike any target in South Korea within seven minutes. Most of the Scud missiles the North fired flew 500 km at an altitude of 130 km. But a Scud fired from Wonsan, Kangwon Province on February 27 flew a shorter distance of 250 km at a higher altitude of 150 km. Yoo said South Korea currently lacks the means to intercept incoming Scud or Rodong missiles, but the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system is designed to intercept missiles at an altitude of 40-150 km. “We should deploy at least three THAAD batteries since the PAC-3 missiles the government is going to purchase can only intercept missiles at a low altitude,” he added. Defense Minister Han Min-koo agreed with Yoo’s assessment of the PAC-3 missiles but denied there are plans to deploy THAAD batteries. (Chosun Ilbo, “N. Korea’s Missile Tests Analyzed,” November 4, 2014)
Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK) spokesman Wednesday [March 26] gave the following answer to a question put by KCNA “blasting Park Geun Hye of south Korea for making provocative remarks for no reason over the DPRK’s nuclear issue at the 3rd ‘nuclear security summit’ held in Netherlands: Recently Park let loose a string of very reckless remarks against the DPRK, groundlessly accusing it over its nuclear issue at the summit. Though she is a faithful servant and stooge of the U.S., she should have properly wagged her tongue on the basis of hard facts or elementary common sense. Had she had the idea of uttering even a proper word at the summit, she should have chided the U.S., among others, for being the first to produce nuclear weapons, proliferating them, bringing horrible nuclear disasters to humankind and stockpiling more nukes than any other countries in the world to pose constant nuclear threat still now. As far as the instability of nuclear facilities is concerned, she should have mentioned, first of all, nuclear power plants in south Korea which had to stop operations due to troubles many times in a year and sparked rows over the leakage of contaminated nuclear substance and horrible disasters at nuclear power plants in Japan and the U.S. Funny enough, Park, a U.S. nuclear war servant, talked about a ‘world without nuclear weapons,’ parroting what her master uttered. But great irony was that she asserted the building of such world should start from the “north’s dismantlement” of its nukes. This either betrayed the lack of her knowledge about where to start or where to end or revealed that she had the same ulterior motive as the U.S.’s. This time Park took issue even with the DPRK’s line of developing the two fronts simultaneously, groundlessly finding fault with its nukes. By doing so, she cruelly violated the agreement made at the north-south high-level contact on halting the smear campaign. Does she have the face to talk about ‘confidence and ‘sincerity’? The north-south agreement is neither an ‘election commitment’ on which the south Korean rulers are apt to renege anytime nor an empty promise which the philistines used to fail to keep. If Park truly wants to improve the inter-Korean relations, she should be careful about what she says, and have discretion and reason to get a habit of refraining from making reckless remarks. She made a serious blunder. Explicitly speaking about the nuclear issue, there may be the denuclearization of the whole Korean peninsula but no ‘north’s unilateral denuclearization’ under any circumstances. She had better not have even a dream about it. The ‘world without nuclear weapons’ is, of course, a good thing but she should cogitate again about what should be its starting point and have the courage to say what she would like to talk to her American master who produced nuclear weapons first and poses the biggest nuclear threat to the world. Only then is it possible to find a right way of solving the nuclear issue.’ We will keep a watch on Park’s undesirable behavior.” (KCNA, “CPRK Denounces Park Guen Hye’s Provocative Remarks over Nuclear Issue,” March 27, 2014)

Frank Jannuzi: “This week in Geneva, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) has an opportunity to do something important when it considers how to respond to the 372-page report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea (COI). As Amnesty International’s Secretary General Salil Shetty has written, “A strong resolution needs to be adopted sending a clear message…that the Commission’s recommendations will be acted upon and not kicked into the diplomatic long-grass.” Avoiding the long grass will require some creative leadership by members of the HRC
and the UN Security Council (UNSC). For more than 20 years, the international community has struggled to rein-in the nuclear ambitions of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), while largely turning a blind eye to the root causes of the suffering of the North Korean people. ...But that excuse for inaction no longer exists. In a report as remarkable for its lack of hyperbolic language as for its stunning conclusions, the COI has documented a litany of human rights abuses inside the DPRK, including torture, rape, execution and mass incarceration of prisoners of conscience under horrifying conditions. ...The COI found that crimes against humanity have likely been committed by North Korea, and it has written to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, warning him that senior officials may be held responsible. So now the question is no longer whether the North Korean government is responsible for systematic violations of human rights. The question is what realistically can be done about it. Ideally the United Nations will rally and take action to address the concerns raised by the COI report. Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, put it this way: “[The Commission of Inquiry] has published a historic report, which sheds light on violations of a terrifying scale, the gravity and nature of which—in the report’s own words—do not have any parallel in the contemporary world. There can no longer be any excuses for inaction.” ... The members of the HRC should seize this opportunity and use their power and influence to coax a reluctant UNSC into action. The United Nations should publicly and privately urge the North Korean government to act on the Commission’s findings, and it should be prepared to devote its own resources and expertise to support initiatives that will promote greater respect for human rights inside the DPRK. Unfortunately, all of the early indications are that mobilizing the UN Security Council and persuading the DPRK to listen to its admonitions won’t be easy. With China, Russia and Cuba back on the HRC, getting a strong consensus for the first step—submission of North Korea’s human rights situation to the UNSC—is not a given. And assuming the Security Council does take up the matter, China is almost certain to block the most serious possible outcome—referral to the International Criminal Court for investigation of crimes against humanity. Even getting a strongly worded statement out of the UNSC, much less a binding resolution, will be a challenge given China's posture. At best, the HRC and the UNSC seem poised to shine an unwelcome spotlight on North Korea’s human rights record and to approve continued modest efforts to collect evidence of crimes against humanity that could be used in the future. But “naming and shaming” alone will not positively influence the North’s behavior, and for now, the prospects for any sort of justice/accountability mechanism are remote. The DPRK’s state-run news media KCNA wasted no time in denouncing the UN report as libel based on fake evidence manufactured by the United States and other hostile forces. “The DPRK [North Korea] once again makes it clear that the ‘human rights violations’ mentioned in the so-called ‘report’ do not exist in our country.” Later, KCNA personalized its attack, condemning Michael Kirby, the distinguished Australian judge who led the COI, saying his mission was “...to manipulate ‘evidence’ on the orders of Washington, lie about (North) Korea and oppose the republic under an international alliance that is controlled by the United States.” Shaming alone also is unlikely to convince North Korea’s “enablers”—especially China—to change their behavior. No country has more influence over the path of the DPRK than does China (although foreigners often exaggerate that influence, wrongly believing that Beijing can dictate policy to Pyongyang). But China has made plain its contempt for the COI, which
probably would never have been brought into being by the HRC in the first place had China not rotated off the Council in 2013. Speaking in Geneva last week, Chen Chuandong, a counselor at China’s UN mission, said the COI had made “unfounded accusations.” Dismissing the Commission’s findings, he said, “The inability of the commission to get support and cooperation from the country concerned [DPRK] makes it impossible for the commission to carry out its mandate in an impartial, objective and effective manner.” …Given the DPRK’s refusal to cooperate with the COI, and assuming China intervenes to prevent the UNSC from referring the situation in the DPRK to the International Criminal Court, what can the international community do that might begin to fulfill its “responsibility to protect” those suffering inside the DPRK?

Some will call for more sanctions and pressure. One can easily envision the talking points from Washington. A senior government spokesman will solemnly declare: “North Korea has a strategic choice to make…it can choose the path of denuclearization and respect for international norms, or it will find itself increasingly isolated from the global community.” This mind-numbing mantra—a policy of “strategic patience” thinly masking the symptoms of diplomatic sclerosis—will not do diddly-squat to help the North Korean people. The daily tragedy of life inside the DPRK will almost certainly continue unless the international community becomes more creative and much more committed to a sustained process of principled, comprehensive, top-to-bottom multilateral engagement. There are a few modest steps that could be taken in response to the COI’s report that might actually work over time to improve human rights conditions for the North Korean people, including those living outside the DPRK. For instance:

- The United States and the European Union, working with like-minded countries, should quietly press China to immediately cease the unlawful practice of forcibly returning North Korean refugees to a country where they face persecution, torture and death. Consistent with its international obligations, China should be called upon to allow North Koreans to peacefully transit China or depart China for South Korea or other safe haven.
- The United States should back South Korea’s play to expand exchanges with the DPRK, to include family reunification visits and cultural and educational visits.
- The United States should back South Korea’s Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), endorsing Track II engagement on less sensitive issues such as public health, the environment and food security.
- The effective US visa ban on visitors from the DPRK should end, and large-scale people-to-people initiatives—such as the long-delayed reciprocal visit to the United States by the national symphony of the DPRK—should be encouraged rather than blocked.
- The United States and like-minded countries should invest heavily in internet freedom and other means to increase the ability of the North Korean people to access reliable information online or over their cell phones. With broad backing by a coalition of religious groups, civil society organizations and human rights advocates, including Amnesty International, USA, the US Congress recently made a down payment on this approach by requiring the US Broadcasting Board of Governors to spend not less than $25 million in FY 2014 on research and deployment of internet censorship evasion technologies.
• The World Food Programme, in partnership with other UN agencies, private international aid organizations and the Red Cross, should resume carefully monitored food aid deliveries to the DPRK, with an emphasis on trying to reach some of the estimated 120,000 men, women and children incarcerated in the North’s prisons.

Longer-term, a Helsinki-style multilateral initiative offers the best hope of creating an environment in Northeast Asia conducive to peace and security and respect for human rights. Attempting to isolate the DPRK has not worked, and isolation will not help create the conditions necessary for those responsible for crimes against humanity to eventually be brought to justice. More sanctions—piled on top of some of the most comprehensive sanctions ever imposed on a country—are unlikely to bring about an epiphany in the thinking of North Korea’s leaders when it comes to human rights. Only pressure from within—brought by a generation of North Koreans who have more contact with the outside world and a deeper understanding of the failure of their own government to deliver justice and development to the people—is likely to convince the leaders of the DPRK to change course and begin to change the conditions now chronicled for all the world to see.” (Frank Jannuzzi, “Engage, Just Don’t ‘Name and Shame,” 38North, March 26, 2014)

Members of the U.N. Security Council condemned North Korea’s Nodong ballistic missile launch one day ago as a violation of U.N. resolutions and will continue discussions on an “appropriate response,” said Luxembourg’s U.N. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, president of the 15-nation Security Council for the month of March, after a closed-door meeting on North Korea requested by the United States. "Members of the Security Council condemned this launch as a violation of Security Council resolution(s)," she said. "Council members agreed to consult on an appropriate response." “There was unanimous condemnation of the launches," Lucas told reporters, adding that, "We also all agreed that this response should be given quickly.” Several council diplomats said negotiations on possible council action would likely continue into next week. There is a possibility, the diplomats said, of the Security Council’s North Korea sanctions committee expanding the current U.N. blacklist to include additional North Korean entities involved in Pyongyang’s missile program. But they said it could take weeks to reach agreement. “That (expanding the blacklist) would be an appropriate response by the council,” a Western diplomat told Reuters on condition of anonymity. “The first step will be some kind of more formal statement condemning the launch.” The ability of the council to take such steps will depend on China, a veto-wielding council member and North Korea’s traditional ally and most significant trading partner. Beijing issued a muted response to the North Korean launch. "In the present situation, all sides ought to dedicate themselves to maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told a regular briefing today. During the closed-door council session in New York, Beijing’s delegation reiterated that the Chinese wanted de-nuclearization of the Korean peninsula and to resume stalled six-party aid-for-disarmament talks among the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the United States, a Western diplomat said. The diplomat, who was inside the closed-door meeting, said China’s delegation also made clear that any council response to North Korea should be proportional to Pyongyang’s

The Navy seized a North Korean fishing boat this evening after it intruded into southern waters across the West Sea maritime border. According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the boat crossed over the Northern Limit Line (NLL) at around 5.26 p.m. and moved about 1.8 kilometers into South Korean waters near Baengyeong Island. A naval ship seized the boat at around 8 p.m. after it refused to retreat despite warning shots. “The boat was boarded and captured. We had to move in because weather conditions were worsening and we needed to ensure the safety of the North Korean crew,” the JCS said.

“The crew will be questioned as to why they crossed the NLL.” The JCS then warned that should the North use the seizure as an excuse to provoke the South, its forces will respond in a resolute manner. (Kim Tong-hyung, “North Korean Fishing Boat Seized near Maritime Border,” Korea Times, March 27, 2014)

3/28/14

DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman “blasting the U.S. for disclosing its attempt to intensify military provocations disturbing peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and in its vicinity: The U.S. president at a recent summit of the U.S., Japan and South Korea held in Hague openly justified the on-going joint military exercises, disclosing his provocative intention to further intensify them. The danger of a war on the Korean peninsula is increasing obviously due to the U.S. massive introduction of aggression forces and destructive weapons and its ceaseless madcap maneuvers for a nuclear war. It is a vicious strategic scenario of the U.S. to bar detente on the Korean peninsula created thanks to our sincere efforts and prevent the inter-Korean relations from being mended through such military provocations in a bid to deliberately escalate tensions and invent a pretext for arms buildup in the Asia-Pacific region. The joint military exercises for aggression staged by the U.S. in south Korea and in its vicinity with nuclear war hardware involved several times every year are, indeed, the most vivid expression of its hostile policy toward the DPRK. Facts go to prove that a series of commitments made by the U.S. that it has no hostile intent toward the DPRK are a sheer lie. The U.S. had better fulfill its commitments, not taking issue with others for no reason. The U.S. is describing its joint military exercises aimed at ‘occupying Pyongyang’ in other country as ‘defensive’ and ‘regular ones’ while terming regular drills of the DPRK army in its land ‘provocations.’ This is not workable on anyone. The U.S. insistence on such logic would only compel the DPRK to develop all its steps for bolstering up its war deterrent and demonstrating it into more annual and regular processes.” (KCNA, “DPRK Will Bolster up War Deterrent: Spokesman,” March 28, 2014)

General Staff of the Korean People’s Army (KPA) spokesman gave the following answer to a question raised by KCNA [today] in connection with the fact that a speed boat flotilla belonging to the second fleet of the south Korean navy illegally intruded into the waters of the DPRK side in the West Sea of Korea and forcibly seized a peaceable fishing boat of the DPRK on Thursday night: “22 HP fishing boat ‘539-52456’ belonging to the Ongjin Fishery Station lost its route due to engine breakdown when it was engaged in regular fishing in the waters near Mahap Islet in Ongjin County on [last]
night. As there was thick sea fog, sailors of the boat dropped an anchor and was judging direction with a compass. Suddenly unidentified warships appeared and encircled the fishing boat, firing more than 50 bullets. Speed boats belonging to the second fleet of the south Korean navy crossed the maritime military demarcation line and intruded into the territorial waters of our side all of a sudden. The gangsters stormed the fishing boat that had its engine barely repaired, beat our sailors with iron sticks, making them fall in a faint. Then they shackled and blindfolded the sailors and began taking the boat to Paekryong Island. What matters is that the gangsters threw an iron hook at the peaceable boat that went adrift after losing its route and seized the boat by force although its sailors stated that they did not want to surrender. Even the Joint Chiefs of Staff of south Korea formally admitted in an official notice sent to the DPRK that the boat was a peaceable fishing boat and normal navigation was not possible due to an engine trouble and that the sailors had no idea of submission. However, the gangsters of the south Korean navy separated our sailors and forced submission upon them with guns leveled at them on the island. The KPA General Staff sized up the situation and sent an emergency warning notice through the north-south military hotline on the west coast at 22:20 [yesterday], urging the Joint Chiefs of Staff of south Korea to immediately send back the fishing boat and warning that in case the return of the boat is delayed, that will entail unpredictable consequences. It, at the same time, took a military countermeasure of immediately dispatching patrol ships of the KPA to the waters where the incident occurred. Much upset by this, the group of gangsters belonging to the second fleet of the south Korean navy told lies and made excuses that our fishing boat ‘illegally crossed the northern limit line’ and that they seized the boat because it did not respond to several warnings. It was compelled to hurriedly notify the KPA of the time and place of handover. As a result, at 01:28 [today], our sailors could come back to the motherland aboard the fishing boat. The sailors have not yet come back to their senses but are still in coma due to the shuddering barbaric atrocities committed by the gangsters who forced submission on them. The DPRK side will take various measures to prevent abnormal incidents from happening to all fishing boats engaged in fishing in sensitive waters. But we will never overlook the inhumane and monstrous atrocities committed by the south Korean military warmongers by forcibly seizing the fishing boat and committing gangster-like crimes against its crew. The KPA will certainly force the group of gangsters of the south Korean navy to pay a dear price for their shuddering atrocities.” (KCNA, “KPA Will Never Pardon Gangsterism of S. Korean Military Warmongers: Spokesman,” March 28, 2014)

The north-south relations have been driven into a catastrophic phase again due to the south Korean authorities’ frantic scattering of anti-DPRK leaflets. The spokesman for the north side’s delegation to the north-south high-level contact issued a statement revealing its gravity [March 28]. It says: “The south Korean authorities headed by Park Geun Hye dared take issue with the nuclear issue of their fellow countrymen outside Korea. Inside south Korea they are busy openly encouraging the operation to scatter leaflets against fellow countrymen and smear campaign against them. The ceaseless leaflet scattering operation in south Korea is an open breach of the valuable agreement reached between the north and the south and the most serious act of treachery that can never be pardoned. The north and the south reached a historic
agreement at the high-level contact on February 14 in which they solemnly stated to the nation that they would refrain from slandering each other. But the situation is quite contrary to our expectation. It is because the pledge which south Korea made upon authorization of Park Geun Hye turned out to be a smokescreen to cover up the leaflet scattering operation that was carried out at the connivance of the authorities and the smear campaign against the north that has gone beyond the tolerance limit. We cannot but query is it Park’s style negotiating tactics to produce a honeyed agreement in a bid to attain her goal and is it her special skill for ‘confidence-building’ as she is unhesitatingly reneging on the agreement under such absurd pretexts as ‘nature of social system’ and ‘freedom of speech.’ The leaflet scattering operation and smear campaign against the DPRK going beyond the tolerance limit are undisguised acts of declaring a war against the DPRK. Park named the leaflet scattering against the DPRK a ‘balloon operation’ and is making sure that a military posture is taken to cope with the possible counterattack of the DPRK. In the long run, this tells that she is aware that a leaflet scattering operation conducted under the signboard of ‘balloon operation’ is a dangerous source of a military retaliation. We have long regarded the leaflet scattering by the south side as a declaration of a war and papers for sentencing death to human scum who orchestrated the leaflet scattering operations. Does she really want to see such leaflets becoming a source of war for reducing the base of provocations to ashes? She should bear in mind that now is the time to make a choice herself. The more desperately Park is hurling bêtes noires and conservative media into the smear campaign against fellow countrymen, the deeper she will find herself in an inescapable quagmire. Those who go frantic with the anti-DPRK leaflet scattering and smear campaign against compatriots going against the trend of the times can never be called human beings with normal way of thinking and fair media persons. All of them are without exception bêtes noires disqualified to be members of the nation and top class criminals who will not be able to live in the peaceful and stable reunified country. The more zealously Pak harbors betesnoires, the worse smell she will feel. In the long run, she will earn the ill fame of being an owner of huge dumping ground. Ethics and morality are more important than politics. A politician should be more human than any others and pursue justice and truth. Otherwise she will consider the presidential chair as a commanding tower for smear campaign and make no scruple of throwing the nation into an abyss of misfortune by misusing it. If the south Korean authorities are to have an elementary face to appear before the DPRK side, they should properly implement the north-south agreement, to begin with. All compatriots are closely watching the moves of the south Korean authorities. “(KCNA, “Spokesman for N. Side’s Delegation to N-S High-Level Contact Blasts S. Korea’s Scattering of Anti-DPRK Leaflets,” March 29, 2014)

President Park: “It pained me to see a recent footage of North Korean boys and girls in the foreign media. Children who lost their parents in the midst of economic distress were left neglected out in the cold, struggling from hunger. Even as we speak, there are North Koreans who are risking their lives to cross the border in search of freedom and happiness. The agony inflicted by division is also captured by the plight of countless people who were separated from their families during the war and who have ever since been yearning to see their loved ones without even knowing whether they were still alive. Just as the German people secured freedom, prosperity and peace by
tearing down the Berlin Wall, we too, must tear down barriers in our march toward a new future on the Korean Peninsula. Today, a ‘wall of military confrontation’ runs through the center of the Peninsula. A ‘wall of distrust’ has also been erected during the war and the ensuing decades of hostility. Formidable still is a ‘socio-cultural wall’ that divides southerners and northerners who have long lived under vastly different ideologies and systems in terms of how they think and live. Then there is a ‘wall of isolation’ imposed by North Korea’s nuclear program, cutting North Korea off from the community of nations. All of these curtains must be swept away if we are to unite the Korean Peninsula. And in their place we must build a ‘new kind of Korean Peninsula:’ a peninsula free of nuclear weapons, free from the fear of war, and free to enjoy life, peace and prosperity. I harbor no illusions that these tremendous barriers could be torn down with ease. But the future belongs to those who believe in their dreams and act on them. To make today’s dream of peaceful unification tomorrow’s reality, we must begin meticulous preparations now. Nor do I believe that a nation is made whole again simply by virtue of a reconnected territory or the institution of a single system. It is when those in the south and the north can understand each other and can get along as people of the same nation, that the Korean Peninsula can truly experience renewal as one. In my view, Germany was able to overcome the after-shocks of unification fairly quickly and achieve the level of integration we see today because of the sustained people-to-people interaction that took place prior to unification. Now more than ever, South and North Korea must broaden their exchange and cooperation. What we need is not one-off or promotional events, but the kind of interaction and cooperation that enables ordinary South Koreans and North Koreans to recover a sense of common identity as they help each other out. And so I hereby present three proposals to North Korean authorities in the hope of laying the groundwork for peaceful unification. First, we must take up the agenda for humanity -- the concerns of everyday people. For a start, we must help ease the agony of separated families. It makes little sense to talk about solidarity as one nation, when members of the same family are refused their god-given right to live together. It has been 70 long years. Last year alone, some three thousand eight hundred people who have yearned a lifetime just to be able to hold their sons’ and daughters’ hands -- just to know whether they’re alive - passed away with their unfulfilled dreams. I am sure the same is true of their fellow family members in North Korea. Allowing reunions should also give family members in North Korea solace. In order to address problems arising from family separations, East and West Germany permitted family visits in both directions and steadily promoted exchanges. It is about time South and North Korea allow family reunions to take place regularly so we could ease their anguish and build trust in doing so. We will reach out to North Korea to discuss concrete ways to achieve this and engage in necessary consultations with international bodies like the International Committee of the Red Cross. Going forward, the Republic of Korea will expand humanitarian assistance to ordinary North Koreans. The Korean Government will work with the United Nations to implement a program to provide health care support for pregnant mothers and infants in North Korea through their first 1,000 days. Furthermore, we will provide assistance for North Korean children so they could grow up to become healthy partners in our journey toward a unified future. Second, we must pursue together an agenda for co-prosperity through the building of infrastructure that
support the livelihood of people. South and North Korea should collaborate to set up multi-farming complexes that support agriculture, livestock and forestry in areas in the north suffering from backward production and deforestation. Working together from sowing to harvesting will enable South and North Korea not just to share the fruits of our labor, but also our hearts. As the bonds of trust begin to burgeon between the two sides, we can start to look at larger forms of development cooperation. To help make life less uncomfortable for ordinary North Koreans, Korea could invest in infrastructure-building projects where possible, such as in transportation and telecommunication. Should North Korea allow South Korea to develop its natural resources, the benefits would accrue to both halves of the peninsula. This would organically combine South Korean capital and technology with North Korean resources and labor and redound to the eventual formation of an economic community on the Korean Peninsula. In tandem with trilateral projects among the two Koreas and Russia, including the Rajin-Khasan joint project currently in the works, we will push forward collaborative projects involving both Koreas and China centered on the North Korean city of Sinuiju, among others. These will help promote shared development on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. The international community also needs to take greater interest in getting involved if development projects in North Korea are to proceed more efficiently. I call on those NGOs from Germany and Europe which have extensive experience working with North Korea on agricultural projects and forestry to join us. I also hereby ask international organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank for their support and cooperation. Third, we must advance an agenda for integration between the people of South and North Korea. As the state of division persists year after year, the language, culture and living habits of the two sides continue to diverge. If there is to be real connection and integration between the south and the north, we must narrow the distance between our values and our thinking. To achieve this, those from the south and the north must be afforded the chance to interact routinely. We will encourage exchanges in historical research and preservation, culture and the arts, and sports -- all of which could promote genuine people-to-people contact - rather than seek politically-motivated projects or promotional events. Should North Korea so desire, we would be happy to partner with the international community to share our experience in economic management and developing special economic zones, and to provide systematic education and training opportunities relating to finance, tax administration and statistics. We could also look at jointly developing educational programs to teach future generations and cultivate talent, for it is in them that the long-term engines to propel a unified Korean Peninsula forward will be found. I hereby propose to North Korea that we jointly establish an ‘inter-Korean exchange and cooperation office’ that would be tasked to realize these ideas. The armistice line bisecting the peninsula and the demilitarized zone, which is in fact the most militarized stretch of real estate on the planet, best epitomize the reality of our division today. My hope is to see South and North Korea, together with the United Nations, moving to build an international peace park inside the DMZ. By clearing barbed-wire fences and mines from parcels of the DMZ, we can start to create a zone of life and peace. This international peace park will presage the replacement of tension with peace on the DMZ, division with unification, and conflict in Northeast Asia with
If South and North Korea could shift the adversarial paradigm that exists today, build a railway that runs through the DMZ and connect Asia and Europe, we will see the makings of a genuine 21st century silk road across Eurasia and be able to prosper together. North Korea must choose the path to denuclearization so we could embark without delay on the work that needs to be done for a unified Korean Peninsula. I hope North Korea abandons its nuclear aspirations and returns to the Six Party Talks with a sincere willingness to resolve the nuclear issue so it could look after its own people. Should North Korea make the strategic decision to forgo its nuclear program, South Korea would correspondingly be the first to offer its active support, including for its much needed membership in international financial institutions and attracting international investments. If deemed necessary, we can seek to create a Northeast Asia Development Bank with regional neighbors to spur economic development in North Korea and in surrounding areas. We could also build on the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative to address North Korea's security concerns through a multilateral peace and security system in Northeast Asia. Here lies the road to shared prosperity between South and North Korea and here lies the path to peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia. Korea will aspire to a unification that promotes harmony with its neighbors, that is embraced by the community of nations, and that serves the cause of the international community. With a view to ushering in an era peaceful unification on the Korean Peninsula, I will soon be launching a committee to prepare for unification -- one that reports directly to me as president. People from inside and outside the government will come together through this committee to muster our collective wisdom as we more fully prepare for the process of unification.

(“President Park Geun-hye, “An Initiative for Peaceful Unification on the Korean Peninsula - Beyond Division, toward Integration,” Dresden, March 28, 2014) Called the “Dresden Doctrine,” the South’s proposal to the North offers a comprehensive package of economic assistance. Some projects like extending humanitarian assistance and seeking cultural integration would begin without the North abandoning its nuclear programs,” presidential secretary for foreign affairs Kim Hyoung-zhin said. Some analysts and presidential secretaries said it is still too early to expect a dramatic or abrupt arrival of detente on the Korean Peninsula. They said how the North responds to Park’s proposals will hold the key to easing tension. Presidential spokesman Min Kyung-wook said that the plans will only start when the North makes substantive moves toward giving up its nuclear ambitions. “It depends on how the North reacts to the proposals,” Min said. “It will be hard to carry out all the aid without sincere action by the North.” Analysts also remained cautious about the prospects of thawing the chilly ties between the two Koreas even after the declaration of the Dresden Doctrine. “Park reaffirmed her long-held stance that North Korea sticking to its nuclear programs is unacceptable,” said Ko Yoo-hwan, a professor of North Korea studies at Dongguk University in Seoul. “At the same time, Park successfully dispelled criticism that her North Korea policy has no action plans, by offering series of specific measures.” However, pundits still remain skeptical about the potential effectiveness of Park’s policy. “This is no new message to the North,” said a North Korea analyst who declined to be named. “The North will not react positively unless Park carries out some groundbreaking appeasement policy. I don’t think inter-Korean relations will improve
anytime soon, at least until the end of the ongoing joint Korea-U.S. military exercise.” (Kim Tae-gyu and Chung Min-uck, “Park Hints at Flexible Approach in Aid to N.K.,” Korea Times, March 29, 2014)

Uncertainty is lingering over whether President Park Geun-hye’s proposals to bolster humanitarian aid to North Korea and bilateral exchanges will lead to a turnaround in the strained ties, given high military tensions and mutual distrust. After Park’s announcement of the proposals on March 28 in Dresden, Germany, Seoul is poised to hold consultations among related government agencies to formulate a plan to put them into practice. But Pyongyang has yet to officially respond to the proposals. Instead, its media continued their verbal criticism of Park’s statement, which Seoul decried as an act that did not show even a “minimum level of courtesy” to a foreign head of state. “Park Geun-hye traveled around European states, churning out embarrassing words such as unification, co-prosperity and exchanges,” said Rodong Sinmun March 30. “We are seeing right through it ... Park’s unabashed intention to harm us with poison embedded in her outward smiles.” Analysts said that Pyongyang might have felt offended by the “patronizing” nature of Park’s proposals, and that it would see them as being aimed at absorbing the North to the South’s advantage. But the impoverished state might be exploring ways to extract as much as possible from the situation to shore up its economy, they added. “At this point in time, Park’s proposals are likely to be perceived by Pyongyang as a ‘poisonous apple’ -- a package that ultimately seeks to achieve reunification by absorbing the North,” said Cheong Seong-jang, a senior research fellow at the think tank Sejong Institute. “Thus, persuading the North to believe that there is no poison at all in the package will be the major task facing the Park Geun-hye government.” Aimed at laying the groundwork for reunification, Park’s proposals for “humanity, co-prosperity and integration” included extending aid to mothers and their babies; building infrastructure in the North in return for rights to develop underground resources; and increasing bilateral exchanges in various sectors. Experts say that Seoul could propose high-level talks with Pyongyang to explain Park’s proposals. But Seoul appears cautious, as current tensions between the two sides could prevent fruitful dialogue. For Seoul, the biggest hurdles to inter-Korean cooperation are Pyongyang’s refusal to show willingness toward denuclearization and its failure to take any steps to apologize for its 2010 torpedo attack on the corvette Cheonan that killed 46 South Korean sailors. While ignoring Seoul’s calls to show “sincerity” in its denuclearization commitment, the North has called for an early resumption of the multilateral aid-for-denuclearization talks. Pyongyang has already declared itself a nuclear-power state in its constitution and adopted a policy of simultaneously pursuing nuclear development and economic reconstruction. The North has also called on Seoul to lift the so-called May 24 sanctions while continuing to deny responsibility for the torpedo attack. After the corvette sank in March 2010, Seoul imposed the May sanctions, which cut off all government economic exchanges and cooperation with Pyongyang. Observers say that rather than presenting any clear stance over inter-Korean relations, the North may continue to watch Seoul’s moves until the allied military drills end next month and U.S. President Barack Obama completes his trip to Asia, including visits to South Korea. (Song Sang-ho, “Uncertainty Lingers over Park’s Dresden Proposals,” Korea Herald, March 30, 2014) The South Korean government has reportedly set a principle that if any issues
incompatible with the May 24 sanctions against North Korea occur in the implementation process of “Dresden unification proposals,” “lifting of May 24 measures would be necessary.” Multiple sources in the Seoul government said Sunday, “Of the three proposals, expansion of humanitarian aid to North Korea can be implemented within the boundary of the May 24 measures,” adding, “(However) in order to establish infrastructure for people’s livelihoods in North Korea, May 24 measures banning new inter-Korean investments and trade, and South Koreans’ visits to North Korean territory except Kaesong and Mount Kumgang regions should be gradually eased.” The South Korean government judges that in order to implement the Dresden proposals, it will start with regularization of family reunions, and assistance with "maternal-child health packages" targeting mothers and infants, but in the phases of investment for infrastructure such as transportation and communications, development of natural resources in the North, and implementation of the Seoul-Pyongyang-Beijing cooperation project centered in the North Korean city of Shinuiju, lifting of the May 24 sanctions is necessary. Thus far, Seoul has been approaching the Najin-Hasan project, as an “exception” to the May 24 measures that ban the South’s new investment in the North. A source in the South Korean government said, “We made a detour route in order to secure national interests through the Euroasia Initiative.” To achieve the Dresden Proposals, however, the South Korean government is apparently seeking the fundamental solution of lifting the May 24 measures, rather than recognition of such exception. Seoul seems to judge that as the Park administration’s proposals to Pyongyang make progress, areas incompatible with the May 24 measures will inevitably increase, and the administration cannot afford to create exceptions for such cases every time. However, many officials in the Seoul government maintain a cautious stance, saying, “Seeking to realize the Dresden proposals in itself will not directly lead to lifting of the May 24 measure.” They argue that in order for Seoul to lift the May 24 measures, Pyongyang should take responsible measures on the sinking of the South Korean naval corvette Cheonan through inter-Korean dialogue. A source in the South Korean government said, “The government will hold consultations between relevant government agencies, including the presidential office, the Unification Ministry and the Food, Agriculture and Forestry Ministry within this week, before taking follow-up measures for the Dresden proposals.” (Dong-A Ilbo, “Seoul Could Lift Sanctions against Pyongyang If Dresden Proposals Progress,” March 31, 2014)

South Korea sent back a North Korean fishing boat that had drifted across a disputed maritime border off the west coast, the defense ministry said, defusing tensions in an area which has been the scene of deadly clashes in recent years. South Korea’s military had seized the boat after it ignored warnings to retreat, but later confirmed the vessel had experienced engine failure and the three crewmen had no wish to defect to the South, a ministry official said. (Jun-min Park, “South Korea Sends back Stray North Korean Fishing Boat,” March 27, 2014)

North Korea continued to buy fertilizer from China in bulk last month, data showed, as the impoverished nation has revved up efforts to increase food production. The North brought in 13,769 tons of Chinese fertilizer in February, a whopping 13 times more than some 1,064 tons from a year earlier, according to the data compiled by the
Korean Rural Economic Institute (KREI). In the first two months of the year, Pyongyang imported 48,882 tons of Chinese fertilizer, which is far higher than 1,066 tons from the same period a year earlier, the data showed. “The 2013 figure is unprecedented, as the North used to buy a limited amount in the winter season. It seems to be very proactive in securing fertilizer long ahead of its usual schedule, and that indicates farm output improvement is its top priority,” said KREI researcher Kwon Tae-jin. In his New Year's message, the North's young leader Kim Jong-un stressed boosting food production, saying all efforts "should go for agriculture ... in order to build a strong economy and to improve the people's livelihoods." Last year, Pyongyang bought a total of 207,334 tons of fertilizer from China, down by 18 percent from the previous year. (Yonhap, “N. Korea’s Fertilizer Imports from China Soar in Feb.,” March 28, 2014)

Rodong Sinmun commentary: “The present south Korean chief executive made very provocative remarks for no reason over the DPRK’s nuclear issue at the 3rd ‘nuclear security summit’ held in Netherlands. The DPRK laid bare the injustice of her remarks and drew attention to her undesirable demeanor in an answer given by the spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK) to the question raised by KCNA. However, the south Korean authorities are making much fuss about the ‘serious violation’ of the agreement on halting the smear campaign between the north and south. Rodong Sinmun [today] observes in a commentary in this regard: The south Korean chief executive let loose a string of very reckless remarks against the DPRK, groundlessly accusing it over its nuclear issue at the summit, though she is not well informed of the essence of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. The DPRK told truth as it could not remain a passive onlooker to the behavior of the south Korean chief executive agitating confrontation in violation of the above-said agreement. .... If the south Korean regime persists in its malignant smear campaign defying the DPRK’s warnings, the north-south relations are bound to collapse. The north-south relations are put at serious peril due to the provocative Foal Eagle joint military maneuvers now under way in south Korea. She should have expressed concern about this situation and cogitated about how to put it under control. If she calls on foreign forces to boost cooperation in the confrontation with the DPRK, urging it to dismantle its nukes, the north-south relations are bound to meet tragic consequences. The fate of the inter-Korean relations entirely depends on the attitude of the south Korean authorities.” (KCNA, “Fate pf North-South Relations Entirely Depends on Attitude of S. Korean Authorities: Rodong Sinmun,” March 29, 2014)

DPRK Foreign Ministry statement “blasting the United Nations for its illegal action of taking issue with the justifiable rocket launching drills conducted by the Korean People’s Army (KPA): The sincere efforts of the DPRK to prevent a new war and ensure peace and security on the Korean peninsula are facing a grave challenge of the hostile forces. The UN Security Council at a closed-door consultative meeting held on March 28 at the urgent request of the U.S. committed an illegal provocative act of ‘denouncing’ the DPRK’s justifiable rocket launching drills for no reason. The drills were self-defensive military drills of the KPA to cope with the grave situation created by the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK which has been pursued for the past several decades and the evermore intensified exercises for a nuclear war. The climate for detente is being created on the Korean peninsula thanks to
the proactive and peace-loving sincere efforts of the DPRK this year. Nevertheless, the U.S. kicked off the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle joint military exercises with south Korean puppet forces with huge aggression forces and destructive weapons involved. With their scale and danger increased, the largest-ever forces since 1993 are involved in the Ssangyong drill which started on March 27. The U.S. dared declare that its main objective is to ‘occupy Pyongyang.’ It is quite natural for the KPA to make full preparations to cope with the prevailing grave situation as its mission is to protect the security of the country and its people and defend peace. However, the UN Security Council, shutting its eyes to the U.S. madcap nuclear war exercises, "denounced" the KPA’s self-defensive rocket launching drills to cope with them as a ‘violation of resolutions’ and ‘threat to international peace and security’ and is set to take an ‘appropriate step.’ It is absolutely intolerable. As far as UNSC’s ‘resolutions’ which it claimed were ‘violated by the DPRK are concerned, they are full of brigandish paragraphs to wantonly encroach on the sovereignty of the DPRK and the security of the nation and deprive it of its right to launch satellites for peaceful purposes as they are a product of the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK. The DPRK, therefore, categorically rejected them as soon as they were adopted and there is no ground whatsoever for the DPRK to be bound to them. If something is measured by a wrong ruler, a wrong result is bound to be produced. That is why there is such absurdity that the DPRK’s efforts to defend the security of the country and the nation are labeled a ‘provocation’ and the U.S. moves for igniting a nuclear war are described as ones for ‘defending peace.’ If the UNSC persistently tries to deny the exercise of the DPRK’s just right by partially citing the unreasonable ‘resolutions’ according to the U.S. scenario, it will end up escalating tensions and sparking conflict only, far from contributing to keeping peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region. The farce staged by the U.S. to ‘denounce’ the DPRK’s rocket launching drills for no reason after bringing them up for discussion at the UNSC is aimed to divert the blame for escalating tensions to the DPRK and hype the DPRK’s ‘threat’ to have a justification for arms buildup pursuant to its pivot to Asia-Pacific strategy. As the U.S. persists in its moves to isolate and stifle the DPRK by abusing the UNSC, prompted by its strategic interests, the DPRK has the right to defend itself and is fully ready to do so. Now that the U.S. is staging ceaseless nuclear war exercises by mobilizing all type nuclear strike means aimed at ‘occupying Pyongyang,’ etc. while describing the exercises as ‘annual ones,’ the KPA’s drills to cope with them will involve various forms of exercises in which more diversified nuclear deterrence will be used for hitting various medium- and long-range targets with a variety of striking power. The DPRK is fully ready for next-stage steps which the enemy can hardly imagine in case the U.S. considers them as a ‘provocation’ again. It would not rule out a new form of nuclear test for bolstering up its nuclear deterrence. The U.S. had better ponder over this and stop acting rashly. If a catastrophic development which no one wants occurs on the peninsula, the U.S. will be wholly responsible for it.” (KCNA, “DPRK FM Blasts UN for Taking Issue with DPRK over Its Justifiable Rocket Launching Drills,” March 30, 2014)
nations abducted by North Korean agents decades ago and have them returned home. North Korea has been insisting that the abduction issue was politically settled in September 2002, when then Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro visited Pyongyang. The two countries should hold serious and candid discussions on matters of mutual interest to achieve progress toward resolving pending issues, said Ihara Junichi, director general of the Foreign Ministry’s Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, at the opening of the meeting. Song Il Ho, North Korean ambassador in charge of talks on normalizing relations with Japan, responded by saying that he completely agrees to the views. The Japanese side plans to reiterate its stance that the two countries cannot normalize diplomatic relations unless the issues of North Korea’s abductions and its nuclear and missile programs are resolved altogether. Japan also plans to lodge a protest against North Korea’s firing Wednesday of two mid-range ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan, saying the action violates U.N. Security Council resolutions and the 2002 Pyongyang declaration between the two countries. (Jiji Press, “Japan, N. Korea Resume Official Talks,” Yomiuri Shimbun, March 30, 2014) North Korea has become open to discussing the issue of its abductions of Japanese nationals as the two countries agreed March 31 to carry on with governmental talks. During the first formal negotiations in more than a year, in Beijing, Japan appears to have demanded that North Korea reinvestigate the whereabouts of nationals Pyongyang agents abducted decades ago and allow all victims to return home. (Karube Takuya, “N. Korea Ready to Discuss Abductions of Korean Nationals,” Kyodo, March 31, 2014)

The two Koreas exchanged artillery fire across the western maritime border after the North staged a live-fire drill that sent artillery shells into southern waters and prompted the evacuation of South Korean islanders. The North fired about 500 rounds of artillery shells into waters north of the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the Yellow Sea from 12:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. After some 100 rounds fell south of the NLL, the South Korean military shot about 300 artillery shells into North Korean waters with K-9 self-propelled howitzers and dispatched F-15K fighter jets near the maritime border, it said. (Kim Eun-jung, “Koreas Exchange Live Fire near Western Sea Border,” March 31, 2014) In a fax message sent to the South Korean 2nd Navy Fleet Command on Monday morning, Pyongyang pinpointed seven spots where their artillery shells were expected to land, all of them above the NLL. But some 100 shells landed below the NLL, all near South Korea’s Baengnyeong Island. (Kim Hee-jin and Jeong Yong-soo, “North Warns Its Ship in East Sea,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 2, 2014) North Korea fired some 500 artillery shells near the Northern Limit Line, with about 100 of them falling south of the de facto inter-Korean sea border. In response to the 100 shells having dropped into its territorial waters, the South fired back some 300 shots with its K-9 self-propelled howitzers. All of the rounds fell north of the maritime border, Seoul’s Defense Ministry said. The ministry called the North’s live-fire drills a “premeditated, deliberate” provocation. “The live-fire drills came on the heels of the North’s launches of rockets and ballistic missiles, as well as the threat of another nuclear test. It is part of this provocative package,” ministry spokesperson Kim Min-seok told reporters. “Given that the North fired the shots southward, we judge the drills to be a deliberate provocation. Those rounds having fallen in our waters were all concentrated in sensitive areas adjacent to Bangnyeongdo, meaning it was a very deliberate, threatening move.” (Song Sang-ho, “Koreas Trade Fire across Sea Border,”
North Korea and South Korea fired hundreds of artillery shells across their disputed western sea border, escalating military tensions a day after the North threatened to conduct more nuclear tests. South Korean officials said the shells from both sides fell harmlessly into waters from which naval and fishing boats had stayed clear. But the exchange of fire marked the most serious episode along that border since an artillery duel there in 2010. Earlier today, North Korea had told the South that it would conduct live-fire military drills in seven zones along the maritime border, which hugs the southern coast of North Korea. Then its artillery pieces and multiple-rocket launchers rolled out of shoreline tunnels and fired 500 shells and projectiles between 12:15 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. About 100 of them flew across the disputed sea border and fell into South Korean-controlled waters near Baengnyeong Island, said Kim Min-seok, the spokesman for the South Korean Ministry of National Defense. Baengnyeong, a South Korean marine garrison, lies only 10 miles from the southwestern tip of North Korea. In retaliation, South Korean marines fired K-9 self-propelled artillery pieces, pounding North Korean waters north of the disputed sea border with 300 shells, Kim said. With guns from both sides rumbling, residents of the five South Korean border islands, including hundreds of children, hurried into bomb shelters. South Korea suspended ferry services to the islands and ordered fishing boats operating near the border waters to return to port. “This is a premeditated provocation to test our will to defend the maritime border, and if the North provokes again using our response today as an excuse, we will act decisively,” Kim said. “We have increased our vigilance along the western frontier islands and boosted weapons’ readiness there.” Artillery exchanges in the disputed waters are not unprecedented, but they raised fears that the often-repeated cycle of peace overtures followed by military provocations was resuming on the Korean Peninsula. “Pyongyang prefers to strike when it sees Washington as weak or distracted, beset by bigger problems,” Lee Sung-yoon, a North Korea expert at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, said, referring to the North’s capital. President Obama “is seen as wavering on Russia and Syria,” he said. “It would be a good time to raise the stakes once more with a nuclear or long-range missile test, as Pyongyang has intimated in recent days.” North Korea’s latest hostilities came as the country was preparing for major anniversaries, like the April 15 birthday of Kim Il-sung, the deceased grandfather of the current leader, Kim Jong-un, and the April 25 anniversary of the North Korean military. The North was also scheduled to convene its recently elected rubber-stamp Parliament on April 9. The regime traditionally uses such events to bolster internal solidarity, sometimes with the aid of missile and nuclear tests and other provocations. Kim Jong-un, who came to power after the death of his father, Kim Jong-il, in 2011, has so far “turned out to be more of a hard-liner and far more bellicose in external relations than his father,” said Cheong Seong-chang, a North Korea expert at Sejong Institute of South Korea. (Choe Sang-hun, “North and South Korea Exchange Fire across Disputed Sea Border,” New York Times, April 1, 2014, p. A-1) North Korea’s artillery firing drills in the West (Yellow) Sea on Mar. 31 were very likely a response to the recent joint military exercises by South Korea and the US. The fact that they came on the same day as the largest joint landing exercise in 21 years, and were announced to the press, indicates that Pyongyang may indeed be ratcheting up its response. At the same time, the decision to alert South Korea to its plans appeared to be an attempt to keep tensions at a predictable level while
maximizing the impression from the show of force. The drills came on the same day that the Ssang Yong (Double Dragon) exercise, part of ongoing joint military exercises by South Korea and the US, was being opened up to the press. Staged off Pohang in North Gyeongsang Province, it was the largest landing exercise since 1993, with around 12,500 South Korean and US marines taking part. The scenario, which involves the allied forces moving back north after being pushed back by the North Korean military, reportedly included an occupation of Pyongyang. Having been on the wrong side of the Incheon landing during the Korean War, North Korea is especially sensitive to landing exercises that involve the US. Also factoring into the strong objections it has raised to the exercises each year is its awareness of the weakness of its conventional weaponry compared to the allied forces. “In the broader sense, North Korea’s artillery drills were a response to the South Korea-US military exercises in general,” said Peace Network director Cheong Wook-sik. “In a narrower sense, they were responding to the South Korea-US landing exercise.” During last month’s agreement on the staging of reunions of divided family members, North Korea appeared to back down once on the issue of the exercises. Some analysts said that ruled out the possibility of another concession this time. “North Korea already made one concession back in the February agreement with South Korea on the family reunions, when it agreed to hold the reunions even though they overlapped with the exercises,” said Kim Dong-yeop, a research professor at the Kyungnam University Institute of Far Eastern Studies. “They may have felt that if they didn’t do anything this time, it would be less a ‘concession’ than an implicit approval of the exercises, and they might lose ground in later talks with Seoul,” Kim explained. The two sides have also recently been facing off over a North Korean fishing boat that drifted over the Northern Limit Line (NLL). In the process of South Korea capturing the boat and sending it back, North Korea accused the South of “abusive behavior,” prompting the South to describe the North as “the one that caused the problem in the first place.” A piece the same day in the Rodong Sinmun, the newspaper of the Workers’ Party of (North) Korea, with the title “They will pay the price for their unpardonable thuggishness,” featured a chorus of agitated representatives of North Korean society denouncing the South. For these reasons, North Korea had multiple goals in mind when it staged the artillery drills and announced them beforehand. First, by alerting South Korea to the drills, it sought to keep tensions at a predictable level. Second, it also appears to have sought a propaganda effect by sending as loud a message as possible to the South Korean public about the reasons for the drills and the nature of the South Korea-US exercises. The military tensions look likely to continue at least through the end of the Foal Eagle exercises on Apr. 18. Judging from the rigid stance coming from Seoul, even the unification policy presented in President Park Geun-hye’s recent Dresden statement is unlikely to be pushed for the time being. The administration wants to avoid giving the impression of capitulating to North Korea’s military actions, while the Blue House is insisting that it has “no plans at the moment for proposing a senior-level meeting” with the North. At their root, the recent exchanges have mainly been about both sides facing off ahead of the turnaround that many are predicting for late April, when the exercises end. Once the schedule for North Korea’s internal political events and South Korea’s joint military exercises with the US are over, US President Barack Obama is scheduled to visit South Korea in late April, and the two sides will be forced to find some way of thawing the chill. Still, the rising influence of hardliners on both sides as tensions mount could
result in a situation that is beyond fixing. (Choi Hyun-june and Kim Oi-hyun, “N. Korea’s Live-Fire Exercise Likely a Response to ROK-U.S. Joint Exercise,” Hankyore, April 1, 2014)

With Pyongyang having threatened to conduct a “new type” of nuclear test, attention is being drawn to what method it might employ for a fourth test and how far its military nuclear technology has come. For the fourth test, the North is most likely to carry out an experiment using highly enriched uranium, which would differentiate it from past tests.

The North conducted plutonium-based tests in 2006 and 2009. What fissile material was used for last year’s test remains unknown as the South and the U.S. failed to obtain and analyze post-test radioactive materials. “The most likely scenario is that Pyongyang uses highly enriched uranium and publicly announces it to the outside world, so as to corroborate its claim that it has succeeded in having a variety of nuclear detonation methods,” said Kim Tae-woo, nuclear politics expert at Seoul’s Dongguk University. “Then, it may also warn that it could mass-produce those various types of nuclear arms as it has claimed.” Another likely scenario is that Pyongyang will test a “boosted fission weapon,” which experts have called a “1.5-generation” nuclear bomb. The development of this weapon is known to be a preliminary step toward the production of a hydrogen bomb, regarded as a “second generation” nuclear weapon. Some observers also raise the possibility of the North conducting a test of a hydrogen bomb, while many say the North has not reached a high enough level of technology for this. “The North could also shock the world by claiming that it will test a boosted fission weapon. Although the chances are low, the North could also declare that it had conducted a test of a hydrogen bomb,” said Kim. (Song Sang-ho, “Attention Turns to ‘New Type’ of N.K. Nukes,” Korea Herald, March 31, 2014)

With the launch today of a special intraparty panel directly under his lead, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and his ruling Liberal Democratic Party are ready to kick off their full-fledged drive to reinterpret the Constitution to allow Japan to help defend its allies. Abe says he wants Japan to make a more “proactive contribution to peace,” and to do this he plans to change the government’s official interpretation of war-renouncing Article 9 so the nation can exercise the right of collective self-defense, which means coming to the aid of Japanese allies who come under military attack. Previous governments have maintained that Japan can’t exercise the right to collective self-defense, which Article 51 of the United Nations Charter defines as an inherent right, because Article 9 of the Constitution prohibits Japan from using force to resolve international disputes and bans it from maintaining “land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential.” Yet some politicians and experts note Japan already has policies in place that cross that boundary. “In a way, Japan has been effectively exercising the right,” said Nishihara Masashi, president of the Research Institute for Peace and Security. “Rather than reinterpreting the Constitution, the government should make exceptions in the way they have done with the arms exports ban,” Nishihara said, referring to past instances in which the government, in the form of chief Cabinet secretary statements, allowed certain exceptions to the limits on exporting weapons. Despite what is stated in the Constitution, Japan has supported U.S. military operations by providing logistic support and has taken part in some international peacekeeping
efforts. Back in 1960, in the course of revising the Japan-U.S. defense treaty, Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke—Abe’s grandfather—said that even allowing a foreign nation to maintain military bases on Japanese soil and defending Japan alongside those forces could be interpreted as engaging in collective self-defense. The bases in Okinawa proved to be of great use to the United States during the Vietnam War. In 1965, the U.S. Air Force began flying B-52s out of Kadena Air Base to bomb North Vietnam. Japan also enacted a law to allow the Self-Defense Forces to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations in 1992 without amending or reinterpreting the Constitution. The law was enacted in response to Japan’s bitter experience in the first Gulf War, from 1990 to 1991, in which it provided $13 billion in financial support to help the allies battle Saddam Hussein but no troops. This earned Tokyo a great deal of international scorn. The Japan-U.S. defense cooperation guidelines drafted in 1997 also led to Japan enacting a law in 1999 to let it provide logistic support to the United States in emergencies in “areas surrounding Japan,” which was understood to include the Korean Peninsula. It also passed a law in 2001 allowing it to refuel U.S. vessels in the Indian Ocean for free in support of Operation Enduring Freedom—the war in Afghanistan launched after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks—and enacted one allowing the SDF to conduct policing operations against pirates off Somalia in 2009. “There are many things Japan can do to contribute to the international community without reinterpreting the Constitution,” said Masahiro Sakata, former secretary-general of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau, which vets the constitutionality of government-proposed legislation. The bureau has historically said that Japan cannot exercise the right to collective self-defense. “There are limits to what Japan can do, but Abe should ask the public if they want to push the limit by putting the issue of constitutional revision on the table rather than just bulldozing the reinterpretation through,” Sakata said.

Yearning to depart from the long-accepted postwar system and to put the alliance with the U.S. on a more equal footing, Abe has long sought the reinterpretation of Article 9. One move he made during his first stint as prime minister in 2006 was to task a government panel with examining the conditions under which Japan could engage in collective self-defense. Its report in 2007 envisioned bolstering the alliance by allowing Japan to shoot down missiles targeted at the U.S. and to help protect U.S. naval ships on the high seas in joint operations. It also called for expanding Japan’s role in international missions by letting the SDF use arms to defend foreign troops during peacekeeping operations. Yet Yanagisawa Kyoji, a former Defense Ministry official who was assistant chief Cabinet secretary in charge of crisis management from 2004 to 2009, noted that Japan can legally shoot down a missile headed for Guam if it travels over Japanese territory because that would be individual self-defense. One of the biggest changes in assuming an unlimited right to collective self-defense could be the ability to participate in joint military exercises with countries other than the United States. Yanagisawa said exercising the right could ultimately mean entering situations in which Japan is helping to defend friendly countries like the Philippines or Vietnam. But those scenarios appear to have been left out of the discussion. “It’s easier for the public to understand the necessity of collective self-defense if the government says it’s for the sake of preserving the U.S. alliance,” said Yanagisawa. “Abe wants the legacy of having been the leader who enabled Japan to exercise the right.” The panel, which was reconvened after Abe returned to power in December 2012, has discussed five specific questions: 1) Can Japan assist the U.S. by conducting ship inspections when
the latter comes under attack? 2) Can Japan join U.N.-authorized operations if contingencies break out in areas near Japan? 3) Can the SDF remove mines near Japanese waters? 4) Can Japan join U.S.-authorized military actions such as those in the first Gulf War? 5) How should Japan respond to armed incidents when they are not considered full-scale attacks against Japan? Some people worry Japan could be dragged into American wars, especially after Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary Takamizawa Nobushige implied last September that Japan could send the SDF to defend friendly nations on the other side of the Earth. But a high-ranking government official said last week the panel is likely to only say Japan can use the right under limited circumstances where inaction would harm its interests, implying Japan could engage in activities like removing mines from international sea lanes. “The report won’t include cases in which Japan would participate in a large-scale war under the right to collective self-defense,” said the official, referring to the report the panel is scheduled to produce in April. “Now we can say that we can’t exercise the right because we have Article 9, which was imposed by the United States,” said Michishita Narushige, director of the security and international studies program at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies. “But after the government gives the green light, Japan will not be able to make any excuses for not doing enough and more.” (Mie Ayako, “Abe Ready for Full-on Military Drive,” Japan Times, March 27, 2014)

An unmanned drone crashed on a South Korean island near a disputed maritime border with North Korea, a South Korean defense ministry official said, triggering an investigation into whether the aircraft was from the North. The drone fell on Baengnyeong island at about 4 p.m. yesterday, when North Korea fired hundreds of artillery rounds in seas close to a disputed maritime line. That triggered a similar show of strength from South Korea. The South Korean military was trying to verify where the drone had come from and what its purpose might have been, and was also looking into any possible link to North Korea’s espionage operations, the military official told Reuters. Yonhap, quoting an unidentified South Korean government official, reported that the drone was 2 to 3 meters (7 to 10 ft) long and comprised a Japanese engine and Chinese parts, as well as a small camera. Yonhap also said the drone was similar to another found in a border city late last month. (Ju-min Park, “Unidentified Drone Crashed on South Korean Border Island: Military,” Reuters, April 1, 2014) South Korea has concluded that the two drones that were recently found near the border with North Korea were from the communist nation, a defense ministry official said, prompting the military to seek measures to tighten air space security. South Korea recovered two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) near the border -- one found in Paju, just south of the demilitarized zone, on March 24, and the other discovered on Baengnyeong Island near the tensely guarded western maritime border on Monday when North Korea held a live-fire drill. A team of military officials and experts disassembled the drones to conduct an in-depth analysis and came to the conclusion that Pyongyang has developed the two UAVs for surveillance of South Korea, the ministry said. “The two unmanned aerial vehicles are prime-type spy drones,” the defense ministry official spoke on condition of anonymity. “While advanced spy drones can adapt their flight paths to different terrains, the North’s drones cannot change their flight altitudes though they use the Global Positioning System.” The sky blue drones were equipped with a Japanese camera and Chinese parts, but they didn’t have
wireless transmission system that can send image data in real time. The aircraft that crashed on Baengnyeong Island was briefly spotted by a radar on Monday, when the two Koreas exchanged hundreds of rounds of artillery into the western sea during the North’s live-fire drill. The 3.2 meter-long fixed-wing drone can fly at an altitude of 3 km with a maximum speed of 162 km per hour, capable of conducting missions within a 4-km radius. It can carry 20 kg to 25 kg of ammunition and land on the ground using a parachute. The other drone found in Paju, which is smaller in size, has inscriptions in Korean with North Korean spelling standard on the back of its lithium-ion battery, along with an expiration date. It flew in a southward direction to Seoul and then turned back toward north, but the aircraft was not detected by the low-altitude surveillance radar, the official said. The aircraft is known to contain pictures of military installations and even the residential quarters of Seoul’s presidential compound, revealing holes in South Korea’s air defense. "The drones could be used in terrorism if developed, though they cannot conduct such missions," the official said, stressing urgent need to prepare countermeasures. In light of the incident, the defense ministry pledged to work together with other related agencies to draw up measures to defend against such drones and other small aircraft that are hard to detect by radar. "The military is preparing measures to deal with unmanned aerial vehicles, including North Korea’s lightweight aircraft, to complement the air-defense operation system," the defense ministry said. "The ministry will also consult with the related agencies to draw up measures to control civilian UAVs and the registration system," it added. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Says Two Drones Are from N. Korea,” April 2, 2014) The drone that crashed on a South Korean border island during Pyongyang’s live-fire drill earlier this week is believed to have been sent from an airport on the west coast of North Korea, a military official said. While experts believe Pyongyang developed the small drones based on the Soviet-era designs to enhance its surveillance of South Korea, the drone incursions have raised concerns over South Korea’s air defense capacity as the drone recovered in Paju had taken 193 photos of the border and the capital city Seoul. Among them were photos taken from airspace above the presidential office in downtown Seoul and military installations near the border, revealing holes in the air security of South Korea. While some reports said Pyongyang may have acquired the photos with a data transmission system, Seoul’s defense ministry said the antiquated drone does not have that capability. "Although the drone had a 0.9 GHz transmission system, it is used to control the vehicle and receive GPS signals, not for sending images," ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said in a briefing. "Although the cameras can take photos, (the drone) cannot send the images." Fingerprints were collected from the UAV found in Paju, which belongs to no South Korean citizen, Kim said, corroborating evidence that shows the North’s involvement. (Kim Eun-jung, “N. Korean Drone Sent from Southwestern Airport during Firing Drill,” Yonhap, April 3, 2014) Paul Schulte, a visiting senior research fellow in the department of war studies at London’s Kings College, said: “The aircraft is so small that it looks as though it could not have flown from anywhere else [other than North Korea] - that is unless it is from South Korea and they haven’t identified it, but that is less likely.” North Korea is known to operate several types of UAVs. The first model introduced in the late 1990s was the VR-3 Reys, an eight-meter-long reconnaissance drone made by the Russian aerospace and defense company Tupolev. Its range stretched up to 90 kilometers. The North also has the 2.78-meter Pchela-1T, manufactured by the Russian Yakovlev Design Bureau, for
surveillance and observation in battlefields with a range of 60 kilometers. There are also two types of larger remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs) based on China’s D-4. Two years ago the North was reported to be developing unmanned attack aircraft based on the MQM-107D Streaker, a U.S. target drone. According to South Korean intelligence sources, the North has conducted tests on high-speed drones fitted with high explosives but failed to master the technology. Inspired by the first Gulf War in 1991, South Korea started developing its own UAV Songgolmae in 1993. The 4.8-meter-long aircraft model named RQ-101, which is capable of flying at a maximum speed of 185 kilometers per hour for as long as six hours with a range of 110 kilometers, was put into service in 2002. Seven years later, Seoul introduced the Skylark II, an unmanned aircraft with a range of 60 kilometers from Israeli manufacturer Elbit Systems. Just last month the Defense Acquisition Program Administration announced it would buy four units of Global Hawk unmanned aircraft from Northrop Grumman, an American aerospace and defense firm. (Seo Ji-eun and Jang Hyuk-jin, “Two Crashed Drones Are N. Korean, Says Gov’t.,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 3, 2014) Seoul’s Defense Ministry said May 8 that its probe team had secured the “smoking gun” confirming that the three crashed drones, discovered in frontline areas in March and April, came from North Korea. Announcing the result of its investigation, the investigation team, consisting of South Korean and U.S. experts, presented its analysis of photos and mission data from the drones’ cameras and memory chips, which revealed that they took off from the North and were programmed to return to the North. “Analyzing the travel routes of the three drones, the investigation team secured definitive scientific evidence, or a ‘smoking gun,’ to prove that Pyongyang is responsible for sending the drones,” ministry spokesperson Kim Min-seok told reporters. The military authorities discovered three drones, one in Paju close to the western Demilitarized Zone on March 24, one on the border island of Baengnyeongdo on March 31 and another in Samcheok, close to the eastern DMZ on April 6. Based on its analysis, the ministry said that the drone found on Baengnyeongdo Island took off from 27 kilometers southeast of Haeju, Hwanghae Province. Its planned travel route, stored in the drone’s memory chip, matched the routes along which the drone took photos, officials explained. The drone from Paju took off from 5 kilometers northwest of the North Korean border city of Gaeseong, while the drone from Samcheok originated from 17 kilometers east of Pyonggang in the North’s Gangwon Province. Seoul officials suspect that the North produced the drones based on Chinese drones it imported via Hong Kong. Seoul has requested through a diplomatic channel that Beijing confirm if there was any connection between Chinese firms and Pyongyang authorities. (Song Sang-ho, “Seoul Finds ‘Smoking Gun’ Proving N.K. Sent Drones,” Korea Herald, May 8, 2014)

North Korea told its ships to avoid the waters near Wonsan, a coastal city off the East Sea, between March 31 and April 4, raising concerns of more missile launches following live-fire exercises in the Yellow Sea, officials from the South Korean military told reporters it learned through intelligence. But North Korea did not give any similar notification to the International Maritime Organization. Some weapons not seen recently near the East Sea have been spotted by South Korea, officials said, such as a missile transporter-erector-launcher (TEL), a mobile missile launcher. “Although North Korea withdrew all the weapons it used for the live-fire drills on Monday right after the exercises in the Yellow Sea,” an official said, “we detected some moves of a missile
launch near the East Sea.” South Korea’s military does not rule out the possibility of an attack in the ocean or on land, another government official in Seoul said. “Considering that North Korea does not repeat strategies used already, they could stage an attack near the Military Demarcation Line, such as attacking our guard posts, while everyone is keeping an eye on the Yellow Sea and the East Sea,” the official said. The Military Demarcation Line is the inter-Korean border. Sources said North Korea’s military carried out exercises targeting front-line guard posts of South Korea during winter drills this year. Since Pyongyang has deployed artillery and missiles at a training field near Mirim Airport in Pyongyang since mid-March, officials are also wary of a large-scale military provocation, possibly around the time of U.S. President Barack Obama’s visit to Seoul this month. “North Korea has carried out a series of drills by deploying various kinds of weapons recently,” a military official said. “Although they have only threatened South Korea and Japan so far, they could now use other weapons targeting the United States.”

On March 30, North Korea’s Foreign Ministry warned in a statement that it will conduct “a new form of nuclear test,” implying a fourth underground nuclear test following tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013. Experts wonder whether a “new form” of test signifies a device made from uranium rather than plutonium. The first two tests were confirmed by specialists as plutonium bombs. The type used in the February 2013 test has not been confirmed. U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel denounced Monday’s live-fire drills by North Korea. “The provocation that the North Koreans have, once again, engaged in is dangerous and it needs to stop,” he said at a briefing on Monday. “And obviously, when I’m in China, that will be a subject that I will discuss with my counterpart in China.” Hagel will visit China next week. In the meantime, South Korean military said Monday that Pyongyang has recently tacitly recognized the Northern Limit Line as the maritime border with the South. In a fax message sent to the South Korean 2nd Navy Fleet Command on Monday morning, Pyongyang pinpointed seven spots where their artillery shells were expected to land, all of them above the NLL. But some 100 shells landed below the NLL, all near South Korea’s Baengnyeong Island. As of yesterday, Pyongyang did not refute claims by the South Korean military that it violated the NLL. In 1959, North Korea also marked the NLL in its annual defense yearbook as the effective maritime boundary in the Yellow Sea. But, starting in the 1970s, Pyongyang has challenged the line and its patrol ships have crossed it more than 500 times, according to the South Korean military. “Since North Korea announced a new western border unilaterally drawn up by itself in 1999, they have tried to nullify the NLL,” a South Korean military official said. “But recently, they seem to recognize the NLL as a real boundary.” (Kim Hee-jin and Jeong Yong-soo, “North Warns Its Ship in East Sea,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 2, 2014)

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un assessed the current political situation on the Korean peninsula to be extremely serious and claimed that the North must tear down the United States’ hostile North Korean policy. At a resolution meeting of the commanders of the joint forces in the Korean People’s Army held at the Samjiyon Grand Monument in Ryanggangdo on April 1, First Secretary Kim mentioned in his speech, “We made a grand proposal and continued to adopt realistic measures in order to provide a new turning point for reunification based on our desire to open a new path to improved inter-Korean relations, but the current political situation in this
land is extremely grave.” This day’s meeting marked an end to a march carried out by the commanders of the joined forces which began on March 23 under the direction of Kim. First Secretary Kim said, “The United States and the hostile powers are ignoring our generosity and good will, trying to politically destroy and economically isolate our republic, and embarking on vicious schemes to crush us with military force. Our military and our people will never tolerate the U.S. policies hostile to North Korea and will thoroughly destroy them.” (Yi Ji-seon, “Kim Jong-un: ‘Grave Political Situation … Will Crush U.S. Hostile Policy,” Kyunghyang Shinmun, April 3, 2014)

Danny Russel, the assistant secretary of state for East Asia, acknowledged that a growing China has been unhappy with efforts by the United States to strengthen defense cooperation with allies Japan and South Korea. “The most direct way for China to affect those military deployments and those strategic alliance plans is by applying its leverage to North Korea to bring about a decision on the part of Pyongyang to choose the right path,” Russel told a conference call organized by the Asia Society. (AFP, “U.S. Says China to Gain by Pressing N. Korea,” April 1, 2014)

A ranking North Korean diplomat said that whether his country and Japan can improve their relations hinges on the fate of Pyongyang’s de facto embassy building in Tokyo. “Without resolving this issue, there is no need to make progress on Korea-Japan relations,” Song Il Ho, North Korea’s ambassador for talks on normalizing ties with Japan, told reporters at Beijing Capital International Airport before flying back to Pyongyang. Song, who took part in a two-day meeting with Japanese diplomats through the Chinese capital, was referring to the possibility that the pro-North Korean group Chongryon will be evicted from its Tokyo headquarters, which is the closest thing Pyongyang has to an embassy in Japan. (Kyodo, “North Links Relations to De Facto Embassy’s Fate,” Japan Times, April 1, 2014)

Taking his nation another step away from its postwar pacifism, the government of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo discarded a nearly half-century ban on the export of weapons and military hardware, a move aimed at helping Japan assume a larger regional security role to offset China’s growing military might. The decision, which had been under consideration for years before Abe took office, replaced the self-imposed ban dating to the late 1960s with new, still-restrictive guidelines that permit the export of weapons only to allies and partners that agree not to sell them to third nations without Japanese approval. The new guidelines will also make it easier for Japan to join multinational development projects for expensive new weapons systems, like the American-led effort to build the F-35 stealth fighter jet. The move formalizes a change that had already begun in incremental steps a few years ago, as Japan created a growing number of exceptions to its export ban, known as the three principles, one of the most visible pillars of Japan’s post-World War II renunciation of war, along with its pacifist Constitution, which Abe has also said he wants to revise. Adopted in 1967, the three principles originally prohibited arms sales to Communist nations, countries under United Nations sanctions and countries in armed conflict, but it eventually grew into a blanket ban on all weapons exports. Analysts said getting rid of the principles was partly aimed at opening new markets for Japanese defense companies at a time when Japan’s own military spending, while up for the first time in a decade, remained
severely constrained by ballooning budget deficits. But they said Abe had finally decided to carry out the long-discussed change to achieve a larger strategic goal: augmenting Japan’s regional influence by offering its technologically sophisticated defense hardware to other countries locked in territorial disputes with an increasingly assertive China. Analysts described the decision as a step toward Abe’s goal of turning long-passive Japan, which has Asia’s second-largest economy after China, into a more proactive player in regional security. Japanese officials say Abe wants to do this by turning Japan into a full-fledged defense partner of the United States, which has guaranteed Japan’s security since the war but has recently been forced to cut military spending because of fiscal problems of its own. American officials, who have long urged Japan to assume more of the defense burden, have said they would welcome a lifting of the ban. (Martin Fackler, “Japan Ends Decades-Long Ban on Export of Weapons,” New York Times, April 2, 2014, p. A-4)

A former State Department arms specialist was sentenced to 13 months in prison for leaking classified intelligence on North Korea to a Fox News reporter in 2009. Stephen Jin-woo Kim, a Korean-American, earlier pleaded guilty to passing information about the possibility of a North Korean nuclear test to James Rosen, Fox’s chief Washington correspondent. The ruling by the U.S. District Court here ends Kim’s four-year court battle. (Yonhap, “Ex-U.S. Official Sentenced to 13 Months in Jail for Leaking Information on N. Korea,” April 3, 2014)

Concerns expressed by the junior partner in the ruling coalition have done nothing to deter Prime Minister Abe Shinzo from his ultimate goal of amending the Constitution. At a high-level meeting April 2, Ishiba Shigeru, secretary-general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, suggested delaying Cabinet approval for changing the government interpretation of the Constitution out of consideration for partner New Komeito. “The words ‘collective self-defense’ must be included” in any Cabinet approval decision, Abe said, rejecting Ishiba’s proposal. Those close to Abe explained that the reinterpretation is only the first step in the prime minister’s long-term plan. “By first changing the interpretation, approval will be given to allowing for the exercise of the right to collective self-defense within the realm of the possible,” one source said. “However, that alone will not allow for implementing security measures of an international standard. That would make it even clearer that the only alternative will be amending the Constitution.” The April 2 meeting at the prime minister’s office, which included LDP Vice President Komura Masahiko and Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide, was held to discuss ways to persuade a reluctant New Komeito to go along with reinterpretation plan. It was not the first time Abe has refused to budge on the collective self-defense issue. An aide to Abe once suggested the option of not using “collective” in the document to be approved by the Cabinet. Abe replied, “That is totally unacceptable.” In September 2007, after a disastrous LDP showing in the Upper House election, Abe stepped down as prime minister after about only a year in office. Inoue Yoshiyuki, an aide to Abe during that period and now an Upper House member of Your Party, recalls what Abe told him about two months after he resigned as prime minister: “I wanted to visit Yasukuni Shrine while in office. I also wanted to amend the Constitution.” After the party swept to a landslide victory in the Lower House election held Dec. 16, 2012, Abe again became prime minister. Two days later, one of Abe’s
closest confidants handed him a list of priority issues for his administration. The memo reflected the views of political scientists and others with close ties to Abe. After the Abe administration was formed, the list was revised about 10 times because of changing economic conditions and the international situation. At important junctures, Abe met with his confidant to iron out the priorities. One of the major items on the very first memo was constitutional revision. The aide suggested to Abe that he first work on amending Article 96 of the Constitution to ease the conditions for initiating constitutional revision from a two-thirds or greater majority in both houses of the Diet to a simple majority in both chambers. Abe had made that issue a key policy plank when he ran for LDP president in 2012. “Even if half of the public is in favor of amending the Constitution, it cannot be carried out if one-third or more of the members of the Diet oppose it. That is wrong,” he argued at the time. However, the move to lower the hurdle for constitutional revision was criticized even by conservatives who generally favored amendments. Kobayashi Setsu, a professor emeritus of constitutional law at Keio University, described the proposal to amend Article 96 as equivalent to “gaining admission to a university through a back-channel process.” Public opinion polls by media organizations found more voters were opposed to the proposal than in favor. For those reasons, Abe began taking a cautious approach toward amending Article 96 around May 2013. Shortly thereafter, amending Article 96 was deleted from the list of priority issues kept by Abe’s aide. Recent policy memos contained about seven or eight items, such as collective self-defense, repairing the Japan-U.S. relationship, the Senkaku Islands and historical understanding.

“Constitutional revision is an objective that serves as the major precondition for this administration,” the aide said. “While we have not given up on amending Article 96, we no longer feel that has to be amended first.” Abe, in fact, has spoken out in favor of amending the Constitution ever since he was first elected to the Diet in 1993. In 1994, an LDP body chaired by Gotoda Masaharu, a former chief Cabinet secretary and political heavyweight, looked into fundamental issues. The body considered revising the party stance of compiling a new Constitution, which had been included ever since the LDP was established in 1955. Abe vigorously opposed the proposed change. His challenge to the moderate Gotoda gained the attention of conservative scholars who viewed Abe as someone with a promising future. Abe began developing a network of personal ties to such academics, including Yagi Hidetsugu, a constitutional law scholar, and Nakanishi Terumasa, a political scientist. He also gained the support of experts and groups in favor of amending the Constitution. Those aligned with Abe on constitutional revision have begun raising the possibility of a new objective. Last November, a meeting attended by about 800 individuals who favored constitutional revision was held in Tokyo. Among those in attendance were Takaichi Sanae, the LDP policy chief, and Eto Seiichi, an adviser to Abe. Journalist Sakurai Yoshiko, who is also close to Abe, was one of speakers at the event. During the second part of the closed-door gathering, Momochi Akira, constitutional law professor at Nihon University, laid out his vision of the political future. “The Upper House election scheduled for the summer of 2016 should be held concurrently with a Lower House election. The national referendum on whether to amend the Constitution should be held at the same time,” he said. The expectations of those in favor of constitutional revision have grown as support ratings for the Abe Cabinet have remained stable. However, a referendum cannot be held unless two-thirds or more of the members of each Diet chamber agree
to initiate an amendment. Lawmakers and scholars close to Abe are now considering first proposing an amendment that can gain the approval of even opposition party members so that a two-thirds majority can be obtained. Those close to Abe point to the fact that the Constitution contains no provisions about how to deal with emergencies, such as natural disasters. They propose submitting an amendment that can gain the approval of a large majority of the public and putting off revisions of pacifist Article 9 until later. “If we can show the public how the constitutional revision procedure works, we should be able to have them understand that amending the Constitution is not something to be feared,” said Yosuke Isozaki, who serves as both a special adviser to Abe and secretary-general of the LDP’s Headquarters for the Promotion of Revision to the Constitution. (Asahi Shimbun, “Abe Refuses to Bend in Quest for Constitutional Revision, May 3, 2014)

4/3/14

South Korea named its new chief negotiator for the six-party talks on ending North Korea’s nuclear weapons program ahead of a scheduled meeting with the envoys from the United States and Japan. Hwang Joon-kook, the ambassador in charge of negotiations for the South Korea-U.S. defense cost sharing pact, replaces Cho Tae-yong, who was promoted to vice foreign minister earlier this year, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Yonhap, “Seoul Names New Envoy on Six-Party Talks,” April 3, 2014)

Japanese Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori issued an order without disclosing it for the Self-Defense Forces to destroy North Korean ballistic missiles if any are launched, a government source said April 5. In line with the order, the SDF deployed to the Sea of Japan the Aegis-equipped destroyer Kirishima carrying long-range SM-3 interceptor missiles, the source said. The order was kept secret to avoid revealing Japan’s missile detection capabilities, they said. (Kyodo, “Japan Ordered SDF to Destroy Any N. Korean Missile Lauched,” April 5, 2014)

Rodong Sinmun erupted, describing South Korean President Park Geun-hye as a “bitch” and “old cat groaning in her sickbed.” A trio of articles organized under the headline “We Accuse Park the Bitch” showcased a variety of angry public reactions to a keynote speech Park delivered in Germany last week on Korean reunification. “Park Geun Hye had never married, nor given birth to child. It is really ridiculous that such a cold-blooded animal talked about human affairs, feigning to be concerned about our women and children. It would make even a cat laugh,” Pyongyang doctor Kim Jong Hui reportedly told the Rodong. (Chad O’Carroll, “N. Korean Newspaper Erupts over Park’s Unification Speech, Labels Her ‘Bitch,’” April 3, 2014)

Milonopoulos and Blandford: “South Korean President Park Guen-hye, in her statement at the 2014 Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague last week, warned, “North Korea’s Yongbyon is home to such a dense concentration of nuclear facilities that a fire in a single building could lead to a disaster potentially worse than Chernobyl.” Yet, this claim, which was first made in a recent study by a South Korean physicist, has not been critically evaluated using available, and known, information about North Korea’s past practices in reactor operation and construction, and the technical capacity of the reactors at the Yongbyon site. Our analysis differs from these
recently prevailing speculations, in terms of the scale and scope of a potential nuclear meltdown at Yongbyon, in part, due to the significantly smaller size of North Korea’s experimental reactor and available radionuclide inventory. However, based on our analysis of the potential safety vulnerabilities of the ELWR’s construction, North Korea’s isolation, and its lack of safety culture, we believe the probability of an accident at the ELWR is high and should be a concern for the international community. …Very few details are known about the design of North Korea’s ELWR. What is known was obtained from information gathered by a visiting American delegation in November 2010 and through close examination of satellite imagery of the facility. During the site visit by Dr. Siegfried Hecker and his Stanford University colleagues, the reactor’s chief engineer stated that the ELWR would use a pressurized water reactor (PWR) design—the most common commercial reactor constructed around the globe. The reactor will operate with a full fuel-load of four tons of low-enriched uranium (LEU) at 3.5 percent of the uranium-235 isotope—a level of enrichment consistent with typical PWR fuel—to be produced in the newly constructed uranium enrichment facility at Yongbyon. At the time of the November visit, the concrete foundation of the reactor’s containment vessel was estimated to be 28 meters squared. The chief engineer said the vessel was expected to be 22 meters in diameter, 0.9 meters thick, and 40 meters high. These dimensions have been confirmed by analysis of commercial satellite imagery. As of January 2014, the external construction of the reactor appeared complete. The containment structure has been welded shut, the turbine generator hall seems finished, a ventilation shaft has been erected, and a transformer park used for electricity generation has been set up on the east side of the reactor. Still, there is probably a significant amount of work to be done inside the reactor before it becomes operational. For example, the control system will need to be installed and all the internal components, including the vessels and piping, will need to be designed, installed, and tested. The testing of the reactor’s components may occur in the coming months. However, it is unlikely the ELWR will be fully operational for one to two years at the earliest, assuming the North Koreans do not run into any large-scale problems. …While the ELWR appears similar to the LWRs that KEDO was supposed to have built in North Korea, it is unclear how the North’s involvement with that project has influenced the reactor design or how much technology transfer occurred. When the KEDO project was terminated, some reactor components, fabricated abroad, were left onsite. It is unknown any of these components have been used for the new reactor or if the North Koreans—who are very good at reverse engineering—may have used the components instead to learn how to fabricate them for the ELWR. Satellite imagery of the KEDO site from 2009 shows activity around many of the areas where the components were stored indicating the North Koreans may be using them in some way for the new reactor. The large amount of unknowns about the ELWR is cause for concern. After closely examining the available data, we have identified four potential safety vulnerabilities. 1. Possible flawed reactor safety design and inadequate quality of construction From our observations of satellite imagery, we believe the new ELWR has features similar to standard Generation II pressurized water reactors. While the specific safety features of the ELWR are unknown, reactors with a similar design generally rely on “active” safety systems, which require operator actions or electronic feedback to ensure safety of the reactor. The specifications of the safety system can make the difference under a disaster scenario between a reactor core melting down
and shutting off just in time. Because these key details remain unknown, it exposes a serious safety vulnerability and raises considerable alarm that a natural disaster onsite could precipitate a core meltdown of the reactor. For an active safety system to be adequate, onsite power needs to be supplied to the reactor constantly in order to pump cooling water through the core to keep the temperature constant and prevent a meltdown. However, North Korea’s antiquated energy grid is unlikely to be reliable enough to guarantee a constant stream of onsite power. In addition, backup diesel generators are usually used to provide power to the cooling system in the event a station blackout occurs. However, no generators appear present at the site. In short, without a reliable source of onsite power or adequate back-up generators, North Korea’s ELWR runs the risk of losing power and not being able to provide adequate cooling to the core. The ability of the North Koreans to fabricate specialized safety-related equipment and components is another important concern. Everything in the reactor, from the piping to the pressure and containment vessel to the concrete used for the containment building, requires special materials and quality-assured fabrication to prevent any radiological leaks. Pyongyang does possess a large steel industry, including a 10,000-ton forging press at the Chollima Steel Complex, which could be used to forge reactor components. However, these components require precise and accurate fabrication, a process only a few countries have perfected through many years of trial and error. While not impossible, it would be surprising for North Korea to be able to flawlessly fabricate these components without outside assistance. An additional concern is that basic details of the ELWR design appear to have been decided on an ad hoc basis even as construction had already begun. As of November 2010, North Korea’s reactor engineers admitted to not yet knowing what type of cladding would be used for the fuel: either zirconium alloy or stainless steel. This decision is usually made early in the reactor design phase, well before construction has begun, because the type of cladding can affect the overall design of the reactor’s core and safety features. Moreover, North Korea has no experience fabricating fuel for an ELWR. That might leave the reactor susceptible to fuel failures. Once the reactor becomes operational, the fuel rod’s protective cladding sleeve could degrade and the hot exposed fuel pellets would leak radiation into the containment vessel, possibly contaminating the reactors components.

2. Inexperienced design and safety engineering

While some North Korean engineers were trained in aspects of LWR construction and operation by KEDO, Pyongyang evidently decided not to capitalize on this experience. Rather, the reactor design team is composed of young men in their 40s without any prior experience designing or building these reactors, making them more susceptible to misjudgment and errors in their calculations. … An additional potential problem is what appeared to be inadequate nuclear standard best practices during the early construction of the containment building. For example, with only a single backhoe visible onsite, Dr. Hecker asked if the North Koreans had conducted the proper seismic analysis to ensure the reactor was not sited in a location susceptible to earthquakes. Although the chief engineer assured him they excavated down to the bedrock, there was little visible evidence that such an analysis had occurred. In addition, the method of laying the foundations for the reactor’s containment structure appeared inadequate. Best practices for reactor design requires special reactor-grade concrete poured in large, unbroken units whose drying must be carefully watched through close temperature control. However, only a small mixer was visible at the site
and the concrete containment shell was being poured only one meter at a time. Even the siting of the ELWR raises serious questions. Located adjacent to the Kuryong River, the reactor uses the river as its ultimate heat sink—the source of water to cool the core of the reactor. A constant, reliable supply is needed to cool the reactor system to prevent a meltdown. However, based on satellite imagery, rather than constant and reliable, the supply seems variable depending on rainfall. The river tends to flood during the late summer monsoon period and dries up and freezes during the winter. This unpredictable water level complicates the reactor design's need for active cooling.

3. Lack of a strong safety culture and an independent nuclear regulator

The absence of a strong, transparent nuclear regulatory framework in North Korea is of significant concern. One of the key objectives during the KEDO project was to establish such a framework through working with the DPRK’s State Nuclear Safety Regulatory Commission (SNSRC), the authority that is responsible for licensing and overseeing the ELWR’s construction. That was to be accomplished by training operators and teaching its specialists best practices in nuclear safety. The SNSRC’s ability to effectively implement its mission is in doubt for three reasons. First, the employees of the SNSRC, while university graduates, probably only have practical experience working at Pyongyang’s gas-graphite reactor and have never licensed an LWR. This lack of experience is a significant problem. Second, the SNSRC is unlikely to qualify as an independent and strong body operating outside the political influence of the regime, an essential requirement for ensuring nuclear safety. The need for such an authority is a lesson many countries unfortunately do not learn until it is too late. For example, Japan established such an authority in the aftermath of Fukushima, which, unlike its predecessor, is solely regulatory with no responsibility for technology promotion. In the case of North Korea, there are no government agencies that operate outside of the control of the regime and the importance of Pyongyang’s nuclear program ensures an even greater degree of oversight. It should be noted that North Korea does have experience constructing and operating reactors in a safe manner. Since 1986, North Korea has been operating its 5 MWe gas-cooled, graphite-moderated reactor off and on, which was constructed indigenously, without any major accidents or safety issues. However, because of fundamental design differences between the gas-graphite reactors and LWRs, especially related to reactor safety, this experience does not directly translate or inform the ability of North Korea’s engineers to ensure LWR safety. In fact, the gas-graphite design has more inherent safety features than LWRs and is less susceptible to a severe accident.

The nuclear facilities at Yongbyon are located adjacent to large fields used to grow crops and many of the buildings at the nuclear research center, are interspersed with others associated with processing agricultural products. If an accident were to occur, there would be a high risk of contaminating the surrounding agricultural areas and ground soil. In addition, if the accident is not successfully managed, this contamination could be made worse, for instance, it might also spread to the adjacent Kuryong River. This issue of ELWR safety should be of concern to the international community. However, little can be done to address these safety vulnerabilities if tensions between North Korea and the United States continue and there are no talks about Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program. If those talks resume, nuclear safety should be addressed. But in the meantime, national governments, if they have not done so already, should prepare for the day when Pyongyang’s ELWR becomes operational and the possibility that an
North Korea said that the world would have to "wait and see" when asked for details of "a new form" of nuclear test it threatened to carry out after the United Nations Security Council condemned Pyongyang’s recent ballistic missile launch. “The DPRK made it very clear, we will carry out a new form of nuclear test. But I recommend you to wait and see what it is," Deputy U.N. Ambassador Ri Tong Il said during the normally reclusive state’s third U.N. news conference this year. “The U.S. is hell bent on eliminating the DPRK politically, isolating DPRK economically and annihilating the DPRK militarily,” Ri told reporters. "There is a great question mark why the U.S. is hell bent on increasing the tension, ignoring the DPRK proposals, very important for peace and security." He also said Washington was blocking a bid for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula by ignoring North Korean proposals, so it can maintain military presence in the region. "There is no human rights situation existing in the DPRK," Ri said. "The DPRK has the best social system in the world, it is based on one family as a country, fully united around our leadership, the people and the party." "The U.S. is behaving as if it is a human rights judge while it should be subjected to the International Criminal Court more than anybody else. They made a lot of crimes," he said, citing U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ri criticized military drills by the United States and South Korea, called Foal Eagle and due to end on April 18. "The U.S. is now going around crazy with these joint military drills without caring about peace and security on the Korean peninsula," Ri said. A U.S. diplomat said that Washington had long made clear that it was open to improved relations with North Korea if Pyongyang lived up to its international obligations. “North Korea’s nuclear programs will not make the country more secure. The only way for North Korea to achieve the security and prosperity it seeks is by complying with its international obligations and commitments,” the diplomat said. Nuclear expert Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in the United States, said North Korea's reference to a new form of nuclear test could mean simultaneous detonation of two or more devices as part of a program of more intense testing expected over the next few years. Lewis said he thought it unlikely North Korean leader Kim Jong Un would move for the moment from underground to atmospheric testing--something he might do to demonstrate an ability to deploy nuclear armed missiles or artillery--for fear of inflaming Chinese public opinion. "He's only likely to do that ... if he no longer cares what Beijing thinks," Lewis said. "Still, it is useful to remember that Kim Jong Un has a number of other unpleasant provocations from which he might choose." (Reuters, “North Korea Tells World ‘Wait and See’ on New Nuclear Test,” April 5, 2014)
at the request of the North. After the Beijing talks, Song warned that government-level talks between North Korea and Japan aimed at improving ties would fail if a prime real estate in Tokyo, owned by a Japan-based pro-Pyongyang Korean residents’ group, is auctioned off. (Yonhap, “Senior N. Korea Diplomat No-Show at Beijing Airport,” April 5, 2014)

KPA Strategic Force spokesman: “The south Korean puppet forces conducted a ballistic missile test-fire in secrecy at the Anhung firing range in Thaean, South Chungchong Province on Mar. 23 and opened it to public more than ten days later. South Korean media are loudly advertising that the puppet forces succeeded in the test-fire of a ballistic missile with a range of 500 km by applying foreign technology. They are openly claiming that if these ballistic missiles are deployed to be ready to go into action next year, they can put the whole area of the northern half of Korea except North Hamgyong Province within the striking range. ...Great irony is that the puppet forces are claiming that they did a great job by conducting a test-fire of a ballistic missile with a range of just 500 km. And it cannot but be construed as a comedy that they opened to public the test-fire so late. As already known, units of the Strategic Force of the KPA successfully conducted their regular rocket launching drills from late February to late March. At that time the south Korean puppet forces made much fuss together with the U.S. as if the rockets launched by the KPA had dropped in the heart of Seoul. It was none other than the south Korean puppet forces which worked more desperately than any others in a bid to slap fresh "sanctions" against the DPRK while labeling the launching drills as a "violation of the UN resolutions" and a "provocation." Ceaselessly heard from south Korea these days are voices chiding the puppet forces’ poor military reaction to the regular artillery naval firing drills of the KPA. To make matters worse, even drone cases occurred all of a sudden, more badly tarnishing the image of the puppet forces which had fallen to the ground. Thrown into a pretty fix by the artillery naval firing drills in waters, a hotspot in the southwestern sector of the front, and the drone cases, the puppet authorities urgently required a way to put the situation under control. They orchestrated a charade out of agony. It was to open to public in great haste the missile test-fire conducted in secrecy and advertise it as something great and "big success" in a bid to calm down the mounting accusation and derision. With no rhetoric could they improve their poor position. This farce only brought disgrace to them. People are anxious to know how the U.S. will approach the opening to public of the missile test-fire by the south Korean puppet forces. This is because what approach the U.S. will take towards the rocket launching drills conducted by the KPA and the south Korean puppet forces' missile test-fire, both of which happened on the Korean peninsula, would help judge again the American style standards and mode of action. Now the south Korean puppet forces will have no face to find fault with the DPRK over its justifiable rocket launches and its exercise of the right to self-defence any longer no matter how desperately they may wag their tongues. The south Korean puppet forces should properly know that their position is becoming more pitiful as they are hell-bent on the confrontation with compatriots. The U.S., too, would be well advised not to groundlessly take issue with the DPRK over its measures to bolster up its deterrence for self-defense.” (KCNA, “Purpose of S. Korea’s Delayed Opening to Public of Missile Test-Fire Laid Bare,” April 5, 2014)
The U.S. will deploy two additional ballistic missile defense destroyers to Japan by 2017 as part of an effort to bolster protection from North Korean missile threats, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said at a news conference following a meeting with Japan Defense Minister Onodera Itsunori. Hagel said the two ships are in response to North Korea’s “pattern of provocative and destabilizing actions” that violate U.N. resolutions and also will provide more protection to the U.S. from those threats. The two additional ships would bring the total to seven U.S. ballistic missile defense warships in Japan, and it continues U.S. efforts to increase its focus on the Asia Pacific. They carry sophisticated systems that can track missile launches, and their SM-3 missiles can zero in on and take out short- to medium-range missiles that might be fired at U.S. or allied nations. They can also carry Tomahawk cruise missiles, which can be launched from sea and hit high-value targets or enemy weapons systems from afar, without risking pilots or aircraft. In unusually forceful remarks about China, Hagel called the Asian nation a “great power” and said that when he travels to China later this week he will tell its officials that they must have respect for their neighbors. Japan and China have been at odds over territorial claims and other issues. "With this power comes new and wider responsibilities as to how you use that power" and how to employ military might, Hagel said, adding that he looks forward to an honest, straightforward dialogue with the Chinese. Hagel is on a 10-day trip across the Asia Pacific, and just spent three days in Hawaii meeting with Southeast Asian defense ministers, talking about efforts to improve defense and humanitarian assistance cooperation. The U.S. will begin sending long-range Global Hawk surveillance drones to Japan this month for rotational deployments. They are intended to help step up surveillance around the Senkaku islands, a source of heated debate between Japan and China over claims to the remote territories. In its latest symbolic gesture of support for Japan, the U.S. decided not to send a warship to participate in a Chinese naval parade as part of the Western Pacific Naval Symposium because the Japanese were not invited. U.S. military leaders, including the Navy’s top officer, Adm. Jonathan Greenert, will attend the symposium and ship review. (Lolita Baldor, “U.S. to Deploy 2 More Destroyers to Japan by 2017,” Associated Press, April 6, 2014)

South Korea found a third suspected North Korean drone on a mountain on the east coast, officials said, in what could be the latest in a series of border incursions by North Korea’s unmanned spy aircraft. South Korean soldiers found the crashed drone on a mountain in Samcheok, 290 kilometers east of Seoul, earlier in the day after three local residents informed the military that they had seen the unmanned aircraft on October 4, defense ministry officials said. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Finds Third Suspects N. Korean Drone,” April 6, 2014)

Seoul repatriated three North Korean sailors rescued April 4 in the aftermath of a cargo ship accident off South Korea’s coast via the inter-Korean truce village of Panmunjom, Sunday. Two dead bodies of North Korean sailors who drowned during the accident were also returned home, according to the Ministry of Unification. The move comes following Pyongyang’s call yesterday for “concerned parties” to rescue the missing sailors who have been missing since a cargo ship with 16 North Koreans aboard sank off the southwestern coast of South Korea the previous day. The
Mongolian-flagged 4,300-ton boat, named Grand Fortune 1, ran aground at around 1 a.m. on April 4, some 74 kilometers off the coast of Yeosu, South Jeolla Province. (Chung Min-uck, “Seoul Repatriates N. Korean Sailors,” Korea Times, April 6, 2014)

In a show of unity in dealing with North Korea, South Korea, the U.S. and Japan jointly warned the communist nation not to take any more provocative steps. "If North Korea goes ahead with another nuclear test, we, along with the international community, will make it pay the price for that," South Korea's top nuclear envoy Hwang Joon-kook told reporters in Washington. "North Korea's nuclear test would be a direct challenge to the international community, and a threat to peace and security in the world." He was briefing the media on results of a trilateral meeting with his U.S. and Japanese counterparts -- Glyn Davies and Ihara Junichi. The three countries also vowed to continue close cooperation to address the human rights problem in the secretive North, according to the U.S. State Department. "We pledged to continue working closely with each other and with our allies and partners in the international community to focus international attention on the deplorable human rights situation in North Korea, and to hold the DPRK (North Korea) accountable for its systematic and ongoing violations of the human rights of its people," it said. (Yonhap, “S. Korea, U.S., Japan Issue Joint Warning to N. Korea,” April 8, 2014) South Korea, the United States and Japan have agreed to lower the bar on conditions for resuming long-stalled nuclear talks with North Korea, a diplomatic source with knowledge of the matter said April 14, saying Pyongyang must show its sincerity through the same pledges it made in a scuttled aid-for-disarmament deal with the U.S. more than two years ago. The agreement was reached at the trilateral talks in Washington last week among top nuclear envoys of South Korea, the U.S. and Japan. They listed several conditions, which were originally set by the U.S. and North Korea in February 2012, as steps the North should take before the resumption of the six-party talks, the source said on condition of anonymity. Under the so-called “Leap Day” deal between Washington and Pyongyang, North Korea agreed to suspend nuclear and long-range missile tests and allow international inspectors to monitor its nuclear sites in exchange for food aid. The deal fell apart when North Korea launched a long-range rocket two months later and conducted its third nuclear test a year later. Subsequently, South Korea, the U.S. and Japan had called on the North to take steps beyond what it agreed to in the “Leap Day” deal before resumption of the talks. The move to relax the conditions for talks comes amid threats by North Korea to carry out a “new form” of nuclear test ahead of visits by U.S. President Barack Obama to South Korea and Japan later this month. "Two principles have been set before resumption of the six-party talks can take place. The first is to make practical progress in denuclearizing North Korea and the second is to prevent the North from sophisticating its nuclear capability," the source said. "Under the principles, there are various ways to resume the six-party talks. But, North Korea must meet conditions set under the February 29 agreement," the source said, referring to the deal between the U.S. and North Korea. After the trilateral talks in Washington, South Korea’s chief nuclear envoy, Hwang Joon-kook, visited Beijing last week, during which he discussed the issue with his Chinese counterpart Wu Dawei. Wu is now on a week-long visit to the U.S. for talks with his U.S. counterpart, Glyn Davies. "China agrees on the need for North Korea to meet preconditions ahead of the six-party talks, but it insists that the level of preconditions should be reasonable," said the source,
who also is involved in the talks between Hwang and Wu. (Yonhap, “S. Korea, U.S., Japan Lower Bar for Nuclear Talks with N. Korea,” Korea Herald, April 14, 2014)

President Park Geun-hye has been taking a confused approach to North Korea recently, following up her emphasis on inter-Korean exchange and cooperation in a late March speech in Dresden with mention of “internal insecurities” at an April 7 meeting of Blue House senior secretaries. Analysts are now saying that Park’s “my way or the highway” approach, which may work in the domestic politics where she has a solid support base, is now being extended to inter-Korean relations as well. Speaking at a meeting at the Blue House this morning, Park prefaced her remarks by saying, “North Korea’s decision not long ago to break the agreement it had with Seoul not to engage in slander or provocations may be an attempt to shut down internal insecurities.” Park’s primary aim may have been to respond to recent remarks in the North Korean media that denounce her by name. But her decision to make such a blunt reference to “internal insecurities” in North Korea is also seen as somewhat unusual. Moreover, the perceived provocations in the remarks could get in the way of realizing some of the aims she laid out in the Dresden speech. Indeed, signs already point to North Korea taking her remarks as slanderous. While laying out her “three-point proposal” to North Korea in the Dresden speech, she used a number of expressions that could upset Pyongyang, including references to “famine-stricken North Korean children” and a “nonstop string of defections that continues to this day.” A senior government official warned of the consequences of ill-chosen language. “President Park really didn’t show any consideration for the other side when she said that,” the official said. “When you go overseas and start talking about how North Korea is ‘starving,’ they’re going to have a tough time accepting your proposal even if they wanted to.” The charge is that her “North Korea policy” isn’t aimed at the North at all, but is purely for South Korean political effect. The “my way” approach can sometimes be an asset, since it means Park is not letting the situation dictate her response. In the same April 7 opening remarks, she went on to say, “This is all the more reason we need to keep making efforts to solve the humanitarian issues affecting North Korea’s people, build infrastructure for the public welfare, and restore parity between people in South and North Korea.” This reads as a pledge of continued efforts at exchange and cooperation in spite of tensions between the two sides. The problem could be that all of the proposals were focused squarely on the North Korean people. Many said this emphasis in the three-point proposal in Dresden - resident humanitarian issues, resident infrastructure, parity with South Korean residents - was the result of an approach that views the North Korean administration and people as intrinsically separate. It’s also a view of the North Korea held by many conservatives in South Korea and the US. “While it’s more forward-thinking that what’s come before, this Dresden speech is going to seem off-putting to the regime in Pyongyang because it separates out the regime and the public and talks about support as a way of ‘improving people’s lives,’” said Dongguk University professor Koh Yu-hwan. (Choi Hyun-june and Seok Jin-hwan, “Pres. Park’s ‘My Way or the Highway’ North Korea Policy,” Hankyore, April 8, 2014)
Nick Hansen: “Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that North Korea may have experienced problems ensuring an adequate water supply essential for the operation of reactor cooling systems at the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center. These difficulties resulted from the extensive rainfall and subsequent flooding in July 2013, which moved the main channel in the Kuryong River away from the water supply, filled the collection cisterns and ponds with sand and possibly destroyed pipes leading to them that had been laid along the river bottom. Because of these difficulties: The recently restarted 5 MWe plutonium production reactor may have been temporarily shut down or operated at a lower power level in early 2014 in order to repair problems with the secondary cooling system’s water supply. North Korea quickly completed major water channel excavations and dam construction from December 2013 until February of this year to ensure adequate water would be available for the cooling system of the experimental light water reactor (ELWR) now nearing completion. Despite these short-term fixes, the danger posed by an unreliable supply of water for the Yongbyon reactors remains, particularly since the channels and dam constructed are made from sand and could be washed away by future floods. If the 5 MWe reactor’s secondary cooling system were to fail, so would the entire cooling system. The result would be a fire in the graphite core and the release of radioactivity. While North Korea’s experience operating this system would increase its chances of quickly shutting it down before a fire broke out, the reactor’s lack of airtight containment could lead to the escape of some radioactivity even in small accidents. As for the ELWR, Pyongyang has no such experience operating the new facility, the first indigenously built reactor of its kind in North Korea. The rapid loss of water used to cool the reactor could result in a serious safety problem. Contrary to recent assertions by ROK President Park Geun-hye, a nuclear accident in North Korea would not cause damage worse than the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 because of the small sizes of Yongbyon reactors. However, a radioactive release in the atmosphere or river would cause an expanded local area of contamination. Also, Pyongyang’s likely lack of transparency could create a regional crisis, panicking the public in surrounding countries and raising tensions with governments anxious for further information. A key hurdle for North Korea in restarting its 5 MWe plutonium production reactor in August 2013 was reactivating the secondary cooling system for that facility. The system had been shut down since July 2007 and disabled since 2008, with the destruction of its cooling tower as a result of an agreement reached through the Six Party Talks. Hot water, used to cool the carbon-dioxide gas primary cooling system, had flowed from the reactor’s secondary system to the large tower and then was recycled back into the reactor. The tower also cooled the steam and hot water from the turbines that powered the electrical generators. Without the secondary cooling system operating, the primary carbon-dioxide gas cooling system would quickly become hot, causing the heat in reactor core to increase as well as a fire in the graphite moderators. To accomplish the objective of restarting the 5 MWe reactor, rather than rebuild the cooling tower, in mid-2013, Pyongyang connected the pipes that originally went to the tower to new pipes being installed as part of the ELWR cooling system to ensure that the 5 MWe reactor had a backup supply of cooling water. One result of not rebuilding the cooling tower is that the North Koreans now need more river water. A new pipe was also constructed before the 5 MWe restart that dumps the steam and hot water from the turbines directly into the river. Since the restart of the 5 MWe reactor took
place a month after the July 2013 floods at the Yongbyon facility, the cisterns needed to collect the cooling water were already covered with sand. It is unclear why the North Koreans did not immediately clear them. But to temporarily access the water, they appear to have put in place two or three pipes from the pump house to a pond of open water 25 meters away. During this period, a combination of indicators from commercial satellite imagery points to an alteration in reactor operations, either operating the facility at a lower power level or shutting it down. If the reactor was shut down or operated on low power, it seems to have been restarted by February 13, indicated by the reappearance of hot foam, and was operating as of early March.” (Nick Hansen, “Nuclear Safety Problems at North Korea’s Yongbyon Facility?” 38North, April 7, 2014)

Burns: “We’ve consistently said we are willing to engage when countries show a credible and serious interest in abiding by their obligations. This was true in Burma. It’s the case with Iran. And it can be the case with North Korea as well. But we are not willing - to borrow a phrase from former Secretary of Defense Bob Gates - to "buy the same horse twice." We are not going to talk for the sake of talks or respond to North Korean provocations with inducements and concessions.” (Deputy Secretary of State William Burns, Address at the Asia Society Policy Institute, New York, April 8, 2014) Burns plans to step down in October as the State Department’s second-ranking official, administration officials said April 11. He has twice delayed his retirement, most recently at the request of President Obama. (Michael R. Gordon, “Diplomat Who Led Secret Talks with Iran Plans to Retire,” New York Times, April 12, 2014, p. A-8)

KCNA: “A meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea was held under the guidance of Kim Jong Un, first secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea, first chairman of the National Defense Commission of the DPRK and supreme commander of the Korean People’s Army, on April 8. It was attended by members of the Presidium of the Political Bureau of the C.C., the WPK, and members and alternate members of the Political Bureau of the C.C., the WPK. Vice-premiers of the Cabinet and some department directors, first vice-department directors and vice-department directors of the C.C., the WPK were present at the meeting as observers. The meeting discussed the issue of reinforcing the organization for increasing the leadership role and function of the Party as required by the developing revolution. It discussed a proposal for forming the state leadership body to be submitted to the First Session of the 13th Supreme People’s Assembly. It also discussed an organizational matter. Decisions on the relevant agenda items were unanimously adopted at the meeting. Kim Jong Un at the meeting set forth important tasks to be fulfilled to further strengthen the WPK to be an invincible revolutionary party, firmly protect the dignity and sovereignty of the country and dynamically accelerate the work to improve the standard of the people’s living and the building of a rich and powerful country. The meeting held under the guidance of Kim Jong Un marks a historic occasion that encouraged the service personnel and people in the struggle to dynamically advance along the road of independence, Songun and socialism under the uplifted banner of great Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism and provided an important milestone in bringing earlier the building of a thriving
nation and a great revolutionary event of national reunification.” (KCNA, “Meeting of Political Bureau of C.C., WPK Held under Guidance of Kim Jong Un,” April 8, 2014)

North Korean Ambassador to China Ji Jae-ryong was recently summoned by China’s foreign ministry and received a message that China would “clearly oppose any nuclear tests and medium- and long-range missile tests by North Korea,” a diplomatic source briefed on the matter said. “Throughout various channels, including the summons of Ambassador Ji Jae-ryong, the Chinese side has repeatedly urged North Korea not to conduct a nuclear test,” the source said on the condition of anonymity. The source declined to elaborate further, including on when the North Korean envoy was summoned. When asked about the recent summons of Ambassador Ji, China’s foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei replied, “Under the current circumstances, we hope that all sides can do more things that are conducive to the stability of the Korean Peninsula and make their contribution to ease tensions.” Hong was speaking to reporters during a regular press briefing. (Yonhap, “China Summons N. Korean Ambassador over Nuclear Threat: Source,” April 8, 2014)

In one of the clearest signals that Japan is trying to allay fears that it is whitewashing wartime atrocities – and to repair somewhat frayed relations with the United States – the foreign minister said that his government would not try to push revisions of that history. In an interview, the foreign minister, Kishida Fumio, distanced his government from far-right statements about World War II made recently by political associates of the conservative prime minister, Shinzo Abe, including denials of the sexual servitude of thousands of Korean, Chinese and other women. “The criticism about historical revisionism is coming because people who are not members of the government are making outlandish remarks, and these are then misunderstood as being the historical views of the Abe cabinet,” Kishida said. “This is unfortunate and regrettable.” He also restated the government’s intention to uphold apologies made by earlier Japanese leaders to Japan’s wartime and colonial-era victims. “Prime Minister Abe and the Abe cabinet are firmly continuing the views on history, and the position on history of previous administrations,” he added. “We must face history, and be humble before it. This is a matter of course.” Kishida said that the Abe government would use the visit by Obama to showcase its efforts to strengthen Japan’s postwar security alliance with the United States, which maintains 50,000 military personnel at bases in the country. He said these accomplishments include the restarting of a long-stalled deal to relocate an air base on Okinawa, and the willingness to make painful political concessions necessary to negotiate a trans-Pacific trade deal that the Obama administration hopes will cement American regional leadership. However, he said reaching a deal on the pact, known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, might prove too complicated to happen in time for Obama’s visit, although American negotiators are in Tokyo for last-minute talks. Kishida also said emphasizing Japan’s contributions to the stability and prosperity of the region since the end of the war would be one of the best ways to combat the criticism that it is dabbling in revisionism. “What our nation needs to do is show that it has accepted the past humbly, repeatedly expressed remorse and above all, walked a path of peace for 69 years,” Mr. Kishida said. “And we need to explain that there will be no change in these diplomatic policies in the future, either.” (Martin
The United States and China clashed over Japan as China’s Defense Minister Chang Wanquan asserted that Beijing had “indisputable sovereignty” over a group of islands in the East China Sea and that his country’s military stood ready to protect its interests in territorial disputes. Chang said that China would not be first to launch an attack over the territorial dispute. But he accused Japan of “confusing the right with the wrong” in its assertion of control over the disputed islands in the East China Sea, which are known as the Senkaku in Japan and as the Diaoyu in China. “China has indisputable sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands,” Chang said. He added that on the issue of what he called “territorial sovereignty,” China would “make no compromise, no concession, no treaty.” He continued, “The Chinese military can assemble as soon as summoned, fight any battle and win.” Chang made his comments at a news conference with the United States defense secretary, Chuck Hagel, after a morning of meetings at the Ministry of National Defense. It is Hagel’s first trip to China as defense secretary. While both men sought to present their meetings as constructive, they espoused divergent views on a number of issues, particularly the territorial dispute in the East China Sea, and a similar dispute between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea. At one point, Hagel appeared impatient, wagging his finger. “The Philippines and Japan are longtime allies of the United States,” he said. “We have mutual self-defense treaties with each of those countries,” he continued, adding that the United States was “fully committed to those treaty obligations.” Hagel accused China of adding to tensions in the region by declaring an air defense zone in the East China Sea with “no collaboration, no consultation.” Such moves, he warned, could “eventually get to dangerous conflict.” The exchange punctuated a visit that American defense officials had sought to present as a long-awaited deepening of military relations between the countries. Yesterday, Hagel became the first foreign dignitary allowed on board a Chinese aircraft carrier, and today the United States and China announced modest steps toward improving communications. But there appeared to be no closing of the gaps on more contentious issues. Hagel, for instance, called on China to be more open about its cyberwarfare capabilities, which American officials have said Beijing uses for commercial espionage. Hagel portrayed the United States as transparent about its own capabilities in telecommunications security, pointing to a recent briefing that the Defense Department gave to Chinese officials on the Pentagon’s doctrine for defending against cyberattacks. “More transparency will strengthen China-U.S. relations,” he said. “Greater openness about cyber reduces the risk that misunderstanding and misperception could lead to miscalculation.” Beijing, American defense officials said, still has not responded to Hagel’s invitation to reciprocate with a briefing of its own. Chang stood impassively during Hagel’s call for more openness on cybersecurity. When it was his turn to talk, he said that “the defense activity of the People’s Liberation Army in cyberspace abides” by Chinese law. “It will not pose a threat to others,” he added. The disagreement with China over digital security issues puts Hagel in the difficult position of arguing with Beijing over what is acceptable to spy on and what is not. American officials have maintained that a barrage of attacks that originated in China aimed at stealing technology and other intellectual property from Silicon Valley and from military contractors and energy firms in the United States.
Many of those attacks have been linked to cyberwarfare units of the People’s Liberation Army, acting on behalf of state-owned, or state-affiliated, Chinese companies. But the United States has not always been transparent about cyberespionage, either. Last month the New York Times and Der Spiegel reported that the United States had infiltrated the networks of Huawei, China’s networking and telecommunications giant. Additional disclosures about American spying were revealed in National Security Agency documents leaked by Edward J. Snowden, a former contractor at the agency. After his meetings at the Defense Ministry, Hagel went to the National Defense University in Beijing to give a speech and hold a question-and-answer session with about 120 Chinese military officers. Most of the questions from the audience centered on the Senkaku-Diaoyu dispute, as Chinese officers repeatedly complained that American policy in the region favored Japan. The dispute over the islands also figured prominently today at the New York debut of the Asia Society Policy Institute, a nonpartisan research group created by the Asia Society. China’s ambassador to the United States, Cui Tiankai, participating in a panel on Asian peace and prosperity, politely but firmly warned the United States about taking sides with Japan. Without identifying Japan by name, Cui said America should think hard about whether its military alliances with other countries in Asia were serving American interests. He also rejected the idea of settling the island dispute through arbitration, challenging the United States to put itself in China’s position. “I don’t think the United States would subject itself to any international arbitration when its sovereignty and territorial integrity is concerned,” he said. “Most probably you would send out an aircraft carrier task force there. We are not doing that – yet.” William J. Burns, the deputy secretary of state, said in a keynote speech at the event that the island dispute and North Korea’s bellicose behavior were the two most serious security issues facing Asia. Burns also sought to allay concerns that the Obama administration was wavering in its so-called “pivot to Asia” because of crises elsewhere in the world. Going forward, Mr. Burns said, “no region will be more consequential for American interests and for the shape of the global system than the Asia Pacific.” (Helene Cooper, “Hagel Spars with Chinese over Islands and Security,” New York Times, April 9, 2014, p. A-6)

A Chinese pro-Japan advocate with close ties to President Xi Jinping secretly met with Prime Minister Abe Shinzo today in an effort to mend bilateral ties, Asahi Shimbun has learned. According to sources familiar with the inner workings of the politics of both countries, the confidential meeting between Hu Deping and Abe took place on April 8. During his visit to Japan from April 6 to 13, Hu, the son of the late Chinese leader Hu Yaobang, met with Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide, Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio, former Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo and Kono Yohei, a former speaker of the Lower House. They talked about Tokyo’s stance toward Beijing, and discussed the future of Japan-China relations. During the meeting, Abe is believed to have told Hu that Tokyo is ready to hold dialogue and make efforts to mend bilateral relations. Hu’s trip to Japan was organized by Tokyo’s Foreign Ministry. (Kurashige Nanae, “Cofindate of Xi Met with Abe to Smooth Bilateral Relations,” Asahi Shimbun, April 15, 2014)

The first session of the newly formed Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) reelected North Korean leader Kim Jong-un as head of the National Defense Commission. Kim Yong-nam, the North’s ceremonial head of state, retained his position as president of
the Presidium of the SPA, and Premier Pak Pong-ju also kept his job. Choe Ryong-hae, the North Korean military’s top political officer, was elected vice chairman of the defense commission to replace Jang Son Thaek. The North also appointed Ri Su-yong, a former ambassador to Switzerland, to replace Pak Ui-chun as the foreign minister of the communist country. Analysts and government officials said the North’s regime reshuffle indicates that Pyongyang is seeking for internal stability amid tensions with South Korea and the United States. “There were no big changes in the leadership nominations during the SPA session and new policy directions were not announced,” said an official from Ministry of Unification that handles inter-Korean affairs. “We believe the North has chosen stability more than change. “There is little possibility that the North will bring about any big policy shift. We see the North’s future policies to be an extension of the previous ones,” the official added. (Chung Min-uck “N. K. Chooses Stability over Change,” Korea Times, April 10, 2014) Cho Chun-ryong appears to have replaced Paek Se-bong, the ousted chief of the Second Economic Commission in charge of the munitions industry, according to a government official. The National Defense Commission is the North’s top governing body consisting of only nine members, including leader Kim Jong-un. But Cho is an almost unknown quantity to outsiders. “It seems probable that Cho had been a vice chairman of the Second Economic Commission or head of its missiles bureau and worked in the missile development sector for a long time,” the official speculated. “The regime may have concealed his identity for security reasons.” (Chosun Ilbo, “The New Face in the N. Korean Regime,” April 11, 2014)

The United States and China have agreed to set up a high-level consultation channel to discuss North Korea and other regional security issues, U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said on a landmark trip to Beijing. (Korea Times, “U.S., China to establish Regular Dialogue Channel on N. Korea,” April 9, 2014)

4/10/14

The United States is giving China a “mission impossible” by insisting it exert pressure on neighboring North Korea to halt its nuclear program or face US consequences, Beijing’s ambassador said. “There is one thing that worries me a little bit, and even more than a little bit, is that we’re very often told that China has such an influence over DPRK and we should force the DPRK to do this or that,” Cui Tiankai told a Washington think-tank. “Otherwise the United States would have to do something that would hurt China’s security interests. You see you are giving us a mission impossible.” Tiankai, who has been China’s envoy to Washington since April 2013, said he did not “think this was very fair, I don’t think this is a constructive way of working with each other.” Cui told an audience at the United States Institute of Peace that Beijing was very worried by the threat of nuclear arms on the Korean Peninsula and the risk of another war, armed conflict or chaos. “The peninsula is just at our doorstep, any chaos, any armed conflict there will certainly have cross-border effects on China,” Cui said. “But this problem cannot be solved by China alone. We need cooperation among the relevant parties.” (AFP, “Envoy: U.S. Has Given China a ‘Mission Impossible’ on North Korea,” April 10, 2014)

Just weeks after Japan agreed to give up a cache of weapons-grade plutonium, the country is set to push ahead with a program that would produce new stockpiles of the
material, creating a proliferation risk for decades to come. Though that additional plutonium would not be the grade that is most desirable for bombs, and is therefore less of a threat, it could – in knowledgeable hands and with some work and time – be used to make a weapon. The newly created stockpiles would add to tons of other plutonium already being stored in Japan. “The government made a big deal out of returning several hundred kilograms of plutonium, but it brushes over the fact that Japan has so much more,” said Mabuchi Sumio, an opposition lawmaker who served as adviser to the government in the early days of the 2011 Fukushima disaster. “It’s hypocritical.” Plutonium staying in Japan would be used for a nuclear recycling program that has become one of the most contentious parts of the nation’s first comprehensive energy plan since the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The plan is expected to be approved by the cabinet as early as tomorrow. The recycling program, which seeks to separate plutonium from used nuclear fuel so it can be reused to power reactors, is seen by supporters as a way of ensuring resource-poor Japan more energy independence. (Hiroku Tabuchi, “Japan Pushes Plan to Stockpile Plutonium, Despite Proliferation Risk,” New York Times, April 10, 2014, p. A-10) The U.S. government has expressed “grave concern” to Japanese officials over Tokyo’s spent nuclear fuel reprocessing program as it increases Japan’s stockpile of plutonium and the risk of proliferation, according to a joint investigation by Asahi Shimbun and the Center for Public Integrity, a U.S. nonprofit journalism organization. With the nation’s 48 nuclear reactors offline, the planned start-up of a plant in Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, which will extract plutonium from spent nuclear fuel, will only increase Japan’s already-growing stockpile of plutonium, U.S. nuclear policy experts said. If the plant starts operations as early as this year, it would pose serious concerns about the Obama administration’s efforts to control nuclear proliferation, they said. In April last year, Daniel Poneman, U.S. deputy secretary of energy, told Tatsujiro Suzuki, then vice chairman of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission, during Suzuki’s visit to the United States that he was deeply concerned that Japan would have more stocks of separated plutonium from the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel while there is no plan for consumption. The remark surprised Japanese officials because Poneman, known as a pro-nuclear expert, was believed to be sympathetic with Japan’s reprocessing program. Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd., the operator of the Rokkasho facility, plans to complete construction of the plant by October. The maximum reprocessing capacity will be 800 tons of spent nuclear fuel per year, recovering up to 8 tons of plutonium. Japan already has a stockpile of 44 tons of plutonium, which can make up several thousand nuclear weapons. During a recent interview, Jon Wolfsthal, who served as a nuclear nonproliferation expert at the U.S. National Security Council between 2009 and 2012, expressed disappointment over Japan’s failure to make changes to its reprocessing program even after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. “I’m disappointed that Japan and everything they’ve gone through in the last three years hasn’t fundamentally re-evaluated their need for this material,” Wolfsthal said. “I think it would be better, personally, if Japan did not have a MOX (mixed oxide fuel) program and operate Rokkasho.” Wolfsthal added that there was a general sense in the Obama administration that Japan would not listen to U.S. advice on the matter and that harping on it would only deteriorate bilateral relations. At a symposium in Tokyo in December, Robert Einhorn, who had been special adviser for nonproliferation and arms control at the U.S. State Department, questioned the moves by Japan and France
to proceed with nuclear fuel reprocessing. "Why did all (other) advanced countries take the decision to abandon reprocessing?" Einhorn asked. "Is there something different about Japan and France, which led these countries in a different direction?"

In a speech in Tokyo in October, U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz also said, “The United States continues to believe the separation of plutonium needs to be in balance with a corresponding pathway for the eventual consumption or disposition of that material.” Meanwhile, the Abe Cabinet approved on April 11 the nation’s new basic energy plan, which regards nuclear power as a key electricity source and will restart idled nuclear reactors if their safety is confirmed. The plan also pointed to pushing forward the reprocessing program and the completion of the Rokkasho plant as a pending policy goal. But it also tries to address Washington’s concern by including a clause that says, “We do pay due consideration to the balance between supply and demand of plutonium.”

For Japan to reprocess spent nuclear fuel requires the consent of the U.S. government based on a Japan-U.S. nuclear cooperation agreement, but Washington is concerned of the negative effects that Japan’s large plutonium stockpile can have on negotiations with South Korea and Iran over their nuclear programs. During Suzuki’s U.S. visit in April, Thomas Countryman, assistant secretary of state for international security and nonproliferation, also expressed “grave concern” over the Rokkasho plant from the standpoint of its ramifications on U.S.-South Korea nuclear cooperation and Iran’s nuclear program.

(Okuyama Toshihiro and Douglas Birch, senior reporter for The Center for Public Integrity, “U.S. Alarmed about Plutonium Stockpile Growing from Rokkasho Plant,” Asahi Shimbun, April 13, 2014)

4/11/14

National Defense Commission Policy Department spokesman’s a statement: “The south Korean puppet forces conducted a 500 km range ballistic missile test-fire in secrecy on March 23 and made it public later. The U.S. keeps mum about this, feigning ignorance of it, and the UN Security Council also says nothing about it. This stands in sharp contrast to their response to the DPRK’s satellite launch and the rocket launching drill for self-defense. …The U.S. double-dealing attitude and despicable mode of action have been brought to light with the recent case as a momentum. As far as the ballistic missile test-fire of the south Korean puppet forces is concerned, it is a co-product of the master and the stooge as the former allowed the latter to increase the range to 800 km and encouraged the latter to launch the missile in secrecy by stealthily handing over the core technology. We take this opportunity to strongly urge the U.S. to take proper policy decision as befits a big country. First, it should behave with a fair stand if it wants to save its face and be treated as a big country. It should come to its senses, though belatedly, clearly understanding that the army and people of the DPRK will never surrender to the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK which undergoes steady modification. The U.S. has extreme complacency and deep-running self-exaltation. For this the owners of the White House always mistook their rivals and provoked them only to fail and drink bitter cups. The U.S. should admit this. The biggest mistake made by the U.S. is that it is oblivious of the stark fact left by the history of the DPRK-U.S. confrontation and its lessons. The U.S. should set out to have clear understanding of the DPRK and take a bold decision of rolling back its wrong hostile policy toward the DPRK, though belatedly. For present, it should repent of its wrong past by lifting all sorts of ‘sanctions’ which it masterminded to be inflicted on the DPRK for no justifiable reasons. If the ballistic missile launched by the south Korean
puppet forces is not problematic, the DPRK's launch of satellites or rockets will be of no problem, either. The U.S. should, therefore, no longer pull up all the military measures taken by the DPRK to bolster its deterrence for self-defense. We clarify once again that as long as the U.S. persists in its hostile policy toward the DPRK according to its high-handed, arbitrary and gangster-like double standards, the DPRK will push ahead with the countermeasures for self-defense to put an end to the policy as it had already declared. The U.S. should clearly know that it has neither face nor justifications to find fault with the DPRK any longer.” (KCNA, “Policy Department of NDC Warns U.S. Not to Find Fault with Military Measures of DPRK,” April 11, 2014)

South Korea’s top nuclear envoy warned of a “grave” situation on the Korean Peninsula as North Korea has threatened to conduct a fresh nuclear test, saying “closer and strategic cooperation” with China is essential in preventing further North Korean provocations. Hwang Joon-kook made the remarks upon his arrival at Beijing Capital International Airport ahead of talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wu Dawei, later in the day. “At present, the situation is grave as North Korea threatens to carry out a nuclear test, and there could be an additional provocation by the North,” Hwang told reporters. “So, it’s time for South Korea and China to forge closer and strategic cooperation,” Hwang said. (Yonhap, “S. Korean Envoy Warns of ‘Grave’ Situation after N. Korea’s Nuclear Threat,” April 9, 2014) In Beijing on April 11, Hwang and Wu Dawei, China’s top nuclear envoy and special representative for Korean affairs, discussed ways to resume “meaningful dialogue” while boosting consultations to deter Pyongyang from an additional underground explosion. The meeting came on the heels of three-way talks with the United States and Japan in Washington earlier in April. The Beijing talks also came as South Korean officials voiced “flexibility” in its preconditions for North Korea before resumption of the talks could take place, indicating that they could lower the bar for North Korea to sit down at the negotiating table. Diplomatic sources said South Korea, the U.S. and Japan have agreed to lower the bar on conditions for resuming the long-stalled nuclear talks with North Korea. The top nuclear envoys of South Korea, the U.S. and Japan listed several conditions, which were originally set by the U.S. and North Korea in February 2012, as steps the North should take before the resumption of the six-party talks, the source said on condition of anonymity. But controversy is brewing after a ranking Seoul official displayed willingness to apply “flexibility” toward preconditions for what would be the first gathering in more than five years. His remarks imply a softened stance for South Korea and the U.S. compared with their previous demand for preemptive, stronger commitments from the North than those enshrined in the now-defunct Feb. 29, 2012, agreement. In the so-called "leap day deal," Pyongyang agreed to put a moratorium on its nuclear program, cease atomic and missile tests and let in international inspectors in return for 240,000 tons of food aid from Washington. The deal fell apart when North Korea launched a long-range rocket two months later and conducted its third nuclear test a year later. At her recent three-way summit with the leaders of the U.S. and Japan, South Korean President Park Geun-hye also indicated movement in her position, saying the allies can “explore various ways to resume dialogue if there is a guarantee that we can make substantive progress on the denuclearization front and block North Korea from beefing up its nuclear capabilities.” But other Seoul and Washington officials cautioned against over-interpreting the “flexibility” remarks, saying no concrete ideas were being
floated for the restart of the talks and tension remains high on the peninsula on the back of Pyongyang’s threats of a nuclear test and military drills on both sides of the border. U.S. State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki said that nothing has changed regarding their approach. “Obviously, there are steps North Korea would need to take. The ball remains in their court,” she told reporters on April 11. (Yonhap, “Diplomatic Efforts under Way for Resumption of Six-Party Talks,” North Korea Newsletter No. 309, April 17, 2014)

South Korea and the United States carried out a live-fire exercise near the border with North Korea as part of their annual joint drill aimed at enhancing military readiness, the Eighth U.S. Army said. About 350 Korean and American soldiers participated in the drill held at Rodriguez Firing Range in Pocheon, north of Seoul, featuring a wide array of Army aviation, artillery, armor and infantry assets. Battle tanks and armored vehicles of the two nations, as well as U.S. Army’s OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopters, joined the drill. The armed reconnaissance helicopters returned to South Korea last year after completing a five-year mission in Iraq. (Yonhap, “S. Korea, U.S. Carry out Live-Fire Exercise,” April 11, 2014)

4/12/14 National Defense Commission spokesman’s statement “clarifying its views and principled stand as regards the fact that the south Korean authorities are talking nonsense that they ‘expect’ positive response from the DPRK to the ‘Dresden Declaration,’ which does not deserve even a passing notice said: First, the ‘Dresden Declaration’ is nothing but a jargon let loose by a traitor to the nation as she was so servile as to peddle the internal issue of the nation in other country. Park called on outsiders to help solve the issue of the territory and nation divided into two by foreign forces and vociferated about the application of mode of unification in which ‘one side is swallowed up and the other absorbs it’ to the ‘unification’ of the Korean peninsula. This was the daydream of a psychopath and a reckless behavior. Second, the ‘Dresden Declaration’ is a nonsensical one made by an anti-reunification element who deceived the public with hypocrisy and deception as she offered no solution, ignorant of the present state of the north-south relations. The ‘three-point proposal to the north’ is all irrelevant and indifferent to the improvement and development of the north-south relations. As far as the issue of solving the humanitarian issue is concerned, it called for putting on a ‘regular basis’ the reunions of separated families and relatives to build ‘confidence’ between the north and the south and ‘rendering nutritional aid to women in childbirth and babies’ to carve out a ‘future of unification’ together with the world community. Park should have studied the order of priority in the work for improving the north-south relations if she wished to talk about peaceful reunification, though belatedly. Park described the ‘recovery of homogeneity’ through ‘common prosperity’ and ‘exchange’ based on ‘aid’ and ‘cooperation’ of the international community as a priority task for mending the inter-Korean relations. Her assertion only self-exposed that she is no more than a blind person as she is politically ignorant and dull-witted and insensitive to realities. What matters is that she desperately hurled mud at the DPRK with such lies as ‘pain’ and ‘hunger’ while crying out for ‘aid,’ ‘cooperation’ and ‘exchange.’ Third, the ‘Dresden Declaration’ is nothing but anti-reunification outpourings intended to improve her poor image in utter disregard of the interests of the country and the nation. The ‘Dresden Declaration’ is no more than rubbish of the
times as it is peppered with treachery, hypocrisy and anti-reunification intention too base to tout. As the south Korean authorities requested the DPRK to clarify its formal stand on the ‘Dresden Declaration,’ it would like to clarify the following principled stand on this occasion: They should bear in mind that the tongue lashing of Park Geun Hye is the first root cause of deteriorating the north-south relations and beclouding the prospect of the nation. It is the unanimous view of the public that the north-south relations will be smoother than now only if Park keeps her disgusting mouth closed. Park should not use the worn-out signboard of ‘confidence’ any longer to cover up her wicked intention. The word ‘confidence’ should never be abused as a veil for covering the sinister intention of fostering distrust and inciting confrontation and deceiving the nation. Next, the south side should put an end to the anachronistic way of thinking and behavior sticking to the dark past. Nothing is more foolish and nonsensical than trying to bring back the inglorious past under the influence of ‘yusin’ perfume. Park should not talk about ‘miracle of the Han Riverside’ and the ‘then time of laying a strong foundation of economic growth’ instead of mentioning her father’s name in a manner of making distant allusion whenever an opportunity presents itself. She had better draw a lesson taught by the history in which one met a tragic death for trampling down the democracy and enforcing ‘yusin’ dictatorship. She should clearly know that she may reduce Chongwadae to her tomb during her office and meet execution after the expiry of the term of her office, if she persistently behaves as now. She had better not waste time doing anything reckless but do anything helpful to the interests of the country and the nation and this would be more beneficial to prolonging her remaining days.” ( KCNA, “NDC Spokesman Blasts Park Guen Hye’s ‘Dresden Declaration,’” April 12, 2014)

4/13/14

Rodong Sinmun commentary: “The United States has escalated hostile acts against the DPRK under the pretext of its nuclear and ‘human rights’ issues, revealing the sinister intention to intensify sanctions against the DPRK, talking about ‘missile threat.’ Meanwhile, the U.S. is staging the Foal Eagle joint military exercises at the climax stage together with the south Korean authorities, posing a serious threat to the DPRK. The south Korean puppet forces are driving the inter-Korean relations into a catastrophe again, while positively cooperating with the U.S., their master, in its anti-DPRK nuclear, ‘human rights’ and missile rackets. This grave situation goes to clearly prove that the sinister intention of the U.S. and other hostile forces against the DPRK remains unchanged and cannot be changed. The army and people of the DPRK are drawing a clear conclusion from the fact that the U.S. and south Korean authorities are escalating confrontational moves against the DPRK while resorting to the unprecedented madcap nuclear and “human rights” rackets against it. The conclusion is that the DPRK should win the final victory under the uplifted banner of Songun. History and the situation prove once again that it is the very just option that the DPRK has access to nuclear deterrence for self-defense to protect the sovereignty and security of the country and the nation. The U.S. and the south Korean authorities would be well advised to clearly understand that any pressure and confrontational moves can never work on the DPRK and make a bold decision to roll back the hostile policy toward the DPRK at once.” (KCNA, “U.S. and Other Hostile Forces’ Sinister Intention against DPRK Remains Unchanged: Rodong Sinmun,” April 13, 2014)
Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK) Secretariat statement “denouncing the south Korean regime for driving the inter-Korean relations into a catastrophe through a malignant smear campaign against the DPRK in violation of the agreement between the north and the south. Accusing the south Korean authorities of malignant mud-slinging at the DPRK’s efforts for dialogue and peace, the statement goes on: Looking back on history, the south Korean authorities have not ceased the smear campaign against the DPRK and are still persisting in it. This campaign has gone on under the Park Geun Hye regime, too. Since the outset of the year, the Park group has gotten frantic with mud-slinging, talking about “the instability of the north’s social system” and “provocations.” It responded to the historic New Year Address and the important proposal of the DPRK by groundlessly denying and slandering them. During her foreign junket on January 18, Park termed the DPRK's important proposal a “propaganda offensive” and cried out for taking a strong security posture to firmly cope with provocations against the south whenever the north launches a propaganda offensive.” At the prodding of the authorities the conservative media malignantly slandered the proposal of the north as an "appeasement gesture", "camouflaged peace offensive," "red herring for creating instability in the south" and "scheme for sparking conflict in the south." The south Korean authorities noisily grumbled about the DPRK’s self-defensive nuclear and missile force, terming it "provocation" and "violation" and calling for "sanctions." On February 7 Park talked rubbish that “the north is still sticking to the line on simultaneously pushing forward nuclear and economic development and the situation remains unstable.” She further said it seems the "north has launched a peace offensive all of a sudden these days, but the south should not slacken the vigilance even under this situation." In a congratulatory speech made on March 6, she spoke ill of the north’s above-said line and incited confrontation, asserting that it is the nukes of the north that are throwing a stumbling block in the way of economic cooperation between the south and the north.” Addressing the 3rd “nuclear security summit” held in Netherlands on March 24 she let loose provocative sophism that the settlement of the issue of the north is indispensable for building a world without nuclear weapons and it is necessary to send a stronger message to the north urging it to dismantle its nukes.” The puppet group has never ceased its malignant smear campaign against the DPRK as regards the "Cheonan" warship sinking case. While persisting in its madcap drills for a nuclear war, the puppet clique justified them through sheer sophism. Late in March and at the beginning of this month they launched a large-scale joint landing drill aimed at "occupying Pyongyang" and joint air strike exercises Max Thunder designed to make air strikes at all areas of the DPRK, pushing the situation to the brink of war. The south Korean authorities' mud-slinging has reached its height by letting loose a whole string of invectives against the dignity and social system of the DPRK. Park let loose a torrent of malignant outbursts slandering the DPRK during her German tour in March last. She blabbered that "orphans roaming about streets are not taken care of and they are enduring hunger in the cold due to economic difficulties.” Daily NK, Chosun Ilbo and other wicked conservative media made such intolerable reckless behavior as daring slander the field guidance given by the supreme leadership of the DPRK to the baby home and orphanage and the election of deputies to the Supreme People’s Assembly. Espionage and intelligence organs including the Intelligence Service took away those
who fled to the third country after committing crimes in the north and abandoning their parents, wives and children and are hurling them into a false propaganda against the DPRK after giving them a petty amount of money. Agents of those institutions are also taking them to foreign countries and using them as “witnesses” in their anti-DPRK smear campaign. The puppet group is busy hurling the human scum into the operations for scattering leaflets into areas of the north side. The south Korean authorities can never shirk the responsibility for having pushed the inter-Korean relations to catastrophe through the above-said smear campaign against the DPRK. They should be careful about their tongue wagging, bearing in mind that their mud-slinging would get them nowhere but ruin and the collapse of the inter-Korean relations. If the south Korean authorities persist in their smear campaign against the social system and dignity of the DPRK despite its repeated warnings and denunciation at home and abroad, they will not be able to escape the most shameful fate, cursed and censured by all Koreans.” (KCNA, “CPRK Secretariat Blasts Smear Campaign of S. Korean Regime against DPRK,” April 14, 2014)

North Korea agreed to reopen its investigation into the abductions of Japanese nationals if Japan relaxes some unilateral sanctions against Pyongyang, during the first formal negotiations held in more than a year in Beijing in late March, it was learned recently. Sources familiar with Tokyo-Pyongyang diplomacy said that the two countries are negotiating behind the scenes, eyeing to host a second round of bureau chief-level talks if they reach an agreement. During the Beijing round of the talks, Song Il Ho, North Korea’s ambassador for talks on normalizing ties with Japan, listed Pyongyang’s desires and interests to be discussed. “If Japan removes sanctions banning personnel exchanges and port calls of (North Korean) vessels, it will be worth considering the start of reinvestigation into the abductions issue,” Song told his Japanese counterpart, Ihara Junichi. Ihara, director-general of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau at the Foreign Ministry, did not immediately reply. He brought the proposal back to Tokyo and discussed it with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. On April 5 and 6, ministry officials again met unofficially with Song and other North Korean representatives in Shenyang, China, to further discuss the matter. In June 2008, Japan agreed to remove restrictions on travel between the two nations and port calls by North Korean vessels in Japan for humanitarian reasons in exchange for Pyongyang’s reinvestigation of the abductions issue. But the agreement fell apart after then Prime Minister Fukuda Yasuo stepped down. In upcoming unofficial talks, the two sides appear to be seeking a settlement similar to the 2008 agreement. (Asahi Shimbun, “Pyongyang Poised to Reopen Abductions Issue If Tokyo Eases Sanctions,” April 13, 2014)

4/14/14 National Defense Commission (NDC) inspection group statement “opened to public the truth about the drone case touted by the south Korean authorities, terming the fiction about the “drones sent by the north” a replica of the Cheonan warship sinking case from A to Z…. It was reported that crashed drones were found in various parts of south Korea recently. The south Korean military authorities on April 2 hastily announced the “results of the first investigation” in which they concluded that the drones were sent by the north. On April 11 they announced the “results of intermediary investigation” insisting that the drones “belong to the north.” They claimed those photos available from the drones are the most convincing evidence
proving that the “drones belong to the north.” If one follows the south side’s assertion, flying bodies coming from the north to the south and from the south to the north should belong to the north and if photos of south side areas are available from the flying bodies, all of them should belong to the north. If then, flying bodies coming from the south to the north and from the north to the south in the areas north of the Military Demarcation Line should belong to south Korea and if photos of areas of the north side are available from the flying bodies, they should belong to south Korea. The “central joint inspection team” produced the writing style in the north marked on the engine battery as one of the most convincing evidence proving that the drones belong to the “north.” It is said that the front side of the engine battery of a drone at present bears the trade mark “date of kiyong (use) June 25, 2013” and “date of stop using June 25, 2014.” They insist that this is the method of writing trade mark commonly used in the north and to write “naltsa (date)” used by south Korea as “nalja” is the writing of the north Korean style. People in the north never use the word “kiyong” on any product. There is no explanation about the word “kiyong” in the large Korean dictionary in the north. The recent “results of investigation” claimed that Chinese and Japanese letters are seen on the back of the battery and the device supporting the flying posture of the drones was made by Futaba of Japan. If they assert the drones belong to the ”north” as they bear Korean letters, how they will explain the Chinese and Japanese letters and Japan-made device. Fingerprints were cited as one of the evidence proving the claim that the drones belong to the north. If one with normal way of thinking insists that the fingerprints they claim found on the drones belong to north Koreans simply because they are not south Koreans’, no one can trust the assertion. A spokesman for the south Korean Ministry of Defense announced at the outset that “it would not be easy to find the place where the north’s drone took off even if over 30 trillion won was spent out of the defense budget.” Some days later, he claimed that the take-off point of the drone was confirmed, adding that it was Onchon airfield in South Hwanghae Province. Onchon airfield of the DPRK is situated in South Phyongan Province, not in South Hwanghae Province. A few days later, he corrected the take-off point of the drone announced earlier, noting that an airfield near Ongjin in South Hwanghae Province was the place where it took off. People in the north have never heard there is an airfield near Ongjin. The south Korean authorities cited the blue color of the drone as evidence to proving that the drones belong to the north. They claim blue and white colors are “colors used in north Korea”. Is there anyone who can agree with this? “One cannot but construe that drones were sent by the north as it is a short distance for neighboring countries to launch such drones and they were not launched in the south either”. This is one clause of the “intermediary investigation results” which judged on the basis of the flying range that the drones were sent by the “north.” If then, do all flying bodies in the world with either short or long flying range belong to the “north”? The south Korean Ministry of Defense on March 31 claimed it confirmed those drones were launched from the area of the north side as a radar of E-8 detected a drone flying to Paekryong Island from the north. It made a poor excuse that the south side fired at least 300 shells from Vulcan artillery pieces three times the moment the drone was detected but could not shoot down the drone flying at the altitude of 5-6 km because the maximum firing range of those guns is just 2 km. The "central joint inspection team," as if it had forgotten all what it had said, made public that the drone discovered on Paekryong Island crashed due to the lack of fuel, flying zigzag at the
speed of 100-120 km per hour at the altitude of 1.4 km. When public became increasingly skeptical about its announcement, the team asserted that another drone which the authorities did not know might be sent to Paekryong Island. Besides, the south Korean authorities made the claim as evidence proving the "north's involvement" that the drones were "cast in iron mould", electronic circuit board attached to wood is not the south Korean style and there is neither witness nor informer who said that they found a launching pad and additional equipment needed for the drone take-off in south Korea. This is the "results of the intermediary investigation" full of lies. Seeing these ambiguous behaviors, people whisper that it was not an easy job to cook up and prove the story about the "north's involvement." The more water flows under the bridge and the more facts are known to public, the more saliently they will bring to light truth that the story about the "north's involvement" is a sheer lie. The open statement laid bare the sinister criminal aims sought by the south Korean authorities through the drone case: The first aim sought by the south Korean authorities is to blame the DPRK for orchestrating the drone case and shift the responsibility for the acute north-south relations and the situation on the Korean peninsula inching close to a war on to the DPRK. The second aim is to take the second "May 24 anti-north measure" by fabricating the second Cheonan warship sinking case in a bid to keep the north-south relations in the state of confrontation. The third aim is to plug their American master into their arms buildup under the pretext of "strengthening the security posture" and thus make up for the "vacuum of force" and stifle the DPRK by force of arms at any cost. It is an inveterate bad habit of the south Korean authorities to cook up shocking cases and kick up anti-DPRK confrontation hysteria by linking those cases with the DPRK whenever they are driven into a crisis. The inspection group of the NDC has the willingness to make everything clear now that the south Korean authorities have not yet ceased floating the story about "the north's involvement" in Cheonan warship sinking case and are fabricating the second and third Cheonan cases. The DPRK remains unchanged in its stand to jointly investigate all cases including the Cheonan case as they claim the north was involved in them. Security room chief of Chongwadae Kim Jang Su, who allegedly looks after "state security" of south Korea, may take part in the investigation on behalf of the south side as it will draw great attention of the nation. If the south Korean authorities have no compunction, there will be no reason whatsoever for them to shun the just and reasonable claim made by the DPRK from the very day of the occurrence of the Cheonan case. We will wait for the south Korean authorities' response.” (KCNA, “Inspection Group of NDC of DPRK Opens to Public Truth about Drone Case Touted by S. Korean Authorities,” April 14, 2014)

North Korea has moved a mobile rocket launcher to its east coast in apparent preparation for a missile launch ahead of the anniversary of the birthday of the nation’s founder, Kim Il Sung, today amid ongoing South Korea-U.S. joint military drills, a source told JoongAng Ilbo yesterday. “We discovered that North Korea is moving a transporter erector launcher (TEL) toward the east coast, which had previously been deployed at its central front,” a high-ranking South Korean government official said yesterday. “North Korea made similar moves before the launch of its short-range FROG rockets and KN-09 ballistic missiles in late February and early March.” On April 5, Mainichi Shimbun, citing a Japanese government official, reported that during bilateral
talks with Tokyo, officials from Pyongyang notified them that they would conduct artillery drills and missile launches by April 17. (Jeong Yong-soo and Kim Hee-jin, “North Transports Rocket Launcher,” JoongAng Ilbo, April 15, 2014)

In a rare public warning to its unruly ally North Korea, China on Tuesday urged the North not to carry out a nuclear test. "We do not support the joint military drills (between South Korea and the U.S.) and do not support the threat of a nuclear test (by North Korea),” China’s foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters during a regular press briefing. (Yonhap, “China Issues Rare Public Warning over N. Korea’s Nuclear Threat,” April 15, 2014)

South Korea on rejected Pyongyang’s proposal for a joint investigation into three crashed drones that Seoul believes originated in North Korea. "The proposal is not worth considering,” defense ministry spokesman Kim Min-Seok told reporters. He accused North Korea, which has flatly denied having anything to do with the drones, of distorting basic facts “to cover up its provocations.” (AFP, “South Korea Spurns North’s Call for Joint Drone Probe,” April 15, 2014)

4/16/14

The 6,825-ton Sewol sank on its way to the southern resort island of Jeju from Incheon, west of Seoul. Of 476 passengers aboard the ill-fated ferry, most of who were high school students on a field trip, 302 died.

South Korea and Japan agreed to hold regular director general-level talks on the Japanese imperial army’s sexual enslavement of Korean women during World War II in their first meeting on the contentious diplomatic issue, a foreign ministry official here said Wednesday. Today’s meeting between the director generals for Northeast Asian affairs from Seoul and Tokyo -- Lee Sang-deok and Ihara Junichi -- was the neighbors’ first official negotiations to tackle the sexual enslavement issue, which has long been a vexing source of diplomatic tension between Seoul and Tokyo. Historians say up to 200,000 women, mainly from Korea and China, were coerced into working at front-line brothels for Japanese soldiers during the war. The grievances of the 55 known South Korean survivors remain unresolved. During the inaugural meeting, both sides agreed to hold regular monthly talks on the issue, with the next meeting slated for May in Tokyo, the foreign ministry official said. “In the first negotiations, both sides reaffirmed their basic stances on the (so-called) comfort women issue,” the official said. “Both sides shared the opinion that this issue should be settled speedily in order to remove obstacles in South Korea-Japan relations.” The details of the next meeting in Japan, including the date and the venue, will be determined through further discussion via the countries' diplomatic channels, he said. But the agenda of the regular director-general meeting may expand to cover other bilateral issues like North Korea, the official also said. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Japan Agree to Hold Regular Talks on Sex Slavery,” April 16, 2014)

As President Park Geun-hye continues her pitch for unification as a potential “bonanza,” one government organ that would conventionally be at the vanguard of the drive appears to be increasingly inconspicuous: the Unification Ministry. With foreign affairs and security being the conservative president’s fortes, CheongWa Dae has
gradually been taking over the ministry’s traditional role — along with its influence. While regular, administrative tasks associated with inter-Korean affairs remain business as usual, the ministry is seen to have been excluded from the decision-making core dominated by hard-line, former military commanders in the presidential office. “I think the Unification Ministry is arguably at one of its lowest ebbs since being founded,” a government source said on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter. “Compare now and 10 years ago. Back then it wielded formidable power at the core of the decision-making process regarding North Korea affairs.” A major blow came when the two Koreas held their first high-level dialogue in about seven years in February, for which Pyongyang demanded a presidential official represent Seoul. The talks were thus led by Kim Kyou-hyun, vice chief of the National Security Office, and Won Dong-yon, deputy head of the United Front Department in the North’s ruling Workers’ Party. Earlier that month, controversy erupted after CheongWa Dae abruptly withdrew its appointment of Chun Hae-sung, chief of unification policy at the ministry, as security strategy secretary at the NSC. That means there are no unification ministry officials in key positions within the presidential office. The office said the decision reflected Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae’s request for the return of his “essential, core” aide but this was insufficient to quell speculation. The ministry’s reduced influence has been felt even across the border. During reunions of separated families at Mount Geumgangsan in February, a senior North Korean official expressed regret over Chun’s situation and the ministry’s status. “I don’t understand why they did this to him just after making him a secretary,” he told reporters. “Shouldn’t there be Unification Ministry officials at the NSC?” Concerns are growing in and around the ministry over its future standing as Cheong Wa Dae gears up to launch a unification preparation committee as Park outlined in a speech marking the first anniversary of her administration in February. The president will chair the panel, which would consist of some 50 senior government officials, scholars and members of related nongovernmental organizations. Observers say the roles of the committee and the ministry would inevitably overlap, though ministry officials said they were different. If Ryoo becomes a vice chairman of the panel, as recent news reports have suggested, it would be a relief for many. “We don’t see the Unification Ministry and the unification preparation committee as overlapping or conflicting in terms of their functions,” ministry spokesman Kim Eui-do told reporters earlier. “The committee is to oversee public discussions over unification and lead the development of unification policy, while the ministry will pursue the key national task of establishing the foundation of a unification era as the central agency in charge of unification policy.” As Park accelerates her campaign at home and abroad, the Foreign Ministry is gaining in clout, fostering partnerships and various projects with other countries. Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se boasts a bigger say as a main architect of the conservative president’s key diplomatic and security initiatives, whereas Ryoo is seen as having often been swayed by hard-line presidential officials at numerous crucial moments for cross-border ties. “With Yun essentially at the forefront of foreign policy, may inevitably have the Foreign Ministry to take over a chunk of unification-related work,” another government source said, requesting anonymity. “Given the recent furor over the Unification Ministry’s role, Cheong Wa Dae would try to have ministry people aboard the preparation committee and make clear what should be done by which body.” (Shin Hyon-hee, “Park’s Unification Drive Dwarfs Ministry,” Korea Herald, April 16, 2014)
This report focuses primarily on unclassified and declassified U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) assessments and reports over the past two decades. These assessments indicate that 

- no public evidence exists that Iran and North Korea have engaged in nuclear related trade or cooperation with each other, although ballistic missile technology cooperation between the two is significant and meaningful, and 
- Syria has received ballistic missiles and related technology from North Korea and Iran and also engaged in nuclear technology cooperation with North Korea.

It should be noted that nonofficial assessments, including journal articles, foreign and domestic media reports, and Internet commentaries, are not always consistent with the official assessments summarized in this report. Although such unofficial sources allege a fairly significant and persistent level of cooperation among these three countries on their ballistic missile and nuclear programs, such reports lack the credibility of official assessments because they are often unsourced or attributed to anonymous government officials, frequently at odds with each other, and unverifiable. …Iran has developed a close working relationship with North Korea on many ballistic missile programs, starting with acquisition of Scud missiles from North Korea in the 1980s. In the mid-1980s, North Korea developed the 300-kilometer range Scud B ballistic missile “from prototypes obtained from Egypt” and subsequently began to export them. Pyongyang developed the 500-kilometer range Scud C in 1991. North Korea sold both types of missiles, as well as missile production technology, to several countries in the Middle East, including Iran and Syria. In 1992 testimony, then-Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Robert Gates identified Iran and Syria as recipients of North Korean Scud missiles. In 1993, then-DCI R. James Woolsey provided more detail, stating that North Korea had sold Syria and Iran extended range Scud C missiles and apparently agreed to sell other forms of missile technology. A Russian intelligence report, which the U.S. IC deemed “credible,” stated that Iran’s missile potential during this period was confined to Scud B SRBMs received from Syria and North Korea. During the 1990s, IC annual threat assessments described several recurring trends between Iran and North Korea. First, North Korea’s ongoing export of ballistic missiles provided a qualitative increase in capabilities to countries such as Iran. Second, Iran was using North Korean ballistic missile goods and services to achieve its goal of self-sufficiency in the production of medium range ballistic missiles. Third, Iran’s acquisition of missile systems or key missile-related components, including potentially significant inputs of space launch vehicle technology and support, could significantly improve Iran’s ability to produce an ICBM. In the latter 2000s, the IC continued to assess that North Korean cooperation with Iran’s ballistic missile programs was ongoing and significant. More recently, 2013 and 2014 Department of Defense reports to Congress on North Korea’s military capabilities and proliferation activities identified Iran as a past recipient of North Korean ballistic missiles and associated technology. In 2006, Iran publicly acknowledged for the first time that it had obtained missiles from North Korea during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, but added that it no longer needed Pyongyang’s assistance: “We received these [Scuds] from foreign countries like North Korea but 17 years after the war we were able to design all of these pieces and even their fuel,” said the chief commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Iran has likely
exceeded North Korea’s ability to develop, test, and build ballistic missiles. But Tehran may, to some extent, still rely on Pyongyang for certain materials for producing Iranian ballistic missiles, Iran’s claims to the contrary notwithstanding. For example, some observers argue that Iran may not be able to produce even its Scud B and Scud C equivalents (Shahab-1 and Shahab-2, respectively) without some foreign support for key materials or components. Nevertheless, Director of National Intelligence (DNI) James Clapper stated during a February 11, 2014, Senate Armed Services Committee hearing that Iran is not currently receiving assistance with its ICBM program. Syria acquired both Scud B and Scud C missiles from North Korea, according to a 1995 CIA assessment. Damascus has also produced missiles with North Korean-supplied equipment, according to official U.S. accounts; a 1997 State Department document indicated that Syria had received missile “production technology” from North Korea and was producing “Scuds with North Korean assistance.” Furthermore, a State Department report to Congress covering 2008 explained that: “Over the past decade, Syria has focused on enhancing the capabilities of this [SRBM] force while also achieving self-sufficiency in indigenous missile production. With North Korean assistance, Syria has made progress toward domestic production of Scud missile variants.” Syria continues to rely on North Korean and Iranian assistance for its missile programs, according to official U.S. accounts. Defense Intelligence Agency Director Michael Flynn testified on April 18, 2013, that “Syria’s liquid-propellant missile program”—apparently a reference to Syria’s Scud B, Scud C, and Scud D missiles—“depends on essential foreign equipment and assistance, primarily from North Korean entities.” Flynn also stated that “Damascus relies on foreign help, mainly from Iran, to advance its solid-propellant rocket and missile development and production capability.” According to official sources, Iran, North Korea, and Syria have engaged in various forms of clandestine nuclear cooperation possibly related to nuclear weapons. North Korea and Iran obtained designs and materials related to uranium enrichment from a clandestine procurement network run by former Pakistani nuclear official Abdul Qadeer Khan. The CIA expressed concern in 2004 that the network could also have transferred nuclear “expertise or technology” to Syria, but there appears to be no public official evidence that this potential transfer is still a matter of concern. Syrian President Bashar al Asad stated in a 2007 newspaper interview that his government had been approached by the Khan network but had conducted no transactions with it. North Korea assisted Syria with building a nuclear reactor that may have been part of a Syrian nuclear weapons program, according to U.S. official accounts. Both the United States and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) assessed that Damascus was building a nuclear reactor; Israel destroyed the facility in a September 2007 air strike. According to a May 2011 IAEA report, the agency assessed that the destroyed Syrian structure “was very likely a nuclear reactor,” a claim Syria denied. The IC assessed that the reactor’s purpose was to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons, a senior intelligence official stated during an April 2008 briefing, but added that the IC had “low confidence” in this judgment. According to a 2013 State Department report, the United States assessed that “the reactor’s intended purpose” was to produce plutonium, rather than to conduct research or produce electricity, “because the reactor was not configured for power production, was isolated from any civilian population, and was ill suited for research.” Syria was constructing the reactor with “North Korean assistance,” the same 2013 report said. A senior U.S. intelligence official stated during
the 2008 briefing that “North Korea has assisted Syria with this reactor,” citing similarities between the Syrian reactor and the North Korean reactor that has produced plutonium for that country’s nuclear weapons program. The official also cited the “involvement of nuclear-related North Koreans in a project somewhere in the area,” as well as “evidence of cargo being transferred from North Korea, most likely to [the] reactor site, in 2006.” More recently, a February 2014 Defense Department report stated that North Korea “provided Syria with nuclear reactor technology until 2007.” It is worth noting that an IAEA investigation discovered Syrian uranium conversion activities that the government had failed to declare to the IAEA. Uranium conversion is the process by which uranium hexafluoride (the feedstock for centrifuges) is produced. However, the IAEA has apparently resolved its concerns regarding these activities. U.S. intelligence officials have expressed concern that North Korea might export its nuclear technology or fissile material. According to testimony from DNI Clapper before Congress in February 2012, North Korea’s export of “ballistic missiles and associated materials,” as well as its assistance to Syria’s nuclear reactor, “illustrate the reach of the North’s proliferation activities.” The IC “remain[s] alert to the possibility that North Korea might again export nuclear technology,” he added. North Korea’s nuclear weapons program has been based on plutonium produced in a nuclear reactor located at Yongbyon. North Korea also has a gas centrifuge uranium enrichment program. North Korea tested nuclear explosive devices in October 2006, May 2009, and February 2013. The first device contained plutonium; whether the others contained plutonium or HEU is still unclear. The 2014 Defense Department report said that North Korea could conduct another nuclear test at any time. Iran has a gas centrifuge uranium enrichment program and is building a heavy-water moderated nuclear reactor. However, the reactor program is a lesser proliferation concern because Iran does not have a reprocessing facility, which, as noted, is required to produce plutonium for weapons. A November 2007 National Intelligence Estimate assessed that Iran “halted its nuclear weapons program” in 2003. The estimate, however, also assessed that Tehran is “keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons.” The intelligence community has reaffirmed this conclusion on several occasions. Then-DNI Dennis Blair discussed in 2009 the circumstances under which North Korea might transfer nuclear weapons or fissile material: Pyongyang is less likely to risk selling nuclear weapons or weapons-quantities of fissile material than nuclear technology or less sensitive equipment to other countries or non-state actors, in part because it needs its limited fissile material for its own deterrent. Pyongyang probably also perceives that it would risk a regime-ending military confrontation with the United States if the nuclear material was used by another country or group in a nuclear strike or terrorist attacks and the United States could trace the material back to North Korea. It is possible, however, that the North might find a nuclear weapons or fissile material transfer more appealing if its own stockpile grows larger and/or it faces an extreme economic crisis where the potentially huge revenue from such a sale could help the country survive. Nuclear-related cooperation could also include sharing technology related to nuclear weapons material production, or data from nuclear or explosive testing. Some analysts have argued that both Pyongyang and Tehran could benefit if the former were to provide nuclear test data to the latter in exchange for Iranian information about enrichment, missile, or other nuclear-related expertise. Iran could also pay for North Korean nuclear assistance with currency or petroleum. Some press
reports have pointed to alleged instances of nuclear-related cooperation, such as the possibility of Iranian officials witnessing North Korean nuclear tests. However, this information remains speculative and unconfirmed by official sources. Furthermore, U.S. intelligence assessments have not mentioned nuclear cooperation between the two countries, even though such assessments have described cooperation on ballistic missiles. For example, although the 2013 and 2014 Defense Department reports did, as noted, describe North Korean nuclear assistance to Libya, they did not indicate that North Korea had provided or received nuclear assistance to or from Iran. Moreover, U.S. officials have stated publicly that there is no nuclear cooperation between Iran and North Korea. During a February 27, 2007, Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, U.S. officials stated that there is “no evidence” that Iran and North Korea are cooperating to develop 2008, background briefing that the two countries are not cooperating on “nuclear issues.” More recently, Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Countryman indicated in June 2013 that North Korea and Iran were not engaged in nuclear cooperation, but added that “it’s a valid reason to be concerned and we keep an eye on it.” Similarly, when asked during a February 20, 2014, press briefing about nuclear cooperation between Iran and North Korea, a senior Administration official responded only by noting that the United States “is always concerned about reports of shared technology and proliferation of technology and of nuclear weapons technology.” Lastly, knowledgeable current and former U.S. officials contacted by CRS said that they were unaware of official unclassified U.S. government evidence of nuclear cooperation between Iran and North Korea. The two countries may not have recently engaged in nuclear cooperation because Iran has, according to the IC, apparently halted its nuclear weapons program. Furthermore, the extent to which Iran and North Korea could benefit from nuclear-related cooperation is uncertain. Although some analysts have argued that Pyongyang could provide nuclear test data to Tehran, the extent to which Iran could benefit from such data is unclear. North Korea’s nuclear weapons program to date has apparently been based on plutonium; Iran would most likely use weapons-grade HEU, rather than plutonium, as fissile material in nuclear weapons, at least in the short term. Although Tehran could provide Pyongyang with access to Iran’s enrichment technology, such access would be of limited benefit to North Korea because North Korea’s centrifuge appears to differ from the two types of centrifuges that Iran has installed. It is also possible that, rather than collaborating, the two countries may be competing with each other in their efforts to circumvent international sanctions by obtaining dual-use technologies from the same supply networks, particularly via trading companies in China. Both Tehran and Pyongyang remain dependent on foreign suppliers for their nuclear program, and some components may be in demand by both countries. The Institute for Science and International Security has concluded from examining procurement data that both countries have well established supply chains in China, but North Korea is able to secure shipments with greater ease than is Iran. The two countries may be reluctant to export components to one another that they themselves have difficulty procuring. Moreover, involved Chinese trading companies would have a financial interest in maintaining business with both Iran and North Korea. (Paul Kerr, Mary Beth Nikitin, Steven Hildreth, Iran-North Korea-Syria Ballistic Missile and Nuclear Cooperation, Congressional Research Service R43480, April 16, 2014)
The United Nations Security Council should slap targeted sanctions on North Korean officials responsible for grave human rights abuses and refer them to the international criminal court (ICC), the head of a special UN inquiry said. The retired Australian judge Michael Kirby told an informal meeting of the Security Council convened by Australia, France and the United States he wanted leading members of the reclusive regime hauled before the ICC for prosecution. "More monitoring and engagement alone cannot suffice in the face of crimes that shock the conscience of humanity," Kirby said. "Perpetrators must be held accountable, it is necessary to deter further crimes." North Korea did not send a representative and the meeting was snubbed by China and Russia. "A new generation of senior officials now surrounds the supreme leader Kim Jong-un," Kirby said. "They must be made to understand that they will themselves face personal accountability if they join in the commission of crimes against humanity or fail to prevent them where they could. The commission of inquiry therefore recommends to the security council the adoption of targeted sanctions against those individuals most responsible for crimes against humanity." Kirby said most countries present supported the proposal to refer North Koreans to the ICC, but UN diplomats said any move was likely to face fierce opposition from China, the North's economic lifeline.

Russia's parliament has agreed to write off about $10 billion of North Korea's Soviet-era debt, in a deal expected to facilitate the building of a gas pipeline to South Korea across the reclusive state. The State Duma lower house in Moscow ratified a 2012 agreement to excuse the bulk of North Korea's debt. It said the total debt stood at $10.96 billion as of September 17, 2012. The rest of the debt - $1.09 billion - would be redeemed during the next 20 years, to be paid in equal installments every six months. The outstanding debt owed by North Korea will be managed by Russia's state development bank, Vneshekonombank. Russia's deputy finance minister Sergei Storchak told Russian media that the money could be used to fund mutually beneficial projects in North Korea, including a proposed gas pipeline and a railway to South Korea.

South Korea's Unification Ministry said it approved a trip to Pyongyang by Choi Yeon-hye, president and CEO of the Korea Railroad Corp. (KORAIL), and four other officials for a meeting of the Organization for Co-Operation between Railways (OSJD) set for April 24-28. The rail conference is meant to boost international cooperation between railway operators, the source said, adding that it is expected to bring together top rail officials from China, Russia and 25 other member states of the OSJD.

DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman's statement: "It is reported that U.S. President Obama is to tour Asia soon. Pursuant to the U.S. pivot to Asia-Pacific strategy, his projected trip is a reactionary and dangerous one as it is aimed to escalate confrontation and bring dark clouds of a nuclear arms race to hang over this unstable region. This strategy which the Obama administration adopted under the signboard of "rebalancing" in the Asia-Pacific region late in 2011 is, in essence, designed to focus
efforts on this region in a bid to encircle and contain its rivals and maintain its political
and military edge. The U.S. is citing the DPRK’s "nuclear and missile threats" and
"provocation" as a pretext for hiding the hegemonic nature of the above-said strategy
and warding off the resistance of big countries in Eurasia. "The Quadrennial Defense
Review Report" announced by the U.S. Department of Defense early in March took
issue with the DPRK over its "provocation" and "threat", reconfirming that the U.S.
would deploy 60 percent of its naval force in the Asia-Pacific region till 2020, pursuant
to the "strategy for rebalancing in the Asia-Pacific region". During his recent trip to a
neighboring country, the U.S. secretary of Defense announced that the U.S. would
additionally deploy two Aegis in Japan till 2017, citing "invasion" from the
DPRK. Touring south Korea and China in mid-February, the U.S. secretary of State
vociferated about the DPRK’s promotion of nuclear development and possible
"provocation" while blustering that the U.S.-south Korea joint military exercises would
be staged in the same period and by the same method in the future, too, regardless of
the crucial proposal made by the National Defence Commission of the DPRK and the
north-south high-level contact. It is as clear as noonday that Obama will trumpet about
the same thing to accuse the DPRK this time, too, just as he habitually did in the
past. Clear is the reason why the U.S. is ceaselessly staging extremely offensive and
aggressive joint military exercises in south Korea only among various areas in the Asia-
Pacific region and steadily increasing their number and scale in a bid to deliberately
keep the vicious cycle of tensions. Its aim is to steadily rattle the nerves of the DPRK
and compel it to bolster up its nuclear deterrence, take military retaliatory steps and
thus label it a "bellicose country" and justify Washington’s military moves. But the U.S.
is seriously mistaken. The U.S. arms buildup in the Asia-Pacific region and joint military
exercises are not justified but facing an unprecedentedly open rebuff of countries in
the region. Moreover, the DPRK is not such a country which may allow itself to make
even a slight concession or seek any lucky chance over the fundamental issue related
to the security of the country and the nation for fear of the nonsensical label of
"bellicose country." It is the policy stand of the DPRK to redouble the efforts to
bolster up justifiable deterrence for self-defense in every way to resolutely
counter the U.S. hostile action. If the U.S. seeks hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region
as now and continues working hard to infringe upon the interests of the DPRK under
this pretext, this will bring adverse consequences to the U.S. itself in the long run. The
U.S. reckless moves will have a very negative impact on resuming the six-party
talks and realizing the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula for the present
and, moreover, inevitably spark a nuclear arms race in the whole region. The
nuclear arms race in Northeast Asia which will prove more destructive than the nuclear
issue in Mid-east is bound to end up making a mess of the initiative for building a
"world without nuclear weapons" advocated by Obama. The Obama administration
would be well advised to coolly examine its hostile policy toward the DPRK whether it
is in the final interests of the U.S., in actuality, when there is still time for it.” (KCNA,
“Spokesman for DPRK FM Lays Bare Reactionary, Dangerous Nature of Obama’s Asian
Junket,” April 21, 2014)

Just days before President Obama is to arrive in South Korea, North Korea has
increased activities at its main nuclear test site, raising suspicions in Seoul and
Washington that the country may be preparing to conduct a new underground nuclear
test, the South Korean Defense Ministry said. Yet the level of activity, at least as visible on commercial satellite photographs of the test site, suggests that the country might not be ready to touch off a new test – which would be its fourth – before Obama leaves Seoul on Saturday afternoon. “We have to be prepared, but some of the necessary preparations simply aren’t visible yet,” a senior South Korean official said. In recent days there had been some indication that the United States was moving to reduce the conditions the North would have to meet to restart some kind of dialogue over its nuclear program, for the first time in more than two years. The report of increased activity also came as South Korea was preoccupied with a disastrous ferry accident. It is possible that North Korea’s leaders are merely trying to rattle South Korea and the United States before Obama’s arrival in Seoul. American intelligence officials told Congress earlier this year that the North could conduct a test “at any time,” but some of the usual warning signs of an imminent event, such as the presence of large wiring going into the test tunnel to measure the blast, were not visible on the few commercial satellite images, according to an analysis published by David Albright of the Institute for Science and International Security. Still, a South Korean Defense Ministry spokesman, Kim Min-seok, said that “various types of activities” had been detected at Punggye-ri, referring to the place in northeastern North Korea where the country has conducted underground nuclear tests in 2006, 2009 and, most recently, in February 2013. The South Korean military said it activated an emergency task force to monitor the events and prepare for other provocations, but that seemed to be motivated in part by an abundance of caution and in part, one South Korean official said, “to make it clear that we would be ready to respond.” The White House spokesman, Jay Carney, said officials were closely watching the situation, but he would not speculate about how the United States would respond should North Korea go ahead with a test. “I would note that there is a kind of cyclical nature to the provocative actions that North Korea tends to take,” he said. Yonhap quoted an anonymous government official as saying that the North had placed a large screen at the entrance of a tunnel in Punggye-ri, likely to thwart Western spy satellites. There was no evidence yet, Yonhap reported, of moves to seal entrances to the tunnels, a major step to contain the leakage of radioactivity. But the timing, officials say, would depend on a political calculation by Kim Jong-un, the country’s young leader, whose unpredictability has become one of the hallmarks of the North’s tactical steps. “North Korea wants attention ahead of Obama’s visit,” said Lee Byong-chul, senior fellow at the Institute for Peace and Cooperation in Seoul. It is not clear how much advantage, if any, Kim could get from such a test, American officials say. He has already demonstrated the ability to set off a crude nuclear device. But recently North Korea’s official news media suggested something different was coming. That has prompted speculation that the North could demonstrate that it could develop a bomb from highly enriched uranium, which it is beginning to produce in quantity to supplement its original source of nuclear material, plutonium. It could also conduct multiple tests, as Pakistan did in 1998. Or it could claim to have developed a smaller nuclear weapon that it could fit atop a missile, though demonstrating that to the world would be difficult. Lee said another nuclear test by North Korea “would add fuel to the fire” among South Koreans who were already troubled by the ferry disaster. Fears of a fourth nuclear test by the North have increased since late last month, when it threatened to carry out a “new form” of nuclear test. Washington and its allies have
warned that another test by the North would lead to more international sanctions. North Korea is already under heavy sanctions for its previous tests of nuclear devices and long-range missile technology. Washington and its allies have long suspected North Korea of trying to make nuclear devices small and sophisticated enough to be delivered by the intercontinental ballistic missiles it has also been developing. It remains unclear how close the North has come to that goal, although it claimed after its last nuclear test that it had “diversified” and “miniaturized” its weapons. After the test last year, relations on the divided Korean Peninsula plunged to their chilliest in years, with the North and the South trading threats of attacks. The tensions eased in the second half of the year. But they rose again starting in February, when the United States and South Korea conducted their annual joint military drills and North Korea launched a series of short- and midrange missile tests off its east coast. The North had produced plutonium from spent fuel from its once-mothballed nuclear reactor, which the North is believed to have recently restarted. North Korea is also running a uranium enrichment program that officials and analysts in the region fear will provide the country with a steady supply of fuel for nuclear tests and bombs. (Choe Sang-hun, “Increased Activity at North Korean Nuclear Site Raises Suspicions,” New York Times, April 23, 2014, p. A-4) During a briefing on April 22, the Ministry of National Defense informed the media of the status of North Korea’s nuclear preparations, and the Ministry and the Joint Chiefs of Staff activated a combined crisis management task force, lending credence to the argument that a nuclear test is imminent. The Ministry even took the unusual step of revealing private remarks by North Korean officials about “getting ready for a major strike,” intelligence likely obtained through wiretapping, which is raising suspicions that the Ministry might have ulterior motivations. “We are picking up a lot of chatter,” said Defense Ministry spokesperson Kim Min-seok. Kim quoted North Koreans as saying, “We are preparing to take the next step, which will be unimaginable for our enemies,” “Something big is going to happen before Apr. 30,” and “We are getting ready for a big strike.” When asked about the source of these remarks, a military officer said on condition of anonymity that he understood that the remarks, which are being openly made in North Korea, were captured through various channels. The Unification Ministry is adopting a more cautious stance on the imminence of the nuclear test, pointing to the fact that North Korea has not made a specific remark about the timing of a nuclear test in its official statements. Opinions also differ among experts. “When we consider past experience and the current international political situation, it is likely that the movements toward a nuclear test are more of a bluff than a reality,” said Yang Moo-jin, professor at the University of North Korean Studies. Yang believes that they are a sort of protest before Obama’s visit to South Korea. But Kim Yeon-cheol, professor in the unification department at Inje University, has a different take on things. “North Korea believes there is no need to wait any more since the path of dialogue is blocked,” Kim said, though he conceded that it was unlikely that North Korea would carry out the nuclear test before Obama visits South Korea. In Kim’s analysis, North Korea will concentrate on improving the technical quality of its nuclear weapons even after Obama’s visit to South Korea if there is no breakthrough in the political situation. (Choi Hyun-june and Kim Oi-hyun, “Pyongyang Could Be Prepping Nuke Test before Obama’s Visit,” Hankyore, April 23, 2014) The Defense Ministry here claimed Wednesday that the North appears to have improved its capacity to miniaturize nuclear warheads so they
can be fitted on to missiles. The nuclear payload needs to be reduced to less than 1,000 kg and the diameter to less than 90 cm to fit on a missile. The ministry based its claim on assessment from South Korean and U.S. intelligence services. “The North has reduced the nuclear payload to about 1,500 kg, but not less than 1,000 kg, which means that its nuclear weapons aren’t warfare-ready yet,” a ministry spokesman said. “But we presume that the North’s three previous nuclear tests have enabled it to improve technology to increase nuclear yield and make the payload smaller.” (Chosun Ilbo, “N. Korea Improves Nuclear Technology,” April 24, 2013)

Another North Korean nuclear test is “quite likely” in the “not-too-distant future,” a veteran former American diplomat told CNN’s Paula Newton, in for Christiane Amanpour. “They’re well along on this path of theirs to the development of nuclear weapons, and testing is an important feature of that program. So I expect there will be another test in the relatively near future,” Stephen Bosworth, former U.S. ambassador to South Korea and former special representative for North Korea policy, said. “At some point, as their missile program continues to develop and their nuclear weapons program continues, they will reach a point where I think we will all conclude they are a very grave threat to regional stability, and indeed to nuclear non-proliferation,” Bosworth said. Recent experience shows, the former diplomat told Newton, that the “one way that we have of at least slowing them down, or gaining some additional time, is to engage with them.” Engagement with the North Koreans is “very painful,” he admitted. “It’s very aggravating to have to deal with these guys. But unfortunately, we really don’t have an alternative.” When the international community did engage with North Korea, in the 1990s, it “gained eight years in which we know that they were not producing any fissile material,” he said. “The record is that when [the North Koreans] are not engaged, or when they are not bound by any international agreements that they are observing – which is the case now – then they proceed ahead with their nuclear development.” Seoul’s warning comes as U.S. President Barack Obama kicks off a trip to the region, including South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Chief on his agenda, Bosworth said, should be a better explanation of what his administration’s so-called “Pivot to Asia” really means. When the policy was announced, he told Newton, it was interpreted either as a refocusing of American interest away from the Middle East, or as an effort to “contain” China’s rise. “I don’t think really that it’s either one of those two things.” Being “distracted by events elsewhere” may be an explanation, he said, but it is no excuse. “If we still consider ourselves a global power we’ve got to be able to deal with more than one important issue at a time.” (Mike Krever, “N. Korean Nuclear Test ‘Quite Likely,’” CNN, April 22, 2014)

A naval code of conduct approved by more than 20 nations around the Pacific, including China, Japan and the United States, could reduce the risk of accidental encounters’ spiraling into conflict, experts said. But Beijing’s firm rejection of President Obama’s comments on Wednesday about islands claimed by both China and Japan underscored the maritime tensions that continue to trouble Asia. The Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea was endorsed by naval officials from the United States, China, Japan and other states at a symposium in the northeastern Chinese port city of Qingdao, China’s Xinhua reported. The agreement comes at a time of growing concern about territorial disputes between China and some of its neighbors. China
claims islands controlled by Japan in the East China Sea known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China. Several countries, including China, Vietnam and the Philippines, have overlapping maritime claims. Obama told a Japanese newspaper that the disputed islands fell under the United States-Japanese mutual defense treaty. “And we oppose any unilateral attempts to undermine Japan’s administration of these islands,” he said in a written response to Yomiuri Shimbun. A Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman, Qin Gang, said Wednesday that China was “firmly opposed to treating the U.S.-Japan security treaty as applying to the Diaoyu Islands.” “The United States should respect the facts, in a responsible manner abide by its commitment not to choose sides over a territorial sovereignty issue, be cautious on words and deeds, and earnestly play a constructive role for peace and stability in the region,” Qin said during a news conference. Last year, a Chinese Navy vessel cut within about 100 yards of the Cowpens, an American cruiser that had been monitoring China’s aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, in the South China Sea. Chinese and Japanese vessels in the East China Sea have also had several potentially dangerous encounters in recent years. In 2013, Japan said Chinese warships used radar that helps target weapons on a Japanese military vessel and a helicopter near the disputed islands. In an interview on Tuesday, the day the rules were approved, Adm. Wu Shengli, the commander in chief of the Chinese Navy, said the tensions with Japan remained serious and the risk of incidents at sea persisted. “Nothing can be excluded,” Admiral Wu said in the interview with Phoenix Television, a satellite service based in Hong Kong. “That’s what we often call accidental discharge when cleaning a gun. The gun is an objective fact, but what we need to study is how to avoid accidental discharge when cleaning a gun.” Military analysts say the lack of formal “rules of the road” for encounters between vessels of major navies in the Pacific increases the risk that an incident at sea could escalate sharply, possibly causing loss of life and inciting diplomatic crises. A code on interactions between warships could help reduce unintended conflict. “Over all, I think it’s a very positive development, but it remains to be seen how effectively it will be implemented,” Ian Storey, a senior fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, said in an interview. The rules will help countries “effectively manage and control maritime crises, reduce misjudgments, and avoid incidents of mutual interference and collisions when on the high seas,” Zhang Junshe, a researcher with the Chinese Navy, told Liberation Army Daily, the official newspaper of the Chinese military. The Western Pacific Naval Symposium had been discussing a code on sea encounters for more than a decade. China had objected to previous versions over concerns about foreign military vessels in its exclusive economic zone, waters within 200 nautical miles of a nation’s coast. The code is nonbinding and is a less substantial protocol than earlier bilateral agreements on incidents at sea, said Sam Bateman, a research fellow at the Australian National Center for Ocean Resources and Security at the University of Wollongong and a retired Royal Australian Navy commodore. Bateman said he had not seen the final version of the code, but previous drafts were “not much more than sort of a set of principles for exchanging messages and keeping clear of each other.” Naval chiefs in Qingdao praised the agreement. Admiral Wu called the new rules a “document of milestone significance,” Liberation Army Daily reported. Adm. Harry B. Harris, commander of the United States Pacific Fleet, said the code was “an important step forward to reduce tension on the sea in the region,” the state-run China Daily reported. (Austin Ramzy
Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK): “open questionnaire to Park Geun Hye [today] asking her to give responsible answers to the questions as to whether she stands for the improvement of the north-south relations or seeks to escalate confrontation and whether she wants reunification and peace against war.

Recalling that months-long Key Resolve and Foal Eagle war exercises for invading the north are over, but the south Korean authorities’ confrontation with their compatriots and moves for a war against the north are going on and their anti-reunification hysteria under the signboard of “unification” is flouting the nation and disturbing the world, the questionnaire goes on: 1. What kind of “unification” does Park mean? Confrontation of the social systems means one side swallowing up the other side and the latter being swallowed up by the former, the showdown which is bound to lead to a war. Does she want this? Park seems to call for the confrontation of the social systems, mistaking Korea for Germany. This is a day-dream which will never come true. The confrontation of the social systems precisely means a war. Does Park really stand for the war? 2. Does Park have the face to talk about “confidence-building process” while desperately pursuing the policy for confrontation with fellow countrymen? When she met a head of state of a certain country, she talked rubbish that “the north should be made to change” and “if one hundred attempts to bring it down fail, one hundred and one attempts should be made to succeed.” Does this mean the “confidence-building process” on the lips of Park? Confrontation and confidence can never go together. What does she choose between the two? 3. What is the difference between the “north policy” of the present south Korean regime and Lee Myung Bak’s watchword “no nukes, opening and 3 000 dollars”? Does she wish to drive the north-south relations to a catastrophe just as traitor Lee did? Park is blustering that she is fully ready to ensure “security of the social system” in the north and support its economy in cooperation with the international community once the north dismantles its nukes, asserting the “issue of the north’s nukes is a stumbling block lying in the way of making arrangements for the era of unification.” Park’s claim that the “north should dismantle its nukes first” is nothing different from the above-said watchword of Lee. To insist on the issue of the “north’s nukes” as regards the inter-Korean relations is little short of denying the process to mend the relations. Park should explicitly clarify her stand: whether to persistently bedevil the north-south relations by following the above-said watchword or to opt for repairing the relations. 4. Park was reported to have said the “building of a world without nuclear weapons” should start on the Korean peninsula. Then, is she willing to cease staging with outside forces north-targeted nuclear war drills in south Korea with U.S. nuclear war hardware involved? The DPRK proposed turning the Korean peninsula into a nuclear free zone long ago. It is none other than the U.S. and south Korean puppet forces that have staged madcap nuclear war exercises against the north by introducing more than 1000 nuclear weapons, turning south Korea into the world’s biggest nuclear arsenal in utter disregard of the north’s offer. Nevertheless, Park is finding fault with the north’s nuclear deterrent for self-defense while keeping mum about the U.S. nukes for aggression. This is, indeed, sheer sophism. The U.S. nuclear blackmail and war drills targeting the north are the root cause of the escalating tensions on the peninsula and the worsened inter-Korean relations. Park should now
talk what she has to as regards the U.S. nukes and make a bold decision to put an end to the north-targeted nuclear war drills staged together with the U.S. To this end, is she willing to announce the cancellation of Ulji Freedom Guardian drills scheduled to be staged again between August and September? 5. Can Park make a decision to pull down the concrete wall built by the "yusin" regime in the area south of the Military Demarcation Line to demolish the barrier between the north and the south and abolish "Security Law"? The concrete wall dividing the peninsula into two parts is a barrier of division and confrontation conceived by Park Chung Hee after visiting the Berlin Wall during his visit to the then West Germany 50 years ago. The ill-famed "Security Law", an anti-reunification fascist law, is also a barrier of distrust, social and cultural barrier and a factor of severance and isolation as it is meant to antagonize compatriots and freeze the bonds between the north and the south. If the Korean nation is truly to usher in a new era of peaceful reunification, it is imperative to pull down the barriers of confrontation against reunification, the leftover of the outdated Cold War in the last century, as early as possible. Can Park make such a decision? 6. Does Park think the "aid to women in pregnancy and malnourished children" would help de-escalate the tensions and improve the inter-Korean relations? The "aid to women in pregnancy and malnourished children" touted by her is an insult and mockery of the people in the DPRK including children and women who receive the greatest special benefits as the king of the country and its flowers thanks to the great politics of love for the people. If the inter-Korean relations are to be mended, it is necessary to defuse the acute political and military confrontation. The DPRK in the historic New Year Address clarified an important principled stand on improving the inter-Korean relations. Does Park have the willingness to accept the proposal and appeal of the DPRK, though belatedly, not pretending ignorance of them? 7. It is self-contradiction to talk about "NGO exchange" and "cooperation" while totally blocking the inter-Korean relations, isn’t it? Park is persistently clinging to the "May 24 steps" taken by Lee Myung Bak, a heinous confrontation maniac, to bedevil the inter-Korean relations. This is as foolish an act as tarnishing her image and binding her hands and feet by herself. This behavior only gives the impression that she is just the same confrontation element as Lee Myung Bak. There is neither reason nor pretext whatsoever for her to keep the long bankrupt "May 24 steps" in force any longer. Does Park have the willingness to lift the steps? 8. Is it more urgent to turn the hotspots around the five islands in the West Sea into peace waters than to build a "world peace park" in the Demilitarized Zone? The urgent issue along the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) to be settled by the north and the south in actuality is to turn hotspots around the five islands in the West Sea into peace waters. If Park has a "plan" to turn the MDL area into a peace zone, she should pay attention to this issue, first of all. Does Park have intention to turn the hotspots around the five islands in the West Sea into peace waters? 9. Who is the arch criminal violating the agreement on stopping the smear campaign and escalating tensions on the Korean peninsula through political and military provocations? The south Korean authorities now claim that the DPRK is violating the agreement made at the north-south high-level contact and slandering the south. This is just like a guilty party filing the suit first. It is none other than the south Korean authorities and Park herself who are sling mud at the DPRK. Does Park have the face to grumble that the "north is reneging on the promise to halt the smear campaign and provocations"? 10. Does Park have the willingness to respect and implement the historic July 4 joint statement, June 15 joint
declaration and October 4 declaration? These are the great programs and landmarks for national reunification common to the nation. Is Park ready to show her will to respect and implement them, though belatedly? If Park has a sincere stand to promote the confidence between the north and the south and open the door for peace and reunification, she should give correct answers to the solemn questions put by the DPRK on behalf of the era and the nation in the eyes of all fellow countrymen and the whole world, pondering over them, questionnaire stressed, adding: The prospect for the inter-Korean relations entirely depends on the attitude of Park Geun Hye." (KCNA, “Prospect for North-South Relations Depends on Park Guen Hye: CPRK Open Questionnaire,” April 23, 2014)

North Korea has expressed its condolences over the sinking of a South Korean ferry in a telephone message through its Red Cross Society, the unification ministry said. The message under the name of Kang Su-rin, the chief of the Red Cross Society of North Korea, was sent to Yoo Jung-keun, the president of the (South) Korean Red Cross, the ministry said. Of 476 people on board, 174 people survived the sinking of the 6,325-ton ferry Sewol. "In the message, the North expressed its deep sorrow over the many victims of the disaster," the ministry said. The North’s condolences are the first of their kind since 2003, when a subway fire and typhoon Maemi rocked the country. The South has yet to respond to the North’s message, ministry officials said. The South conveyed its condolences over flooding in North Korea in 2006. KCNA confirmed the delivery of the condolence message in an English-language report. “The Central Committee of the Red Cross Society of the DPRK Wednesday sent a message of sympathy to the South Korean Red Cross,” it said, adding “The message expressed deep sympathy as regards the sinking of the ferry ‘Sewol’ in waters off Jin Island, South Jolla Province on April 16 claiming many casualties including young schoolchildren and leaving many persons missing.” North Korea experts said that the North’s move seems to be intended to improve chilly inter-Korean ties. "Saying it will keep an eye on President Park Geun-hye’s stance on inter-Korean relations, the North sent its condolence message (over the disaster). It appears to be the North’s intention to thaw the frozen inter-Korean relationship," said Yang Moo-jin, a political scientist at the University of North Korean Studies. "It remains to be seen whether the North carries out its fourth nuclear test." (Yonhap, “N. Korea Offers Condolences over S. Korea Ferry Victims,” Korea Times, April 23, 2013)

4/24/14

U.S.-Japan Joint Statement: “Close U.S.-Japan cooperation is essential in managing and responding to long-standing and emerging threats and challenges in Asia and around the world. Recent events underscore the importance of coordinated action to uphold regional and global rules and norms. At the March 25 Trilateral Summit in The Hague, the leaders of the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea urged North Korea to take concrete actions to meet its international obligations on nuclear and missile issues and to address, without delay, humanitarian concerns, including the abductions issue. In concert with our G-7 partners, the United States and Japan have condemned Russia over its illegal attempt to annex Crimea and are consulting closely on further measures against Russia over its deplorable conduct, while strongly urging Russia to deescalate tensions in Ukraine. Together, we are taking concrete steps to support Ukraine’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and economic stability. The United
States and Japan are working collaboratively to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue, support Middle East peace efforts, contribute to Afghan reconstruction, and improve the situation in Syria, including through the disposal of its chemical stockpiles. The United States and Japan recognize that China can play an important role in addressing all of these challenges, and both countries reaffirm their interest in building a productive and constructive relationship with China. The United States and Japan, as maritime nations with global trade networks that depend on open seas, underscore the importance of maintaining a maritime order based upon respect for international law, including the freedom of navigation and overflight. The United States and Japan share strong concern over recent actions that have raised tensions in the East China Sea and South China Sea, such as the uncoordinated declaration of an Air Defense Identification Zone in the East China Sea. Our two countries oppose any attempt to assert territorial or maritime claims through the use of intimidation, coercion or force. The United States and Japan urge the establishment of confidence-building measures among governments and militaries in the region to address these tensions. In the South China Sea, we call on countries concerned to clarify the basis of their maritime claims in accordance with international law. We support efforts for the early establishment of an effective Code of Conduct as a way to reduce the risk of an unintended incident. The United States and Japan fully support the use of diplomatic and legal means, including international arbitration, to settle maritime disputes in the South China Sea. (White House Office of the Press Secretary, U.S.-Japan Joint Statement, April 24, 2014)

Abe, Obama: “Q. I’d like to raise a question with regard to security. First, my question is addressed to Prime Minister Abe. President Obama, with regard to the defense of the Senkaku Islands, he had clearly stated his security stance based on the security treaty. And what kind of discussion did you have on the exercise of collective security rights? To President Obama, the following question: Based on the security treaty, the obligation to defend the Senkaku Islands, this is the first time that you referred to this issue. Why did you mention this? Could you talk about the import of your statement? ABE: (As interpreted.) Through the talks with President Obama, as President Obama mentioned at the outset in his speech, between our two countries we have the security treaty and under the security treaty, all of the abilities and capabilities to perform the commitment is provided. And this includes all territories under the administration of Japan, inclusive of the Senkaku Islands. And any unilateral action to undermine Japan’s administration of the Senkaku Islands will be opposed by the United States. We agreed on this point. On the exercise of the right of collective defense, presently in Japan the legal basis for security is being discussed and with regard to the stability of Japan and regional safety and stability, and to function the alliance effectively, and to contribute to the stability of the region we are making these studies. This is what I have explained to President Obama. Concerning such studies and examinations being made in Japan, this was welcomed and this would be supported. That was the position expressed by President Obama. OBAMA: Our position is not new. Secretary Hagel, our Defense Secretary, when he visited here, Secretary of State John Kerry when he visited here, both indicated what has been our consistent position throughout. We don’t take a position on final sovereignty determinations with respect to Senkakus, but historically they have been administered by Japan and we do not
believe that they should be subject to change unilaterally. And what is a consistent part of the alliance is that the treaty covers all territories administered by Japan. So this is not a new position, this is a consistent one. In our discussions, I emphasized with Prime Minister Abe the importance of resolving this issue peacefully -- not escalating the situation, keeping the rhetoric low, not taking provocative actions, and trying to determine how both Japan and China can work cooperatively together. And I want to make that larger point. We have strong relations with China. They are a critical country not just to the region, but to the world. Obviously, with a huge population, a growing economy, we want to continue to encourage the peaceful rise of China. I think there’s enormous opportunities for trade, development, working on common issues like climate change with China. But what we’ve also emphasized -- and I will continue to emphasize throughout this trip -- is that all of us have responsibilities to help maintain basic rules of the road and an international order so that large countries, small countries, all have to abide by what is considered just and fair, and that we are resolving disputes in peaceful fashion. And this is a message that I’ve delivered directly to the Chinese and it’s one that I think is entirely consistent with China being successful. I think the alternative is a situation in which large countries, like the United States or China or Russia or other countries, feel as if whenever they think it’s expedient they can take actions that disadvantage smaller countries, and that’s not the kind of world that is going to be stable and prosperous and secure over the long term. So we are invested in an international order, and that applies to a whole range of issues, including maritime issues. My hope is, is that China will continue to engage with us and other countries in the region where we do not take a position on the particular sovereignty of this piece of land or this rock but we do take a position in making sure that all countries are following basic international procedures in resolving these disputes. And if that happens, then I think not only will China be successful, but I think there’s a great potential for Chinese and Japanese cooperation, Chinese and Vietnamese cooperation, cooperation with the Philippines and China -- all of which will benefit the peoples of the region. Q. …In regards to the Senkaku Islands, I just want to make sure that this is absolutely clear. Are you saying that the U.S. would consider using military force were China to have some sort of military incursion in those islands to protect those islands? And how does that not draw another red line that you would have to enforce -- of putting U.S. credibility, your credibility on the line once again, as it was in the case with Syria and Russia? And on another key security issue, you mentioned North Korea in your meeting with the Prime Minister. Are you issuing a warning to North Korea that there should not be another nuclear test? And to Prime Minister Abe, do you have confidence in President Obama’s assurances about your security when the U.S. and the West were unable to stop Russia’s advances in Ukraine? OBAMA: Well, Jim, let me unpack that question because there’s a whole bunch of assumptions in there, some of which I don’t agree with. First of all, the treaty between the United States and Japan preceded my birth, so obviously, this isn’t a “red line” that I’m drawing; it is the standard interpretation over multiple administrations of the terms of the alliance, which is that territories under the administration of Japan are covered under the treaty. There’s no shift in position. There’s no “red line” that’s been drawn. We’re simply applying the treaty. At the same time, as I’ve said directly to the Prime Minister that it would be a profound mistake to continue to see escalation around this issue rather than dialogue and confidence-building measures between Japan and
China. And we’re going to do everything we can to encourage that diplomatically. …

Q. Is there a warning to North Korea to not conduct another nuclear test? OBAMA: North Korea has engaged in provocative actions for the last several decades. It’s been an irresponsible actor on the international stage for the last several decades. So our message on North Korea has been consistent throughout. They are the most isolated country in the world. They are subject to more international sanctions and international condemnation than any country in the world. As a consequence, their people suffer as much as any peoples in the world. And what we’ve said is if you are, in fact, serious about North Korea being a normal nation, then you’ve got to start changing your behavior. And that starts with the basic principle of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. Now, am I optimistic that there’s going to be a major strategic shift in North Korea’s attitudes any time soon? Probably not. But what I am confident about is, is that working with Japan, working with the Republic of Korea, and working with China and other interested parties in the region, that we can continue to apply more and more pressure on North Korea so that at some juncture they end up taking a different course. In the meantime, they’re dangerous, and we have to make sure that we are guarding against any provocations getting out of hand. This is one of the reasons why the alliance is so important and collective self-defense is so important. But we are not surprised when they engage in irresponsible behavior. That’s been their pattern for the last couple of decades. And what we have to do is to continue to try to contain and mitigate the potential damage that this behavior has and continue to put pressure on them so that we can see a shift. And China’s participation in pushing the DPRK in a different direction is critically important as well. They have not only an opportunity but I think a security interest and a broader interest in a peaceful resolution to what has been a generation-long conflict and is the most destabilizing, dangerous situation in all of the Asia Pacific region.” (Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Abe before Bilateral Meeting, Akasaka Palace, Tokyo, April 24, 2014)

President Barack Obama’s pledge to protect the Senkaku Islands was one major sign of the rare developments that unfolded before and during his meeting with Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. After Abe and Obama dined on sushi in the Ginza district of Tokyo on April 23, lights were still burning at the Foreign Ministry in the Kasumigaseki district as officials of the two nations were ironing out the details of the joint statement to be released after the Abe-Obama meeting on April 24. A Japanese government source could not hide his irritation at the slow pace at which wording about security issues, especially with China in mind, was proceeding. "National security is part of a set along with the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade arrangement," the source said. "Adjustments will have to be made in the joint statement depending on progress in the TPP negotiations. This may take us until the morning [of April 24]." Abe and Obama agreed over sushi that further talks should continue between Amari Akira, the state minister in charge of the TPP, and U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman. The two continued their negotiations until 3 a.m. on April 24, but no agreement was reached. At the joint news conference held April 24 after his meeting with Obama, Abe said: “TPP negotiations will continue today between the two officials. The release of the joint statement will be made after the results of those negotiations are taken into consideration." Ordinarily, joint statements released after summit talks have been all
but finalized prior to the actual meeting. That allows for the announcement of the joint statement immediately afterward. The latest meeting was particularly unusual because no joint statement was released right away, and also because negotiations resumed even after the two leaders had already met. Commenting on this unusual situation, a member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party’s farm lobby said, “The joint statement has been taken hostage.” The United States was apparently using the joint statement as a lever to put pressure on Japan to reach an agreement on the TPP. A high-ranking official of the Abe administration said: “That is only evidence that the two sides are involved in negotiations with much at stake in terms of national interests. There will be no problem as long as the joint statement is released before Obama leaves Japan.” While no TPP agreement in principle was reached on April 24, Obama clearly stated Washington’s obligation to protect the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, which are also claimed by China. “Our treaty commitment to Japan’s security is absolute, and Article 5 covers all territories under Japan’s administration, including the Senkaku Islands,” Obama said at the news conference. At the same time, he reiterated the U.S. position and said, “We don’t take a position on final sovereignty determinations with respect to the Senkaku, but historically they have been administered by Japan and we do not believe that they should be subject to change unilaterally.” The Obama administration was initially hesitant about excessively emphasizing China during the president’s meeting with Abe. However, in the wake of the crisis in Ukraine, U.S. officials also stressed that one objective of Obama’s trip to Asia would be to reconfirm Washington’s responsibility to its allies. In the end, Obama agreed to mention the Senkakus in response to Japan’s exhortations. Similar wording will be included in the joint statement. A high-ranking Japanese government official said mention of the Senkakus by Obama would be an important result of the meeting with Abe, especially with no final agreement on the TPP. Because the Japanese request was accepted, a high-ranking Foreign Ministry official said, “From the standpoint of deterrence, the contents of what he said could not have been any stronger.” At the same time, the Obama administration did not completely overlook China. While emphasizing the importance of abiding by the rule of international law, Obama also stressed the importance of China’s role in global affairs. “We have strong relations with China,” he said. “They are a critical country not just to the region, but to the world.” When Obama was asked if he was drawing a new red line on the Senkakus with his comment, he replied, “This isn’t a red line that I’m drawing. It is the standard interpretation over multiple administrations.” He then added, “I’ve said directly to [Abe] that it would be a profound mistake to continue to see escalation around this issue rather than dialogue and confidence-building measures between Japan and China.” In a sense, the Obama administration has not displayed a new view on the Senkakus issue since it has stuck by its past position of neutrality on the sovereignty question. When asked about that point at his own separate news conference, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide said: “Perhaps you should read his comments more honestly. The president clearly said Article 5 of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty applied to the islands. The comments are no more nor no less than that.” While issues concerning interpretation of history, which have dogged Japan’s relations with China and South Korea, were not raised during Abe’s meeting with Obama, the prime minister was asked about his December visit to Yasukuni Shrine by a member of the U.S. media. “I made a pledge of not entering into war under my firm resolve to create a world in which people never again suffer from
the ravages of war,” Abe said. “I will continue to make that explanation in order to gain understanding.” He obviously had in mind the expression by the U.S. State Department of its “disappointment” at his visit, which enraged China and South Korea. Visits are controversial because the shrine memorializes 14 Class-A war criminals along with Japan’s war dead. Abe also explained how Japan had reflected on the wartime suffering it had caused to the peoples of Asia. This was an obvious reference to the wording of the 1995 statement issued under the name of Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, which expressed deep remorse and an apology for Japan’s colonial rule and aggression before and during World War II. Abe also expressed his intention to abide by positions taken by past Japanese administrations, a veiled reference to the 1993 statement issued under the name of Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono expressing apology to the “comfort women” who were forced to provide sexual services to wartime Japanese troops. Abe tried to be conciliatory toward both China and South Korea, much as he did before his meeting in The Hague in March with Obama and South Korean President Park Geun-hye. Prior to those trilateral talks, Abe said in the Diet that his administration would not revise the Kono statement. However, Abe concluded the news conference with a veiled reference to China. "After World War II, Japan created a nation that respects human rights and values the rule of law," Abe said. "We want to increase such regions throughout the world." (Yamada Akihiro, Oshima Takashi, Funakoshi Takashi and Tsuruoka Masahiro, “A Series of Firsts in Obama Meeting with Abe,” Asahi Shimbun, April 25, 2014)

China did not export any oil in the first three months of 2014, according to South Korea’s Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), citing data it collected from Chinese customs authorities. China’s total trade with North Korea fell 2.83 percent to $1.27 billion in the January-March period compared to the same period last year. (Yonhap, “China Didn’t Export Crude Oil to N. Korea in Q1,” Vantage Point (June 2014), p. 60)

Sigal: “As President Obama heads to Asia, strategic patience in Washington is stirring strategic impatience in Pyongyang. For over a year North Korea has waited for the United States to resume negotiations—but it will wait no longer. It has restarted its reactor to generate more plutonium, is close to completing a new reactor, and is expanding its uranium enrichment. It has test launched two medium-range missiles and has displayed new, untested longer-range missiles starting in 2010. Worst of all, indications are that it will very soon conduct a nuclear test that breaks with the past, both militarily and politically. Militarily, the North has dropped hints in November 2010 and October 2012 that it is developing a thermonuclear weapon. If successful, the tests could demonstrate its ability to mount a nuclear warhead on its missiles, destabilizing the strategic balance in Northeast Asia. Politically, the Kim dynasty has long justified its rule by juche or self-reliance - the legitimizing myth that it, unlike its sibling rival in the South, has stood up to all its neighbors and forced them to respect its sovereignty, safeguard its security, and strengthen its economy. Just as it played off China against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, since 1988 it has sought to force the United States, South Korea and Japan to end enmity and provide alternatives to dependence on China. If Kim Jong-un goes ahead with the tests, he will put that strategy in jeopardy. Counting on Beijing for much-needed investment and aid to grow his
economy may become fraught: China has just displayed its displeasure by impeding cross-border commerce, though it won’t cut off the North completely. When the Obama administration took office in January 2009, South Korea was withholding energy aid to the North promised under an October 2007 six-party agreement in order to get a written commitment from the North on verification of nuclear programs. The October agreement said nothing about verification, however, which had been deferred to the next phase of negotiations. Yet, as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice acknowledged on June 18, 2008, Washington had moved the goalposts: “What we’ve done, in a sense, is move up issues that were to be taken up in phase three, like verification, like access to the reactor, into phase two.” In response to the South’s renge on energy, the North moved in late January 2009 to launch a satellite. Pyongyang delayed the launch until April, time for Washington to resume negotiations—the only way to head off the launch and curb other weapons programs. Instead, the Obama administration embraced strategic patience. That pose, adopted in the interregnum, was confirmed in a March 2009 National Security Council meeting chaired by Obama. As NSC senior director for East Asia Jeffrey Bader recalls: “The president told his senior staff he wanted to break the cycle of provocation, extortion, and reward that various U.S. administrations had confronted and ultimately accommodated in the past fifteen years. … Defense Secretary Gates stressed the importance of not providing inducements to bring North Korea back to the table, or ‘not paying for the same horse three times.’ The president agreed. There was no mention then, or at any subsequent time, of candidate Obama’s suggestion of a willingness to meet Kim Jong-il.” Bader’s account makes it sound as if it was Washington, not Pyongyang that needed convincing. Strategic patience manifested the belief prevalent in Washington that the North alone had failed to live up to past agreements and was determined to arm so negotiations would be fruitless. Yet Pyongyang had stopped reprocessing plutonium for twelve years from 1991 to 2003, had disabled its nuclear reactor in 2007 (and did not restart it until late last year), and had seldom conducted test launches of medium- and long-range missiles. Washington’s belief soon became a self-fulfilling prophecy as Pyongyang went ahead with the rocket launch, and soon followed with its second nuclear test. By March 2010 the administration was inching back to the negotiating table only to have the North torpedo a South Korean navy vessel—the Cheonan—eliminating any chance of talks that year. With U.S. elections on the horizon, the administration moved to head off trouble by resuming negotiations in 2011. With preparations for resumption of testing underway, North Korea agreed to suspend uranium enrichment, keep its reactor at Yongbyon shut down, and allow international monitoring. It also accepted a moratorium on nuclear and missile testing while “productive dialogue continues.” Left unresolved was whether that moratorium precluded satellite launches. North Korea insisted on its right to launch despite a UN Security Council ban. The United States warned a launch would be a deal-breaker. These arrangements were to be finalized at talks in December 2011, the very week that Kim Jong-il died. They were delayed until February 29, 2012. Whether Kim Jong-il would have gone ahead with the launch and subsequent nuclear test is not known, but his son (and successor) did. Some in Washington experienced in negotiating with the North thought it was a mistake not to get a written deal that covered satellite launches. That sidestepped a more significant question: why did Pyongyang proceed with the launch and a third nuclear test when it
had every reason to believe that the Obama administration was finally negotiating in earnest? No one outside Pyongyang knows for sure. Administration officials understandably felt double-crossed, which only reinforced their reluctance to resume negotiations. Last fall, North Korean officials indicated their willingness to return to Leap Day and possibly not exercise their “right” to launch satellites. But that was not good enough for Washington, which insisted that Pyongyang had to do more—and without reciprocity from Washington. That was unacceptable to Pyongyang, which saw “commitment for commitment, action for action,” enshrined in the September 2005 six-party joint statement, as the only way to build trust. Last week, Washington, Seoul and Tokyo agreed to soften this stance, but without a commitment to reciprocal steps, it was too little, too late. The North Korean strategy of forcing others to improve relations has now reached a dead end. So has U.S. strategic patience. With little prospect for a negotiated way out, the security of all of Northeast Asia is in peril.” (Leon V. Sigal, “A Nuclear North Korea vs. a Strategically Patient U.S.: Who Wins?” The American Interest, April 254, 2014)

President Obama arrived here offering solace to a country traumatized by the sinking of a ferry that killed scores, and showing solidarity at a time when the Korean Peninsula is rife with tension. With North Korea threatening provocations like long-range missile tests or even a fourth test of a nuclear weapon, Obama warned that the United States, South Korea and their allies would consider levying new sanctions against Pyongyang. “It is important for us to look at additional ways to apply pressure on North Korea, further sanctions that have even more bite,” Obama said after meeting with President Park Geun-hye of South Korea. But Obama acknowledged that diplomatic pressure alone would have limited impact on a government that does not play by the normal rules of diplomacy. “North Korea is already the most isolated country in the world by far,” Obama said. “We are not going to find a magic bullet that solves this problem overnight.” ark was even more pointed, warning the North on Friday that testing a nuclear bomb would dissolve any prospect for a resumption of multiparty talks over Pyongyang’s nuclear program or a rapprochement between North and South. The South Korean government, Park said, has estimated that North Korea is ready to carry out a nuclear test at any moment. Recent activity at a nuclear test site, picked up by satellites, heightened the tension just before Obama’s trip. Given the continuing tumult in relations between the Koreas, Obama reiterated a position expressed by other American officials, saying that he was open to delaying the transfer of operational control of the South Korean military during wartime from the United States to Seoul. (Mark Landler, “Obama Offers Support to South Korea at a Moment of tTrauma and Tension,” New York Times, April 26, 2014, p. A-8) President Obama says it may be time to consider further sanctions against North Korea “that have even more bite” as the country is threatening its fourth nuclear test. Addressing a joint news conference alongside South Korean President Park Geun-hye, Obama said threats by North Korea will get it “nothing except further isolation” from the global community. But Obama acknowledged there are limits to what impacts additional penalties can have on the country. “North Korea already is the most isolated country in the world by far,” Obama said. “Its people suffer terribly because of the decisions its leaders have made. And we are not going to find a magic bullet that solves this problem overnight.” Obama said the missile technology and nuclear weapons that North Korea is
developing pose a direct threat to Korea and Japan, two very close U.S. allies in the region, but to the United States as well. “We can’t waver in our intention. We have to make sure that, in strong concert with our allies, that we are continuing to press North Korea to change its approach,” Obama said, presenting a united front in the presence of Park. The White House said it was keeping close tabs on activity at North Korea’s nuclear test site, where commercial satellite imagery this week showed increased activity. Park said the assessment of her government is that North Korea is “fully ready now” to conduct another nuclear test. “This is a very tense situation,” she said. “President Obama’s visit to South Korea sends a strong message to North Korea that its provocative acts cannot be tolerated,” she said. (Darlene Superville, “Obama Speaks out on Possible N. Korea Nuke Test,” Associated Press, April 25, 2014)

Obama-Park: “PRESIDENT PARK: (As interpreted.) I’d like to extend my sincere welcome to His Excellency President Obama. To the victims of the sunken ferry ship, Sewol, and their families, President Obama expressed consolation and sympathy, and to provide support. I truly thank you from the bottom of my heart. President Obama’s visit to Korea is the fourth time, and Seoul is the city he most frequently visited during his term. Of all the U.S. Presidents, the number of his visits to Korea outnumber that of his predecessors. This reflects President Obama’s special interest in Korea and full commitment and confidence to further strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance. Most recent North Korea provocation is a public announcement on possibility of engaging another nuclear test, thereby imposing threats and provocation. Amidst the situation, President Obama’s visit to Korea sends a strong message to North Korea that its provocative acts cannot be tolerated. President Obama and I will spare no effort to exercise deterrence against North Korea’s provocation and strengthen our mutual cooperation. Above all, faced with the DPRK’s threat, the U.S.-ROK’s defense capabilities is solid and will be further cemented. Tomorrow, President Obama and I will jointly visit ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command for the first time ever since it was formed in 1978 to reaffirm U.S.-ROK’s defense capabilities against the DPRK. The DPRK’s so-called new pattern of provocation will bring about a new level of international pressure. We also exchanged views on what measures Korea and the U.S. need to take jointly, together with the international community, in the face of the DPRK’s provocation. I sincerely hope that North Korea takes the course towards peace and stability while making a right choice to resolve the stress and hardship that North Korea is undergoing. We considered that the security environment is experiencing threats imposed by DPRK’s nuclear program and missile activities. Therefore, we shared the view that the timing and condition of the OPCON transfer slated for 2015 can be reviewed. We also agreed to beef up our capacities to effectively deal with DPRK’s nuclear and missile threats. As a part of that effort, Korea’s air and missile defense, KAMD, will be developed into an independent system and will collaborate to enhance KAMD’s interoperability while securing its efficient operation. The vital foundation of our alliance is high-level situated dialogue, which we plan to further reinforce. In the later part of this year, defense and foreign affairs ministers talk is scheduled. We expect the talks will be meaningful opportunity to discuss current issues, visions of our alliance, present and future, of the Korean Peninsula. Based on strong deterrent capabilities of ROK and the U.S., we decided to lay the groundwork for sustainable peace and peaceful unification and make joint efforts to build a new
To realize that it is crucial to achieve progress in DPRK’s denuclearization. We share the concern over DPRK’s continuous attempt to advance its nuclear capabilities, so with a sense of urgency, we will make progress in the denuclearization. Based on our close coordination, we will continue our efforts to induce consistent response and active cooperation from the international communities, including the five parties. North Korea’s pursuit of two goals at once -- on nuclear arsenals and economic development -- are incompatible. DPRK must realize that. And therefore, to lay the groundwork for peaceful unification in the Korean Peninsula, I explained to President Obama my initiative for peaceful unification presented in Dresden last month. In December 2012, as President Obama mentioned himself, residents of both North and South Korea will eventually become free citizens of an integrated country. Reflecting development process of human history, barriers built due to conflict, distrust, social cultural differences eventually collapse. During that process, I believe we need to shower the North Korean residents with caring interest and deliver a message of hope, especially efforts necessary to provide humanitarian assistance to North Koreans and recover our common sense of identity. Peaceful unification in the Korean Peninsula will provide new economic opportunities to its neighboring countries and allies, and contribute to promote global peace and stability. Though the North Korea regime rejects the initiative I proposed in Dresden, my proposal will assure minimal level of value of life to be enjoyed by North Koreans and recover common sense of identity between North and South Koreans. With that principle in mind, we will pursue the initiative. President Obama and I share the view that while the tension and conflict persist in the Northeast Asian region, we must actively seek ways to promote peace and collaboration in Northeast Asia. In that context, I strongly support the U.S. policy of rebalance toward the Asia Pacific region as it contributes positively to the regional peace and cooperation. I firmly believe that President Obama’s Asia trip demonstrates his strong commitment toward his policy of rebalancing toward the region and his pledge to implement the commitment. As the U.N. Security Council member, South Korea stands side by side with the U.S. to resolve any major issues undermining peace and stability in the global community. The U.S. and Korea are marching together to carry out development cooperative activities in Asia, Africa, and also poverty fighting. We’ll gather our wisdom to tackle new global challenges such as climate change, energy, nuclear security, cybersecurity, marine security. Another important pillar of our alliance is practical cooperation in economic, social and cultural sectors. This topic has continued so far and will continue. KORUS FTA will, together with the U.S.-ROK mutual defense treaty, have become two major linchpins of our alliance. We plan to expand mutual beneficial cooperation based on KORUS FTA. We share the view that, followed by FTA between the two countries, TPP will enable both of our countries to expand our cooperation in the future. We will closely coordinate with each other regarding Korea’s participation in TPP. Regarding the issue of energy, scientists from the two sides are conducting research in the field of IT, high-tech manufacturing, space exploration. In these areas they are closely collaborating further down the road. Energy-related companies and experts from both sides have strengthened cooperation in clean energy and shale gas sector. Thus we are stepping up the bilateral partnership to a new level. Today, after 60 years, precious nine Korean cultural artifacts were returned to Korea. Such social and cultural cooperation between the
U.S. and Korea will enrich our friendly ties and achieve further development. Based on the past 60 years of unwavering trust built between the two nations, the U.S.-ROK alliance will advance further as we effectively handle the challenges in the Korean Peninsula, Northeast Asia and the world. Our alliance will continuously strengthen its role as a linchpin for peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region and also contribute to the people of the U.S. and Korea and the world. Once again, welcome to Korea, President Obama, and I wish you a successful Asia trip. Thank you. OBAMA: Thank you, President Park, for your kind words and warm welcome. And I want to thank the people of South Korea for their enduring friendship and unfailing hospitality. As I said earlier, I know my visit comes at a time of great sorrow for your nation. And again, on behalf of all Americans, I want to express our deepest condolences -- our aedo -- to all the families who lost loved ones on the ferry Sewol. So many were young students with their entire lives ahead of them. I’m a father of two daughters of the same age, or close to the same age, as those who were lost, and so I can only imagine what the parents are going through at this point and the incredible heartache. I brought with me on this trip, in addition to the flag that I mentioned earlier, a magnolia tree from the South Lawn of the White House. These magnolia trees have stood for more than a century, and they represent in our country beauty, and with every spring, renewal -- the same qualities embodied by all those students. So during my visit this tree will be presented to Danwon High School as a reminder of their beautiful lives and the friendship between our nations. And going forward, the United States will continue to offer whatever support we can provide as you respond to this tragedy. These difficult days remind us that, whatever the challenges, our two nations stand together. Our alliance remains a linchpin of security in Asia. Our solidarity is bolstered by the courage of our servicemembers -- both Korean and American -- who safeguard this nation. America’s commitment to the South Korean people will never waver. And, President Park, I want to thank you for your strong personal commitment to our alliance. I was honored to welcome you to Washington for your first foreign trip as President, and we’ve worked closely ever since. In our discussions today we agreed to continue to modernize our alliance, including enhancing the interoperability of our missile defense systems. At the same time, President Park recommended, and I agreed, that given the evolving security environment in the region, including the enduring North Korea nuclear and missile threat, we can reconsider the 2015 timeline for transferring operational control for our alliance. Together we'll ensure that our alliance remains fully prepared for our mission. With regard to North Korea, the United States and South Korea stand shoulder-to-shoulder both in the face of Pyongyang’s provocations and in our refusal to accept a nuclear North Korea. Threats will get North Korea nothing other than greater isolation. And we’re united on the steps Pyongyang needs to take, including abandoning their nuclear weapons and ballistic weapons programs and living up to their international obligations. Of course, we’re also deeply concerned about the suffering of the North Korean people, and the United States and South Korea are working together to advance accountability for the serious human rights violations being committed by the North. I mentioned to President Park that the United States supports the Korean people’s desire for unification, and I share President Park’s vision -- as you outlined, Madam President, in your recent speech in Dresden -- of "a unified Korea that’s free from the fear of war and nuclear weapons." It’s a vision of a
unified Korea where people throughout this peninsula enjoy the political and economic freedoms that exist here in the South. Beyond this peninsula, our alliance is increasingly a global one. We’re grateful for South Korea’s partnership, from typhoon relief in the Philippines to humanitarian efforts in Syria. As Madam President mentioned, we’re working closely on new clean energy technologies to address climate change and with the international community on an ambitious new climate agreement. Around the globe, we’re leaders in development, because we want more people to experience the kind of incredible growth and progress that South Korea shows is possible. And finally, we agreed to continue expanding our extraordinary economic ties. Since we signed our free trade agreement two years ago, our overall bilateral trade has gone up. The United States is exporting more to South Korea, and South Korea is exporting more to the United States, which supports good jobs in both countries. Today, President Park and I discussed how we can make sure that we implement KORUS fully, which would also help ensure that South Korea can eventually meet the high standards of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. So, President Park, thank you again for your partnership and for all that you’ve done to keep our alliance strong. I’m looking forward to our working dinner tonight. Time and again, we’ve seen how much our people can accomplish together, not just for our own countries but for the security and prosperity of the people around the world. And we very much appreciate your leadership on that project. Kamsahamnida. Q. I have a question for President Park. Madam President, last month in Dresden, Germany, you announced your unification initiative centering around the three main proposals for laying the groundwork for peace and unification, but North Korea flatly rejected and has continued with its threats of provocation. In particular, North Korea is showing signs for an attempt at the fourth nuclear test against this backdrop. The two leaders said that there will be -- at their opening statements -- strong sanctions against North Korea by the international society, and they will not -- the two countries will not tolerate a nuclear test. I would like to know what the President’s evaluation is. Is there a possibility of North Korea actually carrying out the nuclear test? And if the provocations continue, if you are to improve and move forward the Korean relations, are you considering a more flexible measure to be taken against the North? Next, with regards to the U.S.-Korea transfer of the command or the OPCON, the two leaders have said that they will review the timing and conditions for transfer. And if the transfer schedule is pushed back again, have you discussed with President Obama specifically on when that timing will be? PARK: The Korean government and also the Defense Ministry -- our assessment is that North Korea is actually fully ready to carry out the fourth nuclear test, so it can actually carry out the test whenever it deems necessary. That is our assessment. We’re not very certain of what the timing will be, but I think we believe that they are fully ready now. And this is a very tense situation. To come up with some flexible measure -- that is your question -- actually, the Dresden initiative is a case in point for a win-win of the two Koreas and for improvement of the quality of life for North Korean residents. It’s indeed a flexible policy. But North Korea is responding with threats of provocation and about carrying out nuclear tests. So this is a point that we really need to think seriously. With regards to the transfer of OPCON, Korea and the United States have decided that the basic direction should be to strengthen the KORUS, combine the defensive posture. We believe that it should not incur any negative situations on the defense posture for Korea. And, therefore, against the heightening tensions of the
threats currently, the timing is 2015. But we have agreed that that we could revisit this issue about reviewing the timing and conditions for transfer. So, currently, I don’t think it is quite appropriate that I give you the exact timing or the conditions. But the authorities -- the defense authorities of the two countries will be able to come to a coordination effort together, and that is what we will do to encourage the defense authorities to move forward. ... PARK: When it comes to Korea and Japan, there are a number of shared interests amongst the two countries. However, there has been some conflict going on between the two countries because of historical views. And your question is how we are going to resolve those differences. ... On this issue, at The Hague, we had a trilateral Korea-U.S.-Japan summit meeting, I think my point can begin from the trilateral summit meeting, so I think my talk can begin from the trilateral summit meeting. The United States, particularly President Obama, has exerted a lot of effort for the trilateral summit to be realized in Hague. And at that summit meeting, the three countries have come to an agreement that will be coordinated efforts for resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. However, I’d like to say that before we had this trilateral summit meeting, what the Japanese leader has done, the commitment that he has made -- I’d like to trace the talks back to the (inaudible) dialogue and the (inaudible) dialogue -- the leader has said that he will faithfully abide by those two dialogues and that there will be some effort for resolution of the issues related to the Korean comfort women victims. And since there has been some consensus reached we should make sure that we do not lose that momentum and carry forward to make progress from that. So I think what is most important is that we go back to the pledges made by Prime Minister Abe and their truthful actions be implemented from the Japan side. That is very important. And for the comfort women issue, for the Korean victims, at the director general level at the Foreign Ministry there will be further consultations. We hope that there will be talks carried out at that director general meeting and that there will be truthfulness displayed by the Japanese side so that we can carry on the momentum for cooperation. And if we’re not able to achieve much progress as we anticipated at that moment, we won’t be able to carry on, to make progress from the momentum that we were able to realize at that time. With regards to the Korean comfort women victims, many have passed away and we only have 55 remaining survivors. And I think it’s very important that we come up with efforts, truthful efforts for these victims because if we let go of this, if we do not make progress in the near future, we won’t be able to do anything about those victims. And, therefore, by implementing truthful actions based on those commitments that we have made, we’ll be able to make progress with the momentum that we were able to achieve at the time. However important the coordinated efforts will be between our three countries, I think efforts should be exerted by all the parties concerned. And progress cannot be achieved by efforts of a single party. And, therefore, in this regard, I really look forward to efforts made by the Japanese side. Q. I have a question for President Obama. Despite numerous warnings from the international community, North Korea is continuing with threats and provocation. And because of the new developments of Ukraine, there are voices of concern about the possibility that U.S. attention is going to be diverted to Europe and that the North Korean nuclear issue is going to go down in the U.S. foreign policy priority list. I’d like to know what your ideas are for resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. And for resumption of the Six-Party Talks, I’d like to know if you’re considering relaxing the pre-
conditions you set for resumption of the talks. And next, I’d like to talk about the conflicts going on in Northeast Asia. Korea, Japan and China are the three countries in Northeast Asia engaged in close political cooperation relative to their historical territorial disputes. How do you foster a friendly atmosphere for cooperation? What can the United States do? And in regards to Prime Minister Abe’s statement at the press conference yesterday, he has made statements justifying the visit to Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese political leaders. I’d like to hear your views over the historical views held by Japanese politicians. OBAMA: Well, as I said earlier in response to one of your American counterparts’ questions, the United States and I don’t have the luxury of choosing just one problem at a time. So the North Korea situation is of direct concern to us not only because it threatens our key allies in the region, the Republic of Korea and Japan, but it also poses a direct threat to us. Some of the missile technology that’s being developed, the nuclear weapons that are being developed in North Korea when matched up with a thoroughly irresponsible foreign policy and a provocative approach by the North Korean regime poses a threat to the United States. And so we can’t waver in our attention. We have to make sure that in strong concert with our allies, that we are continuing to press on North Korea to change its approach. Now, in terms of what the United States believes is going to be most effective, we’ve been very consistent over the last five years. We don’t reward bad behavior. We don’t go through a constant cycle in which provocative actions by North Korea result in dialogue that leads nowhere and concessions to the North Koreans. And we have also been consistent in saying that if North Korea is serious about talks, here are the specific steps that we can begin to take. Denuclearization has to be on the table. There has to be a discussion about how we are going to remove a key threat not only to the region, but also to the world because North Korea is also one of the principal proliferators of dangerous weapons around the world. So far, at least, we have not gotten a positive response from North Korea on that front. What’s been encouraging is the degree to which China -- partly because of consultations with President Xi and Madam President Park, conversations between myself and President Xi and others -- China is beginning to recognize that North Korea is not just a nuisance, this is a significant problem to their own security. And we’ve encouraged them to exert greater influence over North Korea because China has the most significant effect on North Korean calculations. President Park and I agree that in light of what we expect to be further provocative actions from the North Koreans, whether in the form of long-range missile tests, or nuclear tests, or both, that it’s important for us to look at additional ways to apply pressure on North Korea, further sanctions that have even more bite, as well as highlighting some of the human rights violations that make North Korea probably the worst human rights violator in the world. It is also important for us to recognize, however, that North Korea is already the most isolated country in the world by far. Its people suffer terribly because of the decisions that its leaders have made. And we are not going to find a magic bullet that solves this problem overnight. What we’re going to have to do is to continue with a consistent, steady approach. And the single most important thing is making sure that there’s strong unity of effort between ourselves, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and other like-minded countries in the region. We have to present a strong, forceful alliance and we have to prepare for any eventuality while still opening the prospect for
a negotiated resolution to this longstanding conflict. With respect to some of the other issues in East Asia, the United States’ position has been clear and consistent throughout. We consider ourselves a Asia Pacific power. **We don’t have a stake in the specific claims that have caused some of these disputes. We’re not parties to the disputes over the Senkaku Islands, for example. Our primary interest is making sure that international norms and rule of law are upheld and that disputes of this sort are resolved through peaceful, diplomatic means. And we will continue to encourage all the parties concerned -- whether it’s Japan, China, the Republic of Korea, or with respect to disputes in the South China Sea -- to use the law and diplomacy to resolve these disputes.** And my message to China has consistently been that although clearly there are going to be differences between ourselves and China on certain issues, there are also enormous areas of cooperation. We’re not interested in containing China; we’re interested in China’s peaceful rise and it being a responsible and powerful proponent of the rule of law and an international system. In that role, it has to abide by certain norms. Large countries have to abide by rules perhaps even more than small countries because when we don’t, it worries people. And we want to move away from a system in which might alone makes right. So we’ll continue to encourage all parties concerned to take steps to resort to international norms and rule of law. We’ve been encouraging ASEAN and China, for example, to come up with a code of conduct that can resolve some of these maritime disputes. We will make sure that freedom of navigation and other principles that have underwritten the prosperity of the Asia Pacific region and the growth in trade and commerce of this region continue and we’ll continue to project ourselves in the Pacific to ensure that that continues. Finally, **with respect to the historical tensions between South Korea and Japan, I think that any of us who look back on the history of what happened to the comfort women here in South Korea, for example, have to recognize that this was a terrible, egregious violation of human rights. Those women were violated in ways that, even in the midst of war, was shocking. And they deserve to be heard; they deserve to be respected; and there should be an accurate and clear account of what happened.** I think Prime Minister Abe recognizes, and certainly the Japanese people recognize, that the past is something that has to be recognized honestly and fairly. But I also think that it is in the interest of both Japan and the Korean people to look forward as well as backwards and to find ways in which the heartache and the pain of the past can be resolved, because, as has been said before, the interests today of the Korean and Japanese people so clearly converge. They’re both democracies. You both have thriving free markets. Both are cornerstones of a booming economic region. Both are strong allies and friends of the United States. And so when you think about the young people of the Republic of Korea and Japan, my hope would be that we can honestly resolve some of these past tensions, but also keep our eye on the future and the possibilities of peace and prosperity for all people. That’s one of the most important lessons I think from the horrors of war, is being able to look back and learn lessons that allow people to avoid war in the future. **Q** Madam President, thank you. ...**And, President Park, in light of the fact that, as President Obama points out, North Korea is already the most isolated country on the planet, the most sanctioned country, what do you think should be done specifically if they go through with another nuclear test?** PARK: (As interpreted.) That was a long statement, I must say. So going back to the question
posed to me, when nuclear test is actually carried out by North Korea, what will the Korean government do? That is the question, if I remember it correctly. Now, if North Korea is actually going to carry out the fourth nuclear test, that is going to change fundamentally the security landscape and I believe that all our efforts to resolve the nuclear issue through the Six-Party Talks is going to be completely dissolved. It’s going to go in the air. We tried to resolve the problem through dialogue, but what North Korea did was to buy time to upgrade its nuclear capability. And now with this upgraded nuclear capability, North Korea is not willing to listen to anyone. If this is going to be the situation there’s no actual meaning in us carrying out Six-Party talks. And to the neighboring countries, there may be a nuclear arms race triggering. So there’s actually no stopping -- for other neighboring countries, North Korea is not stopped. And South and North Korea have tried to improve relationship, but I think we’re going to lose the momentum for the South Korean efforts to improve that relationship if the North Korean test is going to take place. And also, there is a close linkage between the North Korean nuclear program and others, so I believe that North Korea’s nuclear capability is going to bring a serious threat to world peace, too. And about such an analysis, I believe this is not going to be a problem only for the Northeast Asia region; this is going to be a serious threat to global peace. And if such an event is going to be realized, the U.N., in order to uphold the peace, will have to impose very strong sanctions. That is my view. And I also believe that there is a strong role to be played by China. I’d like to emphasize the role of China. China, with regards to possession of North Korea’s -- of their capabilities, of their testing, China is strongly opposed to the idea and it has also maintained a very strong position for the U.N. sanctions. So against a very bad situation, if China is going to maintain a very strong position, take very strong measures to make sure that China will not tolerate the situation, then it’s going to be very important -- the trade relations, about 90 percent of trade relations and about 80 percent of economic support is going from China to North Korea, and therefore China’s influence in North Korea is indeed huge. And against this very dangerous situation, I really look forward to China’s leading role in making sure that the threat is not going to be translated into action. That is my hope.”

(White House Office of the Press Secretary, Remarks by President Obama and President Park of the ROK in Joint Press Conference, Blue House, Seoul, April 25, 2014)

North Korea has completed all of the preliminary steps required to conduct a nuclear test, a South Korean government official said. The South detected the closure of the entrance of a tunnel at the Punggye-ri site in a northeastern region of North Korea. It means that Pyongyang is now ready for what could be its fourth nuclear test, the official said. “This is the final step in preparing to test a nuclear device,” the official said. “In theory, there are seven to 14 days to conduct a test once the entrance is sealed.”

(Stella Kim, Jethro Mullin, and Andrew Demaria, “South Korea: North Korea Ready for Nuclear Test,” April 25, 2014)

North Korea should abandon its nuclear ambition and refrain from conducting “nuclear and ballistic-missile tests,” Xinhua said in a commentary, shortly after U.S. President Barack Obama warned the North against carrying out its fourth nuclear test. “For the DPRK, it needs to understand that a nuclear-armed Korean Peninsula serves the
fundamental interests of none,” Xinhua said. “It is imperative that it comply with its due international obligations and refrain from such moves as nuclear and ballistic-missile tests.” It appears to be rare for the Chinese official news agency to speak against North Korea’s possible provocations by mentioning the North by name. The commentary also urged the U.S., South Korea and Japan not to flex their military muscles. “For the United States and its allies in the region, they need to make a convincing case about their proclaimed commitment to regional stability,” it said. “Demanding the DPRK to back down on the one hand but flexing military muscles at its door on the other is not helpful; it would only ratchet up Pyongyang’s distrust and sense of insecurity,” it said. (Yonhap, “China Media Urges N. Korea Not to Conduct ‘Nuclear, Missile Tests,’” April 25, 2014)

Almost everything American intelligence agencies and North Korea-watchers thought they understood two years ago about Kim Jong-un, the North’s young leader, turns out to have been wrong. The briefings given to President Obama after Kim inherited leadership said it was almost certain he would be kept in check by his more experienced uncle, Jang Song-thaek. Instead, Kim had his uncle and dozens of others executed. The early betting was also that Kim, who was briefly educated in Switzerland, would emphasize economic overhaul over expanding the nuclear and missile arsenals that were his father’s and grandfather’s legacy. Instead, the nuclear program has surged forward, and recent missile tests are demonstrating that after years of spectacular failures, the North’s engineers are finally improving their aim. Their next big challenge is proving that an intercontinental missile they have shown only in mock-ups can reach America’s shores. As a result, he will be confronting the question of “strategic patience” with the North has been overtaken by reality: an unpredictable, though calculating, ruler in Kim, who has proved to be more ruthless, aggressive and tactically skilled than anyone expected. “We have failed,” said Evans J. R. Revere, who spent his State Department career trying various diplomatic strategies to stop the North. “For two decades our policy has been to keep the North Koreans from developing nuclear weapons. It’s now clear there is no way they will give them up, no matter what sanctions we impose, no matter what we offer. So now what?”

It is an assessment some of Obama’s aides say they privately share, though for now the administration refuses to negotiate with the North until it first fulfills its oft-violated agreements to freeze its nuclear and missile programs. A recent effort inside the National Security Council to devise a new approach resulted in a flurry of papers and classified strategy sessions – and the conclusion that all the alternatives to the current course were worse. “We’re stuck,” one participant in the review said. The only place any real change is visible is in the military planning by South Korea and the United States, which maintains a shrunken force of 28,000 troops in the South. For the first time since the armistice in 1953, officials say, the contingency plan for a conflict with the North treats the nation as a nuclear-capable adversary, despite the administration’s official refusal to acknowledge it as a de facto nuclear state. (What appear to be North Korea’s preparations for a fourth nuclear test, perhaps in the coming days, seem intended to remove all doubt.) The latest revision of OpPlan 5029, the war plan for the Korean Peninsula, assumes that if a conflict broke out, the North would be able to deliver a crude nuclear weapon, though perhaps by truck or ship. American intelligence officials do not believe the North is yet able to shrink a bomb to a size that
could fit on one of its Nodong missiles, the key breakthrough it needs. “He’s put new
effort into his nuclear program, missiles, special operations forces and long-range
artillery,” said Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti, who took over last fall as commander of
United States Forces Korea and the United Nations Command here. “They are using
more underground facilities. He’s gone to school on how we operate.” Defense
officials say they now have less warning time on missile launchings than they had two
or three years ago because Kim has put his resources into mobile launchers that are
regularly moved from tunnel to tunnel, making them harder for American satellites to
track. Although details of the revised plan are classified, officials have talked about
elements of it. Since the North shelled a South Korean island and was blamed for
sinking a South Korean warship four years ago, there are now extensive plans for
immediately responding to and then de-escalating small attacks along the border
regions. But in recent interviews here and in Washington, a picture has emerged of
Kim’s new focus on inexpensive weaponry, from missile launchers to crude
cyberweapons, that are hard to detect and harder to halt. Kim has also nurtured his
reputation for unpredictability, keeping adversaries on edge. Administration officials
acknowledge they have largely left North Korea on the back burner while focusing on
sanctions, cyberattacks and pressure on Iran, forcing it into negotiations. “The
administration decided, consciously or implicitly, that Iran was more important and
there was a greater prospect of getting something done,” said Robert Einhorn, who
ran the sanctions enforcement program against both countries until he left the State
Department last year. “While you can squeeze Iran and its oil money, it’s much harder
to squeeze North Korea” while China continues its financial support. White House
officials argue that focusing first on Iran made sense. Its program can still be halted
before it gains a weapons ability, if that is Tehran’s goal, and the administration
believes that North Korea is less likely to set off a regional arms race. “You could argue
that the best North Korea strategy now is to get a deal with Iran, and use it as a model
for the North about what the world can look like,” one senior administration official
said. But others inside the administration fear that policy is too passive – and perhaps a
prescription for a much larger North Korean arsenal by the time Obama leaves office.
At the heart of the problem are dashed hopes that Kim would conclude that his
grandfather’s and father’s pursuit of a nuclear ability was a Cold War relic, and that he
would gradually steer the country to integration with the world economy. There was
modest reason for optimism just months after Kim came to power in 2011 and struck
yet another deal to freeze all his nuclear and missile activity, in return for a resumption
of the episodic six-party talks with the United States and other nations. That brief effort
ended when the North launched a satellite in honor of Kim’s grandfather. Diplomacy
froze for the next two years, with the administration unwilling to make concessions as
previous administrations did only to find that the North was reneging on its promises.
In recent months the Chinese have led an effort to restart diplomatic talks, and the
United States has quietly met with the North. But the goal is unclear. To the United
States, the purpose of the talks would be denuclearization; Kim’s government has
already declared that the one thing he will not do is give up his small nuclear arsenal,
especially after seeing the United States help unseat Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi of
Libya, who surrendered his own nuclear program in 2003. Joel Wit, a former North
Korea strategist for the American government, said Kim drew an indelible lesson from
that history. "It’s not an accident he’s positioning himself to make sure the inventory of
nuclear material in the hands of the North is about to take off,” said Wit, who edits 38 North, a website that follows the murky, often murderous politics of the Kim government. He was referring to the North’s effort to expand the production of highly enriched uranium, which would give Kim a steadier, more plentiful supply of nuclear fuel than its past reliance on extracting plutonium from a small nuclear reactor. “I’m now convinced North Korea would prefer to collapse with nuclear weapons than try to survive without nuclear weapons,” Chun Yung-woo, who recently served as the South’s national security adviser, said this week. Yet the strategy Washington is pursuing is based on the opposite assumption. (David E. Sanger, “U.S. Confronts Consequences of Underestimating North Korean Leader,” New York Times, April 25, 2014, p. A-6)

KCNA: “A relevant organ of the DPRK put in custody American Miller Matthew Todd, 24, on April 10 for his rash behavior in the course of going through formalities for entry into the DPRK to tour it. He had a tourist visa for the DPRK, but tore it to pieces and shouted hoarse that “he would seek asylum” and “he came to the DPRK after choosing it as a shelter.” This was a gross violation of its legal order. The relevant organ put him in custody after taking a serious note of his behavior, and is now investigating the case.” (KCNA, “KCNA Report on Putting American Citizen in Custody,” April 25, 2014)

North Korea has detained a 24-year-old American man for improper behavior while he was being processed to enter the country as a tourist, state media reported. KCNA identified the man as Miller Matthew Todd — possibly putting his surname first — and said he entered the country on April 10 with a tourist visa, but tore it up and shouted that he wanted to seek asylum. In a statement issued April 26, New Jersey-based Uri Tours said it has “been working closely and continuously with all relevant government and diplomatic entities to resolve this matter in a speedy and favorable manner.” Uri Tours identified the man as Matthew Miller. In Washington, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters that the U.S. is aware of the report, but she did not confirm an American was being held. She said the department is in touch with the Swedish Embassy which handles consular cases for the U.S. because Washington does not have diplomatic relations with Pyongyang. "There is no greater priority to us than the welfare and safety of US citizens. We don’t have additional information to share at this time," Psaki said. (Associated Press, “North Korea Detains 24-Year-Old American Tourist,” April 26, 2014)

President Barack Obama warned that Washington was prepared to use military force to defend its allies, while ratcheting up pressure on North Korea to renounce its nuclear ambitions. During his visit to Yongsan Garrison, the U.S. military headquarters in central Seoul, he also underscored that the South Korea-U.S. alliance would not waver with “each bout of Pyongyang’s attention-seeking.” His strongly worded speech came as the communist state has warned of a “new form” of nuclear test and made a set of saber-rattling moves including the firing of ballistic missiles last month. “We will not hesitate to use our military might to defend our allies and our way of life,” he told a gathering of some 1,500 U.S. military personnel and family members at the garrison. “Like all nations on earth, North Korea and its people have a choice. They can choose to continue down a lonely road of isolation, or they can join the rest of the world and seek a future of greater opportunity, greater security and greater respect.” Referring to the North as a “pariah state” that would rather starve its people than feed their hopes
and dreams, Obama said that nuclear weapons would not make the North strong. He also stressed that Washington’s security partnership with Seoul would only grow stronger in the face of aggression. “North Korea’s continued pursuit of nuclear weapons is a path that leads only to more isolation. It is not a sign of strength. Anybody can make threats, anyone can move an army and anyone can show off a missile,” he said. “It does not give you security, or opportunity or respect. Those things don’t come through force. They have to be earned.” Obama also expressed sadness over the tragic loss of hundreds of people in the recent ferry disaster, reaffirming the U.S.’ continued support for the rescue-and-search operations off the country’s southwestern coast. “America will continue to support every rescue and recovery effort. It is the spirit that allows this alliance to endure. That’s what we are about. That’s been our commitment for more than 60 years, in good times and in bad.” His meeting with U.S. service members came right after he and President Park Geun-hye visited the Combined Forces Command. It was the first time the two presidents of the allies had jointly visited the allied institution since the CFC was incepted in 1978. Their visit to the CFC highlighted their resolve to sternly deal with additional provocations, particularly at the time when the North threatened to conduct a fourth nuclear test, which would significantly enhance its military nuclear capability. “I believe that (our visit to the CFC) is very meaningful at the time when North Korea’s military threats are increasing,” Park was quoted as saying by her spokesperson Min Kyung-wook. “I ask you to maintain strong deterrence with a robust allied defense posture so that North Korea dare not launch provocations.” After a briefing on the security situations by CFC Commander Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, Obama signed the guest book on the table where the Korean War Armistice was signed in July 1953. He called the table a symbol of the sacrifices of many people. During the visit to the CFC, Park was accompanied by Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Choi Yoon-hee, her chief of staff Kim Ki-chun and National Security Office chief Kim Jang-soo. Obama was with U.S. Ambassador to Seoul Sung Kim and National Security Adviser Susan Rice. (Song Sang-ho, “Obama Warns N.K. of U.S. Military Might,” Korea Herald, April 27, 2014)

Hwang Pyong-so, North Korea’s first vice director of the ruling party’s Organization and Guidance Department, replaced top military chief Choe Ryong-hae as the new director of the powerful General Political Bureau of Pyongyang’s Korean People’s Army. Hwang’s appointment as the military’s de facto No. 2 was confirmed by KCNA May 2 amid speculation over Choe’s dwindling public appearances. KCNA reported that Hwang, 65, was introduced as the first deputy director of the ruling party’s Organization and Guidance Department during his May Day speech at the newly built workers’ hostel at the Kim Jong Suk Pyongyang Textile Mill. Kim has now switched up all three top military positions with Hwang’s appointment. The young commander also tapped Ri Yong-gil as chief of the General Staff of the Army last August and the relatively unknown Gen. Jang Jong-nam as minister of the People’s Armed Forces last May.

Hwang came into the public eye in the mid-2000s and emerged as a key close aide to Kim Jong-un after the death of his father, Kim Jong-il, in December 2011. He also became more prominent after the execution of Kim’s powerful uncle, Jang Song-thaek, last December. Officials said Hwang was appointed during an April 26 meeting of the Central Military Commission, which was presided over by Kim. “Chinese authorities
have put a lot of focus on Hwang since he emerged as the behind-the-scenes heavyweight last year following the purge of Jang Song-thaek,” a Chinese source said. Hwang was recently promoted as one of North Korea’s six vice marshals, the second-highest functioning military rank, and has been seen accompanying Kim. Choe’s public appearances, on the other hand, have decreased in recent weeks, with a few reports claiming that he may be in poor health. (Sarah Kim and Jeong Yong-soo, “Hwang Now N. Korea Military’s De Fact No. 2,” JoongAng Ilbo, May 3, 2014)

4/27/14

Chung Hong-won, South Korean prime minister, has tendered his resignation, after becoming a lightning rod for criticism of the government’s response to the Sewol ferry disaster. Divers are still recovering bodies from the wreck, with the death toll from the April 16 sinking expected to reach 302, mostly schoolchildren. The tragedy has captured national attention far more than any other event during President Park Geun-hye’s 14-month tenure, and has produced what appears to be the most serious threat so far to her government. A spokeswoman for Ms Park said that the president had accepted the resignation, and that Mr Chung would leave once the Sewol disaster response was complete. But his departure will not silence criticism of the government’s handling of the crisis, which has already damaged Ms Park’s popularity. Her showing in opinion polls had been consistently strong ever since her perceived firm response to elevated tensions with North Korea in spring 2013. Yet her approval rating fell from 71 per cent to 56.5 per cent between April 18 and 23, according to the research group Realmeter. (Simon Mundy, “S. Korean PM Resigns over Handling of Ferry Disaster,” Financial Times, April 28, 2014, p. 2)

Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea spokesman’s statement “assailing U.S. President Obama’s tour of south Korea from April 25 to 26: Due to the tragedy of sinking of a ferry the whole land of south Korea looks like a mourner’s house. Had Obama have even an iota of ethics and morality, he should have postponed or shelved his trip. The American master and his servant staged the farce of insulting, threatening and blackmailing the DPRK during the former’s criminal tour of south Korea utterly indifferent to the sorrow of south Koreans. This was entirely to serve the purpose of collusion and conspiracy in their campaign against the DPRK. What Park did before Obama this time reminds one of an indiscreet girl who earnestly begs a gangster to beat someone or a capricious whore who asks her fancy man to do harm to other person while providing sex to him. Through her ugly behavior Park answered with a war the question put by the DPRK if she wants peaceful reunification based on the inter-Korean reconciliation or a war through the confrontation of the social systems, and fully revealed that her policy of "confidence-building process” is just the same policy of confrontation as that pursued by traitor Lee Myung Bak. She, at the same time, declared before the whole world her intention to drive the situation to the worst catastrophe through the confrontation with the DPRK to the last in utter disregard of the north-south relations. She fully met the demands of her master for aggression, keeping mum about the nukes of the U.S. and desperately finding fault with fellow countrymen in the north over their nukes. She thus laid bare her despicable true colors as a wicked sycophant and traitor, a dirty comfort woman for the U.S. and despicable prostitute selling off the nation. She visited together with Obama even the "south Korea-U.S. combined forces command“ for the first time as a puppet chief
executive and went off confrontation hysteria, crying out for “deterrence against the north” and “resolutely countering provocation from it.” She even donned a dress unfit for the atmosphere of the mourner’s house in the wake of the big tragedy and embarrassingly flattered Obama in a bid to please him, sparking off uproar. The anti-DPRK charade staged by Obama and his servant became a laughing stock of world people as it was nothing but an odd burlesque rare to be found in the world. The outcome of Obama’s south Korean junket clearly proved that the DPRK was entirely just when it judged and determined that it should counter the U.S., the sworn enemy, by force only, not just talking, and should finally settle accounts with it through an all-out nuclear showdown. This, at the same time, only hardens the will and resolution of the DPRK to keep to the road chosen by it. Park’s true colors and ulterior motive were brought to daylight. **There is no remedy for Park and there is nothing to expect from her as far as the inter-Korean relations are concerned as long as she remains a boss of Chongwadae.** She is steeped in sycophancy and treachery and confrontation with compatriots in the north. Her preoccupation is to realize the dream of confrontation of the social systems. Genes remain unchanged. Needless to say, her present behavior suggests that her fate will be just the same as that of her father Park Chung Hee who met a miserable death after being forsaken by his master and public while crying out for “unification by prevailing over communism” and “unification by stamping out communism.” The DPRK will never pardon anyone who dares challenge its dignity, social system and its line of simultaneously developing the two fronts, the statement warned.” (KCNA, “Challenges to the DPRK Will Never Be Pardonned,” CPRK Spokesman,” April 27, 2014)

Simon Mundy: “As the appalling scale of South Korea’s Sewol ferry tragedy became clear, bereaved relatives chartered a bus to Seoul, where they planned to present their grievances to President Park Geun-hye. Their path was blocked by a crowd of police that grew to 450 officers. On the same day, a group of handicapped people marked the national Day of the Disabled by trying to board a bus in Seoul, to demonstrate South Korean buses’ poor accessibility for disabled people. They too were blocked by police, who sprayed liquid tear gas in their faces. The twin incidents a week ago reflect broader concerns about the strength of democratic institutions in South Korea – a military dictatorship until just 27 years ago. The man who instituted that dictatorship was Ms Park’s father, Park Chung-hee. Nostalgia for his transformative economic agenda helped her to win the election. However, his record of human rights violations has been seized on with delight by her opponents. Their barbs have at times been shrill, even distasteful. One lawmaker warned Ms Park not to follow her father’s authoritarian example lest she share his ultimate fate: assassination. But some actions taken under her government have helped to fuel accusations of authoritarianism, while raising concerns among foreign diplomats and other neutral observers. Although the police behavior towards the bereaved on April 20 was particularly questionable - “totally illegal”, according to the civic group Lawyers for Human Rights - it is part of a broader trend. Even small, peaceful protests are typically attended by huge crowds of police. In December, 4,600 police stormed the headquarters of the Korea Confederation of Trade Unions in search of the leaders of a wildcat rail workers’ strike. Meanwhile, a shadow has been cast over Ms Park’s election victory by revelations that national intelligence agents slandered her opponents with thousands of messages on
social media. The chief prosecutor leading the investigation into the claims was forced out last year by press allegations of marital infidelity; it later turned out that before the stories appeared, an official in the presidential Blue House had illegally made inquiries into the official’s private life. There is no evidence connecting Ms Park with these misdeeds but some of her actions have done little to dispel allegations of authoritarian tendencies. In August she appointed as her chief of staff one of the men who drafted the anti-democratic 1972 Yushin constitution, which in effect installed her father as perpetual leader. In December, she requested the banning of a political party - the first time this would have happened since 1958. The Blue House said the move to dissolve the leftwing Unified Progressive party was necessary because several members were accused of making treasonous statements and plotting an uprising in support of North Korea. One lawmaker was later sentenced to 20 years in prison. South Korea’s civil institutions have made huge strides since 1987 and public discourse is incomparably freer. The biggest daily newspapers are broadly sympathetic to Ms Park’s conservative New Frontier party but they - along with their liberal rivals and a diverse array of popular news websites - regularly criticize the government, sometimes harshly. Prime minister Chung Hong-won’s resignation yesterday followed a mauling by media over his handling of the Sewol disaster. Yet there is backsliding in some areas, dating back to the term of Ms Park’s predecessor Lee Myung-bak. In 2011, Freedom House downgraded South Korea from “free” to “partly free”, citing increased online censorship and claiming that 160 journalists had been penalized for criticizing the government or lobbying for press freedom under the Lee administration. Prosecutions under the controversial 1948 National Security Act - which has broad wording prohibiting “anti-state” activity, and was condemned last year by the UN special rapporteur on human rights - have risen steadily from 31 in 2008 to 102 last year. With the eyes of the world on South Korea last week following the Sewol tragedy, Ms Park did little for the country’s reputation for due process when she stated publicly that the actions of the ferry’s crew were “tantamount to murder” - a remark that could prejudice the trials that almost certainly lie ahead. The ferry disaster has sparked a bout of national soul-searching on everything from government agencies’ recruitment policies to South Korean children’s respect for their elders. It is as good a time as any to take stock of the country’s incomplete journey towards the democracy its people deserve.”  


One of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s right-hand men has been promoted to vice marshal for the Korean People’s Army (KPA). Hwang Pyong-so, 65, first deputy director of the Workers’ Party of Korea Organization and Guidance Department, was promoted to the position of vice marshal, according to the North Korean news reports. The move, which comes less than two weeks after he was confirmed to have been promoted to four-star general, has many observers watching closely to predict his future role in the regime. Hwang’s promotion may have been intended to check the power of North Korea’s current “number two,” KPA general politburo chief Choi Ryong-hae. In an April 28 report, Korean Central Television announced, “the title of Korean People’s Army vice marshal has been conferred upon Comrade Hwang Pyong-so.” “Related decisions by the Workers’ Party Central Military Commission and the Democratic People’s Republic of Choson [Korea] Central Defense Commission were announced on April
The report continued. Hwang’s promotion to four-star general was confirmed during a first annual aviators’ meeting in Pyongyang on Apr. 15. At present, only five other people in North Korea hold the rank of vice marshal - besides Choi, they include “old guard” figures Kim Yong-chun, Kim Chong-gak, Ri Yong-mu, and Hyon Chol-hae. The only higher positions in the North Korean military are “marshal of the republic,” held by Kim Jong-un, and marshal of the KPA, held by 93-year-old Ri Ul-sol. “Our understanding is that no one in North Korea besides Kim Il-sung, Kim Jong-il, or Kim Jong-un has ever risen to the rank of vice marshal so fast,” said a Ministry of Unification official on condition of anonymity. Now that he has been promoted, Hwang is expected to take on major duties within the KPA general politbureau. He could be groomed as a successor to Choe, who is reportedly in ill health. Some are speculating he may have already taken over the position of first deputy director, the politbureau’s second highest post. Hwang’s promotion also hints at a stronger role for the Organizational Guidance Bureau, which serves as a check on the military within the WPK. For this reason, the move could be intended as a check against Choi. “It looks as though the Organization and Guidance Department’s role in the party has gotten stronger, while Choi Ryong-hae’s has diminished, with Kim Jong-un making indirect criticisms of him,” said Chang Yong-seok, a senior researcher at the Seoul National University Institute for Peace and Unification Studies. “Now that Jang Song-thaek has been purged, it looks like they’re moving to a ‘two-headed’ system, with Hwang Pyong-so in charge of the party and Choi Ryong-hae of the military,” Chang added. (Choi Hyun-june, “In N. Korea, Hwang Pyong-so’s Speedy Rise to Vice-Marshall,” Hankyore, April 29, 2014)

Nearly 70 years after the Enola Gay took off from here, the US Air Force is considering the same airstrip on Tinian as one of the facilities it could develop as part of its response to the military build-up in China. With an eye on the theoretical possibility of a pre-emptive strike from China’s growing array of sophisticated missiles, the Pentagon has been scouring the western Pacific for alternative airfields for its aircraft, harbors for its ships and bases for its troops. “The basic idea is to complicate things for Chinese military planners, so that they cannot neutralize American capabilities by taking out a few large bases, like Kadena [in Japan] and Guam,” says Michael Auslin, an Asia expert at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington. The plan to spread the US military’s presence across the region accelerated today as President Barack Obama visited the Philippines. Although Manila asked the US to vacate its longstanding bases in the country as recently as 1991, Chinese assertiveness has generated a change of heart: the U.S. and the Philippines signed a new agreement today that will allow more visits by U.S. aircraft and ships and a rotating presence of marines. Evan Medeiros, Asia director at the White House national security council, said the agreement did not give the U.S. permanent bases in the Philippines. But he said the two militaries would work more closely together on “disaster relief and maritime security”. The facilities that the US will use include Subic Bay, a former US naval base. Obama’s visit to the region has run up against criticism that his much-hyped “pivot” to Asia was losing steam as a result of political opposition to a major trade deal and broader uncertainty about American firmness of purpose. Yet at the same time, the US military has been quietly putting in place arrangements that will give it a much broader geographic presence in the Asia-Pacific region to deal with the growing challenge from China. One part of that new
approach has been to boost co-operation with longstanding allies. As well as the planned new arrangement with the Philippines, the US now has marines stationed in Australia for the first time and has expanded the number of flights it operates from Singapore, while Japan wants to operate more closely with the US military. Pentagon officials have also raised the prospect of some sort of temporary presence in other countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia, which bama visited at the weekend. “We’re not going to build any more bases in the Pacific,” General Herbert ‘Hawk’ Carlisle, commander of US Pacific Air Forces, said in 2013. “The term you’ll hear that we use often is places, not bases. It’s building that relationship.” The other approach has been to revamp older facilities on the many small islands further out into the Pacific, most of which are at the outer edge of China’s missile range. The Pentagon already has a major base on Guam, 2,500km south of Japan and the same distance east of the Philippines. But because of concerns that Guam might come under attack, the US has also developed plans for alternative airfields on two of the nearby Northern Mariana Islands – Tinian and Saipan – which could also be used for training. Two years ago, the marines refurbished the Baker airstrip on Tinian so that a KC-130J Hercules transport plane could land and take off – the first such flight there since 1947. The 2014 Pentagon budget also contains funds to expand the existing international airport on Saipan – which was also a second world war base for Japan and then the US – to accommodate fighter jets and transport aircraft. This expanding web of facilities is causing angst to those in China who believe the US wants to contain its rise. Xinhua news agency described Obama’s trip to Asia as part of a “carefully calculated scheme to cage” China. Yet for the Pentagon, it allows the US to disperse its assets without building expensive and politically charged new bases in populous countries. There are two problems, however, with the plans to expand in small Pacific islands. Residents of Saipan have objected to the Pentagon’s plans for their airport. As a result, earlier this month Gregorio Sablan, who represents the Northern Marianas in Congress, asked that the money be used to expand the airfield on the less populated Tinian. (The Northern Marianas are US territory with similar status to Puerto Rico.) Some observers also believe the islands are of limited strategic value because they will be just as vulnerable as Guam and because they bring enormous logistical headaches. Auslin argues that the better approach is to expand basing arrangements with the countries in the region deeply anxious about China, such as the Philippines or in the future, Vietnam. “It is a lot more complicated than world war two when we built a few landing strips on some Pacific islands that we now control,” he says. “Instead, it makes political and military sense to have as many partners as possible. That means that China will need to go to war against basically the whole region if they want to attack us.”

DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman’s statement: “U.S. President Obama toured Japan, south Korea, Malaysia and Philippines from April 23 to 29. As warned by the DPRK of the danger of his junket on April 21, it was clearly confirmed that Obama’s tour was a dangerous one as it was aimed to bring dark clouds of more acute confrontation and nuclear arms race to Asia. Obama proved in practice that the U.S. hegemonic "strategy for rebalancing" in the Asia-Pacific region is being pushed forward in real earnest. In Japan he officially declared for the first time as U.S. president that islets of
dispute between China and Japan come within the scope of the application of the U.S.-Japan security treaty, thus confirming that it is natural for the U.S. forces to interfere in case of military conflict between China and Japan. He also supported Japan’s readiness to exercise the right to collective self-defense though it is censured by regional countries for attempting to call back the departed soul of militarism. After flying into south Korea he agreed to postpone indefinitely the transfer of the right to command wartime operations by the U.S. forces present in south Korea and build a missile shield with the south Korean puppet forces involved. He went the lengths of blustering that “the U.S. would not hesitate to use military force to protect its allies and their lives.” In Philippines he signed a new military agreement which calls for regularly dispatching U.S. forces to Philippines and jointly using their base, etc. Facts clearly prove that his tour was designed for undisguised confrontation to retain a tighter grip on allies of the U.S. and encircle and contain its rivals in Eurasia, pursuant to the U.S. Asia-Pacific strategy for domination and scenario for aggression from A to Z. The danger of his Asian junket found a more vivid manifestation in the issue of the Korean peninsula. Before his tour the U.S. kicked off together with south Korean puppet forces the largest-ever war maneuvers aimed to “occupy Pyongyang”, the military exercises to apply the “tailored deterrence strategy”, the scenario for preemptive nuclear attack on the DPRK. Such being a hard fact, Obama, touring Japan and south Korea, cried out for harsher “sanctions”, “pressure” and did not rule out the use of military force, labeling the DPRK’s inevitable steps for self-defense “provocation” and “threat.” Not content with this, he did not conceal his inveterate repugnancy toward the social system of the DPRK, describing it as a “forsaken state” and jabbering its pursuance of the program to develop nuclear weapons would leave it further isolated. He also uttered that the denuclearization should be placed on the agenda of dialogue but, in actuality, he flatly denied dialogue for discussing something. By doing so, he declared before the world that the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK remains unchanged, the U.S. tries to bring down the DPRK by force and it began to carry out such scenario. The DPRK had already advised the Obama administration to coolly ponder over whether its hostile policy toward the DPRK is in the final interests of the U.S. or not. However, he declared that the U.S. seeks to ignite a nuclear war on the Korean peninsula to realize its Asia-Pacific strategy, thereby throwing his initiative to build “a world without nuclear weapons” into a wastebasket and making the prospect of realizing the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula gloomier. He will have to pay for this in the mid-term parliamentary election due in November this year. During his tour he took much pain to bring the U.S. allies closer to it, vociferating about someone’s “provocation” and “threat,” but failed to reap desired results. On the contrary, he openly revealed the hegemonic nature of the “strategy for rebalancing” in the Asia-Pacific region only to spark off strong rebuff of his rivals from the very outset and arouse great concern worldwide. His reckless acts only escalated the danger of confrontation and conflict in the Asia-Pacific region and gave further momentum to the opposition to him. The Obama group is making desperate efforts to prop up the position of the U.S. as “the only superpower” on decline in the Asia-Pacific region but it is too late. What remains to be done by the Obama group is to watch what kind of seeds of fire sown by him this time would develop into flames that may affect the U.S. The DPRK will advance along the road of bolstering up nuclear deterrent, unhindered, now that the U.S. brings the dark clouds of a nuclear war to hang
over the DPRK. There is no statute of limitations to the DPRK’s declaration that it will not rule out a new form of nuclear test clarified by it in the March 30 statement. This is the exercise of the inviolable right to self-defense.” (KCNA, “U.S. President’s Asian Tour Censured by Spokesman for FM of DPRK,” April 29, 2014)

North Korea staged a live-fire drill near the western maritime border without provoking the South to fire back as none of the shells fell south of the boundary, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. The North fired about 50 artillery shells from two coastal bases for about 10 minutes starting at 2 p.m. The drill came hours after the North notified the South that it would carry out the exercise in waters north of the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the Yellow Sea. “The North’s shells fell in waters about 3 kilometers north of the NLL,” JCS spokesman Eom Hyo-sik said. “The South Korean military is currently monitoring North Korean artillery units, while maintaining high military readiness.” (Kim Eun-jung, “N. Korea Conducts Live Fire Drill near Western Maritime Border,” Yonhap, April 29, 2014)

The 10-minute drills began at 2 p.m., some five hours after the North’s southwestern frontline command sent a fax notification to the South’s Second Fleet of its plan to stage the drills around its border islands of Wollaedo and Jangjaedo. “In the North’s notification, it claimed the drills were part of its regular exercises. But they could be intended to raise tension near the NLL or probe the South Korean military to find out our responses,” a senior JCS official told reporters, declining to be named. “But the exact cause still remains uncertain and we need to analyze it.” After receiving the notification, the South Korean military directed fishing crews and residents on the country’s frontline islands to evacuate to safe zones, and strengthened its readiness posture. The military deployed four fighter jets and several warships including a guided missile destroyer to prepare against any provocations that would encroach upon South Korean territory. President Park Geun-hye ordered the military to respond “in line with principles” when any shells fell into South Korean waters in a show of her resolve to sternly deal with North Korean provocations. Kim Jang-soo, head of the presidential office of national security, kept the crisis management center up and running, and closely monitored the North Korean military, presidential spokesperson Min Kyung-wool told reporters. (Song Sang-ho, “N. Conducts Live-Fire Drills,” Korea Herald, April 29, 2014)

Jack Liu: “New commercial satellite imagery from April 29, 2014 shows that a high level of activity continues at North Korea’s Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site, probably related to preparations for an underground nuclear test. The imagery indicates: Continued movement and an increase in number of boxes or crates of possible instrumentation and monitoring equipment at the entrances of both South Portal tunnels. There are now approximately 13 boxes near the western-most tunnel entrance and 4 in front of the other entrance, indicating that equipment is still being moved inside. Moreover, appears that none of the tunnels have yet been sealed in preparations for a test. There is significant vehicle traffic including a white panel truck, first sighted on April 25, at the South Portal and likely used to transport these boxes or crates. Also present are what appear to be three other darker olive drab vehicles of the same size and commonly used by the the military. There is an unidentified object near the trucks that appears to have three petals 120 degrees apart. This is the first time this object has been spotted at Punggye-ri. Its purpose remains unclear. At the Main Support Area, in addition to
vehicles present in the April 25 imagery, there is now a row of boxes at the upper part of the parade ground. Excavation of the new tunnel at the West Portal resumed last week after the collapse of the mining cart track in early April. This activity began in mid-May 2013, accelerated at the beginning of this year, but was temporarily stopped when the track collapsed. It appears that this site is not yet complete. If North Korea follows previous test practices, a continued high level of activity indicates that a nuclear test is not yet imminent. Before the February 2013 detonation, all equipment, vehicles and personnel were withdrawn immediately before the blast. Whether North Korea will follow the same time line in 2014 remains unclear. If Pyongyang is preparing to conduct a “new form” of test, including possible multiple detonations, prior practice may be altered. That would make what is already a difficult task predicting the timing of a detonation even more complicated.” (Jack Liu, “North Korea’s Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site: April 29 Update,” 38North, April 30, 2014)

China has signaled that it will impose international and unilateral sanctions on North Korea if Pyongyang follows through with announced plans to set off a fourth underground nuclear test. Meanwhile, North Korea has stepped up anti-U.S. rhetoric, issuing an official government statement that referred to President Obama as a “wicked black monkey.” The over-the-top verbal attacks are viewed by U.S. intelligence analysts as a response to international pressure not to conduct nuclear or missile tests that would further destabilize the region. The indication China will impose sanctions on North Korea for another nuclear test appeared in a pro-Beijing news report from Hong Kong April 30 that quoted a Chinese professor. “If the DPRK should indeed conduct another nuclear test, China will definitely be prepared to play a leading role in joining other nations to endorse another U.N. Security Council resolution to impose sanctions on the DPRK in a collective international manner,” said Shi Yinhong, a professor at the Communist Party’s People’s University in Beijing. Shi warned during the Phoenix TV interview that China is prepared to impose unilateral sanctions on North Korea if actions by Pyongyang undermine stability on the peninsula. “If the action of the DPRK should bring about serious threat to the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula, or if it should seriously violate the denuclearization principle by conducting nuclear tests or long range missile tests, then China will impose its own unilateral sanctions on the DPRK—apart from joining the international community in imposing collective sanctions,” he said. The comments are being viewed by U.S. officials as the first clear indicator that China is attempting to use its diplomatic and economic leverage to prevent a fourth underground nuclear test. Joseph DeTrani, former special envoy for North Korean nuclear talks during the George W. Bush administration, said the Chinese report of possible sanctions is significant. “If China were to impose unilateral sanctions on North Korea if they had a fourth nuclear test, it would be a powerful message to the leadership in Pyongyang that they have gone too far; that their escalation of tension over the past two years has created a dangerous international environment that China will not tolerate,” said DeTrani, now head of the Intelligence and National Security Alliance. “For the region and the world, this would be a welcome response from China, a neighbor and ally of North Korea.” (Bill Gertz, “China Signals Plan to Sanction North Korea for Tests,” Washington Free Beacon, May 8, 2014)
Russia appears to be preparing for a test operation of its newly renovated railway linked to North Korea, but the economic feasibility of South Korea's joining the logistics project remains to be seen, a Seoul diplomat said. Late last year, Russia reopened the 54-kilometer track linking the Russian eastern border town of Khasan to the North's port of Rajin following a five-year renovation. "I have been sensing that Russia is preparing to export its coal through the Rajin-Khasan railway in the near future as part of an experiment," Lee Yang-goo, council general in Vladivostok, told reporters. "But it seems that there is no substantial demand for the rail line now."
(Yonhap, “Russia Preparing to Test-Run Joint Railway with N. Korea: Seoul Official,” April 30, 2014)

Nick Hansen and Jack Liu: “New commercial satellite imagery from May 1, 2014 indicates a significant increase in activity in the West Portal area of North Korea’s Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site related to the excavation of a new test tunnel begun one year ago. At the same time, there appears to be a drawdown in activity in the South Portal area, believed to be the likely location of North Korea’s next nuclear test. Specifically: In the West Portal area, imagery indicates that Pyongyang is continuing and perhaps stepping up excavation activities resumed in late April after repairing a collapsed track leading from a new test tunnel entrance to the spoil pile. On May 1, mining carts are visible on the tracks. Moreover, they may also be present on an older set of rails leading to a different dumpsite last used in 2009. There is new logging activity just outside the fence line a short distance up the mountain just north of the tunnel entrance. No activity was present on April 25, but four days later there appeared to be two log skid trails with trees removed. By May 1, a third skid trail is seen and more trees have been removed. The logs may be used to shore up the tunnel under excavation or for new construction of a nearby small building. (Work began in late April on that building and as of May 1, construction material appears piled up.) Also between April 29 and May 1, part of the main building at the West Portal appears to have been removed. One possible explanation is that this area was a vehicle shelter or carport that has been taken down. In the South Portal area, the May 1 imagery shows continued vehicle activity–two dark color vehicles are on or near the bridge over an adjacent creek and a white box body truck is parked on a spoil pile across the road from the left tunnel entrance. The crates or boxes that had been present near the entrance of that tunnel have been removed as of May 1. There is now sufficient room in front of the entrance to bring in earthmoving equipment to seal the tunnel in preparation for a nuclear test. As of May 1, there was no indication this was being done. Between April 29 and May 1, the number of crates outside the right tunnel entrance in the same area has decreased to one, probably indicating continued activity inside the tunnel. Despite statements last week by the ROK Ministry of Defense that a North Korean nuclear test was imminent and could well happen during the visit of US President Barack Obama to Seoul, almost a week has gone by with no detonation. The passage of time may indicate that, in fact, a test may not be imminent. Leaving aside Pyongyang’s recent statement implying that a test might not be in the immediate works, the May 1 imagery of Punggye-ri indicates a number of developments that would tend to lead to the same conclusion. Most important is the stepped up excavation and construction activity at the West Portal area, which would be cleared of personnel in the event of an imminent test. Moreover, in the South Portal area,
movement of crates near one tunnel entrance reinforces the conclusion that activity is still ongoing inside the tunnel. Even at the second South Portal test tunnel, where activity has been greatest in the past week, even though crates have been cleared from the entrance, there is no evidence to suggest that the tunnel has been sealed in preparation for a detonation.” (Nick Hansen and Jack Liu, “Update on Pungye-ri: Stepped up Activity at West Portal, Drawdown at South Portal,” 38North, May 2, 2014)

Nick Hansen: Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that North Korea is conducting a number of significant activities at the Sohae Satellite Launching Station ("Tongchang-ri") related to the development of larger space launch vehicles (SLVs) and long-range ballistic missiles. Specifically, these activities are: One and maybe more engine tests of what is probably the first stage of a KN-08 road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) were conducted in late March/early April 2014. With this latest activity, three KN-08 rocket engine test series have been identified for the first and possibly second stages dating back to mid 2013. As this effort progresses, the next technically logical step in the missile’s development would be a flight test of the entire system. Continued modification of the gantry previously used to launch the Unha SLV intended to enable it to launch larger rockets of up to 50 meters in height. Construction may not be completed until early summer, effectively preventing a launch from the facility in the meantime. New construction of what appears to be a circular structure with a diameter of about 40 meters and multiple interior walls. The purpose of the project—which has progressed rapidly over the past month, indicating a high priority—remains unclear, although the possibility that it is a new launch pad cannot be ruled out. (Nick Hansen, “New Developments at North Korea’s Sohae Complex,” 38North, May 1, 2014)

Chinese companies have not leased piers at a port of North Korea's free trade zone, a DPRK official has told Hong Kong media, raising speculation that the shock execution of the North Korean leader’s uncle might have soured business ties with its key ally.

China reportedly agreed to invest about US$3 billion in developing the free trade zone in North Korea’s northern tip of Rason, formerly known as Rajin and Sonbong, in late 2011. The special trade zone sits across the border from China’s northeastern Jilin province. There have been media reports that Chinese companies have leased two piers at the Rason port, but Kim Chun-il, a division chief of the port’s foreign business bureau, denied such reports during an interview with Hong Kong-based Phoenix TV.

Asked by a Phoenix TV journalist whether China won the right to exclusively use two piers at the port, Kim replied in Korean, "There are no piers that are specially used by the Chinese side." "They (Chinese people) have said so, but we have never formally rented out Pier 1 and Pier 2 to them," Kim said. The interview was made during a 72-minute special TV program on the Rason trade zone, which was aired on April 19. The program’s video footage can be seen on the website of Phoenix TV. Kim said that Russia leased the Pier 3 at the port, adding that North Korea plans to modernize the two piers on its own. Among a myriad of accusations announced by North Korea’s state media at the time of the execution, Jang was accused of selling “coal and other precious underground resources at random. Consequently, his confidants were saddled with huge debts, deceived by brokers.” "Jang had no scruples about committing such act of treachery in May last as selling off the land of the Rason
economic and trade zone to a foreign country for a period of five decades under the pretext of paying those debts," the North's statement said. Although it is uncertain whether the "foreign country" points to China, the fact remains that Rason economic zone was jointly developed by China. (Yonhap, "N. Korea Official Says No Piers for China at Special Trade Zone," May 2, 2014)

South Korea's foreign minister warned North Korea that the cost of keeping and testing nuclear weapons will be so high that it could threaten the survival of Kim Jong Un's regime. Yun Byung-se told a standing-room audience of diplomats, U.N. officials and Korea-watchers at the International Peace Institute that as long as North Korea relies on nuclear weapons to make threats, "then we, South Korea, together with our partners in the Security Council, will make the cost of having these nuclear weapons very very high, very very heavy, so that could backfire to the regime – the survival of the regime." North Korea has said it still may go ahead and test a new kind of nuclear device following Obama's visit. "Our assessment is that North Korea is ready to undertake a test whenever they make the necessary political decision," Yun said. He explained that a new test "will make a great impact on the strategic landscape in our part of the world" and could undermine the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the cornerstone of global nuclear disarmament efforts. North Korea has pulled out of the treaty. Faced with this challenge, Yun said South Korea has been making intensive diplomatic efforts to deter the North from carrying out a new test with the other parties to the stalled six-party nuclear talks aimed at reining in the North's nuclear program, Security Council members, the European Union and Asian nations. In the event of a new test, he said, the U.N. Security Council must fill all loopholes in the four rounds of sanctions it has already imposed on the North over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs – and individual countries must take similar tough measures. At the same time, Yun stressed that South Korean is seeking to build a peace and "new Korean peninsula." He reiterated President Park Geun-hye's proposals last month to reunify Korea. "It takes two to tango," he said. "We hope North Korea will respond positively to our genuine proposals." Yun said South Korea "recognizes that our journey for reunification will be long and bumpy" but he said a nuclear-free and unified Korea would alleviate security threats in northeast Asia and stabilize the region. "The geopolitical plate of the region is going through what I would call tectonic shifts," he said. "We are witnessing a rising China, a resurgent Japan, an assertive Russia and an anachronistic North Korea which is simultaneously pursuing nuclear weapons and economic development." Yun said conflicts over history, territory and maritime security, among others, are raising concerns "that even a military confrontation owing to miscalculations may become a reality." At the heart of these conflicts, he said, is "a trust deficit." Yun said that's why South Korea is seeking to unify the two Koreas and build a new Asia and a new world. Yun said he is "rather optimistic about this unification" because there are changes inside North Korea and many changes outside including China and Russia now saying publicly for the first time that they are in favor of peaceful reunification of the Koreas. "We have to be prepared for that possibility, or any scenario that will be unfolding in the coming months and years," he said. He recalled the day 23 years ago when East Germany and West Germany replaced their two nameplates at the United Nations with a single nameplate that said Germany. "Likewise, I do believe the day is approaching, perhaps much faster than we may
all realize, for the two Koreas to replace their respective nameplates with one single nameplate that simply says Korea.” Yun said. (Edith M. Lederer, “South Korea Warns North Korea over New Nuke Test,” Associated Press, May 7, 2014)

The U.S. has spotted a tarpaulin over a tunnel entrance at North Korea’s nuclear test site, CNN reported, adding to concerns that Pyongyang is preparing a fourth nuclear weapons test. The tarp was spotted by a spy satellite late last week at the nuclear site in the northeastern town of Punggye, CNN quoted a senior Washington official as saying. A similar cover was used ahead of the North’s third detonation in February 2013, in an apparent attempt to hide the atomic device during its delivery to the site. “If they put the tarp up, that could be a sign that they’re nearing that final stage, closing off the tunnel entrance, and that would be a huge concern to the U.S.,” the broadcaster said. (Shin Hyon-hee, “Development at North Korea Nuclear Test Site Furthers Concern,” Korea Herald, May 7, 2014)

A failure to revive the long-stalled six-party talks on ending North Korea’s nuclear weapons program would aggravate the security situation on the Korean Peninsula, Choson Sinbo said. “The U.S. is feared to take an additional step and cross ‘the red line’ drawn by North Korea to pull the trigger of an all-out showdown,” according to the article titled, “The biggest fear is a rash act by the U.S.” Related countries including China are making efforts to prevent rash acts by the U.S. through measures including the resumption of the six-party talks and if the (efforts) fail to bear fruit, the vicious circle of tension escalation could reach its extremity,” the article said. “Unless the U.S.’ war agitation is put on hold, the North will conduct a variety of exercises aimed at utilizing the DPRK’s diversified nuclear deterrence measures as strike power (targeted) at many mid-to-long range objects,” the newspaper said, also citing the country’s threat in March to conduct an additional nuclear test. (Yonhap, “Tensions Will Grow without 6-Party Talks: Pro-Pyongyang Media,” North Korea Newsletter No. 313, May 15, 2014)

A new expert report recommends that Washington and other governments attempt to engage North Korea on the possible safety risks of its new reactor. North Korea is believed to be close to finishing construction of an experimental light-water reactor at its Yongbyon nuclear complex. In May 2013, the expert website 38 North concluded that Pyongyang could begin the nine- to 12-month process for starting up the reactor just as soon as it had produced enough nuclear fuel to operate the plant. Very little is definitively known about the reactor’s design or specific capabilities, as Pyongyang has not permitted international inspections of the site. Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability experts David von Hippel and Peter Hayes said that while there was some danger of a nuclear accident occurring at the facility that could cause a radiological-emissions release, “due to the technical characteristics of the reactor, they would likely be modest in scale and scope.” But were a deliberate attack mounted on the reactor, its fuel pool and other associated facilities, the radiological fallout “could be more substantial, in terms of health impacts and damages to property,” they said. Von Hippel and Hayes wrote it would be prudent and “timely” for countries such as the United States, China and South Korea to reach out to Pyongyang about nuclear-safety issues. The analysts argued this engagement should take place regardless of where
things stand with the impasse over North Korea’s nuclear-weapons development. "One of the things that surprised me is how little we really know about exactly what the North Koreans are doing in a number of technical respects," Von Hippel, a senior associate with the Nautilus Institute, said in an email. "Much of what we assume about the reactor is based on conjecture and a general understanding of both reactors, in general, and [North Korea's] level of technology, in particular." He and Hayes said there are precedents for the United States engaging countries not party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty on reactor safety risks, such as with Pakistan and India. They suggested that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission could be used as the U.S. point of contact. The two experts based their analysis on commercial satellite images and interviews with some U.S. nuclear weapon experts, who in 2010 were allowed a rare visit to Yongbyon. Hayes, executive director of the Nautilus Institute, in a separate email to Global Security Newswire, said engaging North Korea on nuclear safety "offers a relatively apolitical way to start a conversation with [North Korea] on nuclear matters, should we want to have one." In the event that frozen negotiations with North Korea over its nuclear program are ever resumed, "there is no doubt at all" that Pyongyang’s desire for light-water reactors will be on its agenda, he said. "Some form of assistance with regard to this existing project will be on the table," Hayes said. "We should be prepared for that discussion to commence at any time." (Rachel Oswald, “Experts Urge Engagement with North Korea over New Reactor’s Safety Risk,” Global Security Newswire, May 6, 2014)

Von Hippel and Hayes: “First, the radiological risk arising from the DPRK’s small LWR should not be overstated, but it also should not be neglected. Should an accident (as opposed to an attack) occur at this LWR, the consequences would not be zero, but due to the technical characteristics of the reactor, they would likely be modest in scale and in scope. If the accident affected only the reactor, and not the spent fuel pool, it seems likely that radiological releases could be very small. The radiological consequences of a concerted terrorist attack on the reactor and associated facilities, however, could be more substantial, in terms of health impacts and damages to property. These impacts, however, are highly uncertain, and will remain so even after such an event due to the unresolved issue of dose-response threshold assumptions made to determine the excess deaths resulting from low-level radiation exposure. Thus, the primary predictable impacts of a radiological release from the DPRK’s LWR will be psychological in terms of downwind perceptions and anxiety on the part of exposed or potentially exposed populations, and political, in terms of the policies adopted in anticipation or as a result of such an event. Second, our appraisal is that the DPRK undertook this project at least in part in order to offset the loss of the KEDO LWRs that were to have been built under the original 1994 Agreed Framework between the US (and its allies) and the DPRK. The completion and operation of the KEDO LWRs would have, in the eyes of the DPRK leadership, brought the DPRK to co-equal status with other regional powers in terms of a complete nuclear fuel cycle—that is, the DPRK’s small LWR is a symbolic project aimed at embodying the perceived prestige of the DPRK state in the eyes of its own population and third parties, in accordance with the juche principle of self-reliance, and in response to the slight of the United States in cancelling the KEDO project, as well as to fulfill the leadership’s long-standing commitment to build a nuclear power reactor, a commitment dating back to the early
1980s. Following the suspension of the KEDO project, the DPRK leadership sees this small reactor as a first step in gaining the experience needed to construct a reactor fleet based on domestic technologies. Nonetheless, the potential utility of the small LWR as a negotiating item, should the parties to the Korean conflict return to talks, cannot have escaped the attention of the DPRK’s leadership. Third, on balance and in light of our net assessment of the stakes involved with a potential incident at the DPRK small LWR leading to release of radiation, we conclude that it is timely for the ROK, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia—all potentially affected states—to engage the DPRK on the issue of nuclear reactor safety, irrespective of the nuclear weapons issue. Although it is difficult to bring the DPRK into the trilateral (Chinese, Japanese, ROK, see Attachment 1) Cooperative Nuclear Safety Initiative while it remains completely isolated due to its nuclear weapons program, the earlier it is engaged on fuel cycle safety issues, the better, and this area is one in which confidence building measures with the DPRK should be undertaken. Fourth, this analysis should lay to rest any argument that the DPRK’s small LWR avails it of a way to lever the United States and its partners to engage it due to the radiological risks posed by the small LWR. Left to itself, radiological release due to technological failure, natural disasters, operating error, or malevolent state or non-state attack on the DPRK’s small LWR poses a risk only to North Koreans, and because it is so small, even then it poses only a relatively small risk to North Korean public health due to the high levels of existing risk from disease, malnutrition, and other health risks in the DPRK. This conclusion arises from a careful consideration of the plausible pathways for release of radiation from the DPRK’s small LWR and its spent fuel pond, over time, under a wide range of event specification and analytic assumptions, and in no way suggests a low valuation of North Korean lives that would be put at risk irrespective of the initial cause of the release. Rather, it is a statement of fact about the risk posed on populations outside the DPRK, whose welfare is the direct responsibility of external governments. The only way we can envision a large-scale release of radiation, benchmarked against the release that occurred at Fukushima disaster for example, is deliberate, malevolent attack on the DPRK’s small LWR and/or its spent fuel pond. In principle, the power grid connecting to the LWR also could be subject to attacks intended to cut off its power supply to adjacent areas, or to stop it operating for safety or other reasons, which could compound difficulties of maintaining control of the small LWR in the lead up to, during, or after a direct attack. Due to the risk of reciprocal attack, in which case, the ROK is disproportionately vulnerable, readers should note that we are not suggesting that US and ROK forces currently target the Yongbyon reactors or grid. Whether such attacks would be legal under international law in any circumstances remains controversial given reactor targeting during the Cold War, Israel’s attacks on Iraqi and Syrian reactors under construction, and the International Atomic Energy Agency’s 1990 resolution 510 on the “Prohibition Of All Armed Attacks Against Nuclear Installations Devoted To Peaceful Purposes Whether Under Construction Or In Operation.” In 1994, US military planners did examine closely the feasibility of attacking the Yongbyon thermal graphite-moderated reactor to disable it, before it could accumulate large quantities of plutonium. Such attacks therefore cannot be discounted. Of course, the probability of such attack from a state-based actor is controlled by the DPRK’s adversaries, not the DPRK itself (except to the extent it attempts to defend the small LWR against external attack—mostly likely with the surface-to-air missiles that defend the entire Yongbyon
complex, and their associated radar systems). Today, the United States has low flying stealth aircraft (and in the future, drones) and air-launched cruise missiles able to exploit corridors that evade these radars and would be able to deliver precisely conventional warheads that would disable and destroy the small LWR. In this scenario, significant radiological release could occur, and we have addressed radiological releases roughly consistent with this scenario in our analysis. The possibility of a reciprocal, retaliatory attack on the ROK’s much larger LWRs or spent fuel storage sites, however, is likely to give the United States and its allies pause when considering this option, because the risks to populations and economic losses arising from successful North Korean missile bombardment of ROK LWRs or spent fuel sites are much greater to the ROK (including not only radiological exposure, but prospective loss of large fractions of the ROK’s power supply) than the consequences of a successful attack on the DPRK’s reactor. In short, the United States and its allies control most of the variables that would result in substantial radiological release from the DPRK’s small LWR, but any leverage arising from that dominance is offset by the reciprocal threat posed by DPRK retaliation to ROK LWRs, neutralizing the US-ROK threat from the DPRK’s perspective. Finally, some analysts downplay the risk of non-state attack on the DPRK’s LWR on the grounds that nuclear security in the DPRK is extremely tight—possibly more so than any other reactor site on Earth. In our view, any assumption that non-state actors are not present or unable to attack radiological facilities in the DPRK is just that—an assumption. Transnational criminal networks operate across borders and reach into the DPRK, as do politically and ideologically motivated networks opposed to the regime. For all these reasons, it is appropriate at a purely analytical level to include state and non-state attacks on the reactor and its supporting infrastructure as possible reason for a reactor accident and radiological release, not only technological failures within the reactor itself. As to home-grown non-state malevolent attack on the DPRK’s nuclear facilities, including its small LWR, the prevailing assumption amongst analysts is that this risk is non-existent so long as the current regime exists, due in part to the related belief that there are no autonomous, non-state actors in the DPRK social system. Based on our experience of working in the DPRK as well as decades of close observation of DPRK decision-making at many levels, we believe that these assumptions and beliefs are wrong, both empirically, and in the underlying theoretical frameworks that shape these external perceptions of the social reality of the DPRK. This essay is not the place to engage in this debate. We admit that the DPRK has many cross-cutting surveillance and control apparatus that provide the leadership with unparalleled means of control over the population. We suggest, however, that fealty and ideological commitment are at the core of compliant individual and group behavior in the DPRK, not surveillance and terror. This issue is hotly contested among scholars of the DPRK’s political culture. We believe that there are plausible scenarios of collapse and disorder in which insurgent individuals and networks could pose a threat to the regime, albeit of indeterminate probability. In some scenarios in which the regime unravels from the top down, potential insurgent elements could find it useful to create spectacular threats in order to invoke US and ROK intervention. We stress that there is no empirical data on which to make such judgments at this point. Relatedly, the DPRK was characterized in 2012 as having the worst nuclear security of the thirty states that have access to weapons-useable nuclear materials (based on an index ranking of five material quantity, security and control measures, global norms,
domestic commitments and capacity, and societal factors). If, as we suggest above, scenarios of non-state malevolent attack are plausible, then it is prudent for external powers party to the DPRK nuclear conflict to persuade the DPRK to implement its national obligations to control non-state actors in relation to weapons of mass destruction imposed on all states by UNSC Resolution 1540, including reporting to the 1540 Expert Committee. Participation in this regime may enable the DPRK to build confidence that the small LWR and DPRK spent fuel ponds are not vulnerable to non-state actor malevolent attacks, and that by building control systems that meet international standards and are transparent to external actors, and induce the DPRK to participate in the international nuclear security regime in a responsible manner.”

(David von Hippel and Peter Hayes, “Illustrative Assessment of the Risk of Radiological Release from an Accident at the DPRK LWR at Yongbyon,” Nautilus Institute, May 6, 2014)

Sigal: “Against the backdrop of a threatened new nuclear test, North Korea is doing what it has long done to hedge against political and economic isolation: maintain and expand its network of partners. As it anticipates new international sanctions and a cooling of relations with China, North Korea has just concluded new trade deals with Russia and Uganda and is continuing to boost trade with the rest of the world, despite U.N. sanctions and U.S. efforts to sever its connections to financial institutions around the globe.

Often miscast as a “hermit kingdom,” North Korea has been anything but that when it comes to diplomacy and trade. That has allowed it to endure dramatic changes in international politics, to the astonishment of those who have long expected its collapse. While preaching its gospel of self-reliance, the Kim dynasty has depended on others for its survival without ever quite yielding to their embrace. Throughout the Cold War, Pyongyang steered a parlous course between Moscow and Beijing, securing economic aid and military backing from both, while never quite siding with either. After Joseph Stalin’s death, Kim Il Sung resisted de-Stalinization and criticized the Soviets’ embrace of more consumer-oriented economic policies at home and peaceful coexistence abroad. He also fought off China’s attempt to topple him in 1956 and tightened his grip on power with purges of his own, despite Soviet and Chinese pressure to relent. As the Sino-Soviet split opened wide, Kim initially sided with Beijing, only to distance himself during the Cultural Revolution after Chinese Red Guards denounced him as ‘Korea’s Khrushchev.’ Instead, North Korea turned elsewhere for political support, normalizing relations with two dozen nonaligned states in the Middle East and especially Africa and providing missile technology, military training and modest economic aid. In the 1980s, as China set off on a capitalist road and the Soviet bloc and Soviet Union began to fall apart, North Korea began its efforts to arm itself with nuclear weapons. It also reached out to its lifelong foes the United States, Japan and South Korea in hopes of advancing its security and economic development and hedging against a rising China—only to be rebuffed while China and the Soviet Union boosted trade and normalized relations with the South. For more than two decades Pyongyang continued trying to improve relations with Washington, restraining its nuclear and missile programs in hopes of ending U.S. enmity. A high point was the Agreed Framework of 1994, in which
Washington committed to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations” with Pyongyang. When Washington did not follow through, Pyongyang began acquiring the means to enrich uranium. After Washington pledged in October 2000 to “fundamentally improve” relations with Pyongyang and agreed that “neither government would have hostile intent toward the other,” Kim Jong Il offered to end production, deployment and export of medium- and long-range missiles. However, when President George W. Bush, upon assuming office, walked away from all U.S. commitments, Pyongyang resumed reprocessing plutonium after a 12-year halt and ramped up its enrichment efforts. Rather than resume sustained diplomatic give-and-take, President Barack Obama has adopted a pose of “strategic patience” with North Korea. Having given up improving relations with Washington for now, Pyongyang is accelerating its efforts to develop nuclear weapons. At the same time, to forestall isolation, it is doing what it has done before—strengthening old ties and forging new ones, especially with fellow pariahs. Pyongyang’s ties to Moscow unraveled in 1990, after the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations with South Korea. But Russian President Vladimir Putin has restored them, hosting Kim Jong Il at a summit meeting in 2002 and paying a return visit to Pyongyang in 2010, the first ever by a Russian head of state. Earlier this year, the Duma ratified a 2012 agreement forgiving most of North Korea’s debt. Last week Putin’s special envoy for the Far East visited Pyongyang to explore boosting bilateral trade to $1 billion by 2020. Moscow will soon test a refurbished rail link to North Korea. North Korea has inked deals with Uganda to train Ugandan police, tank crews and specialforces, as well as supply Uganda with tear gas and other military equipment. Although the U.N. Security Council is now probing whether the arrangement violates its arms embargo, President Yoweri Museveni last week thanked the North Koreans. “There are people who are not happy with them, but I have not seen any problem with them,” he told graduating trainees. Pyongyang also sustained long-time arms sales to Syria that included help for its nuclear reactor and the delivery of short-range missiles. And it was recently caught shipping home surface-to-air missile system parts, two MIG-21 fighter jets and 15 MIG-21 engines from Cuba. Pyongyang now has diplomatic relations with 164 countries, balm to its prickly sense of sovereignty. And pariah states are not the only ones doing business with North Korea. In 2005 the U.S. Treasury imposed financial sanctions designed to deny North Korea access to banks. Without bank-issued letters of credit—which guarantee payment to a seller of goods whether or not the buyer eventually pays, and often also assure the quality of goods to the purchaser—North Korean trade should have been impeded. Yet it has grown substantially since 2005, and not just with its main partner China, but also with countries throughout South and Southeast Asia, Africa and Europe. Even North Korea’s trade with South Korea set a record high in 2012 despite the South’s reduced engagement with the North. A North Korean nuclear test would lead to a tightening of the U.N. embargo, but now, as before, Pyongyang will not be going it completely alone.” (Leon V. Sigal, “Despite Efforts to Isolate It, North Korea Is No Hermit Kingdom,” World Policy Review, May 6, 2014)

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se warned Pyongyang of “the most serious consequences” if it continues with its nuclear program in an address to the UN Security Council in New York. But an unfazed Ri Tong-il, North Korea’s deputy UN ambassador, told the council that the Communist regime’s “missile launches and nuclear tests in the
interest of self-defense will become annual." The two Koreas verbally sparred as the council discussed the 10th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1540. Resolution 1540 was unanimously adopted by the council in 2004 against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Yun called North Korea’s nuclear weapons program “the weakest link in nuclear nonproliferation, along with nuclear security and safety” and pointed out that North Korea is the “only country in the world that has conducted nuclear tests in the 21st century.” He went on to say that further nuclear tests by North Korea must be prevented, otherwise it will “critically weaken the credibility of the Security Council.” Following Yun, Ri exceeded his time limit, speaking for 15 minutes instead of the allotted four before he was cut off. Ri said the United States is “the mastermind of the proliferation of nuclear weapons” and said that while Washington helped Israel acquire nuclear weapons, it only “increased nuclear blackmail” against North Korea. He also accused the United States of spoiling the North’s reunification overtures to South Korea by conducting military exercises with the South and keeping more than 1,000 nuclear weapons there. (Sarah Kim, “Verbal Duel on Nuclear Test by North at the U.N.,” JoongAng Ilbo, May 9, 2014)

North Korea’s infant mortality rate topped 33 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2012, a study showed, reflecting the country’s chronic food shortages and lack of widespread, adequate health care services. The finding resulted from analyzing nutrition surveys conducted jointly by the Pyongyang government and international organizations from 1998-2012. Lee Joung-hee, a professor at Kyonggi University’s graduate school of education in Suwon, Gyeonggi Province, released the work in Review of the North Korean Economy, a monthly journal published by the state-run Korea Development Institute. The infant mortality rate follows the number of deaths of infants under 1 year old per 1,000 live births on a yearly basis, and can offer a glimpse into health conditions in a country. The 2012 figure marks a sharp increase from 22.5 in 2000. The CIA World Factbook put its 2014 estimate at 24.5 for North Korea and 3.93 for the South. The number of deaths of North Korean infants under 5 years old per 1,000 live deaths is expected to have exceeded 53, up from 48.2 in 2000, the report said. (Korea Herald, “North Korean Infant Mortality Rate Surges to 3.3 Percent,” May 8, 2014)

Rodong Sinmun commentator: “The ghost-like watchword “Gaining a great opportunity of unification” is afloat in south Korea these days. Park Geun Hye is making much fuss about getting ready for "unification" and "forming a preparatory committee for unification," talking about "gaining a great opportunity of unification" whenever a chance presented itself. She also vociferated about the watchword during her trips to neighboring countries and even during her European junket. Philistines and media of her puppet regime are also staging charades about studying the watchword, oft-repeating it. "The doctrine of gaining a great opportunity of unification" is a heinous "doctrine of confrontation of the social systems" and "doctrine of achieving unification of the social systems". It is also a "doctrine of war against the DPRK" and "a doctrine of nuclear disaster." The strange watchword "Gaining a great opportunity" fully reflects the base and ugly nature of philistinism, mammonism that one can lure people with money and it is everything. It is painful and shameful that the country remains divided though nearly 70 years have passed since the partition of the country. It is a vicious mockery and insult to the wishes of the Korean nation for
unification to deny the basic nature of the issue of the reunification of the country and describe it as a bargaining chip for dealers and gamblers. Her doctrine is nothing but the daydream of "achieving unification of the social systems" veiled with the above-said watchword presupposing the "unification under American-style liberal democracy" and the "German-style reunification." The "unification of the social systems" precisely means the "confrontation of the social systems." The differing ideologies and social systems exist in the north and the south of Korea and both do not want to abandon them. To insist on achieving the unification of the social systems under this situation means seeking confrontation with the fellow countrymen in the north and denying the peaceful reunification, in the final analysis. ..." (KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Comments on Park Guen Hye’s ‘Doctrine of Gaining Great Opportunity of Unification,’” May 8, 2014)

The North Korean delegation at the UN have said they will examine 185 of 268 human rights recommendations handed to them by member states of the Human Rights Council (HRC) Tuesday at the 19th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The 11-man delegation headed by the Permanent Representative of the DPRK Mission in Geneva, So Se Pyong, agreed to examine and respond to the recommendations by the 27th Session of the HRC which takes place in September this year. The delegation also took the opportunity to say that it was committed to fulfilling its international human rights obligations and “expressed the conviction that the review would serve as an occasion to promote understanding of the real human rights situation in [the] DPRK.” The recommendations were presented to North Korea in a Draft report of the Working Group on the UPR and were informed by ongoing concerns on North Korea’s human rights record and the contents of the recent UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) report. North Korea deem the 372 page COI report to be a fabrication created by what it calls “hostile forces” and which So said was published to, “defame the dignified image of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and eventually eliminate its social system.” Despite agreeing to take into consideration over half of the recommendations within the UPR draft report however, the North Korean delegation dismissed all recommendations that mentioned the COI. (Hamish MacDonald, “North Korea to Consider Human Rights Recommendations,” NKNews, May 8, 2014)

A recent call for North Korea-focused grant proposals by the U.S. Department of State’s bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) could encourage activities that risk criminal punishment, several experts have told NK News. The call, which offers applicants grants of up to $350,000 to promote “human rights and democratic principles in North Korea,” will in part fund projects designed to physically move information into and out of North Korea – activities that could pose serious risks to anyone involved with the process. Proposals are sought that promote “access to information into, out of, and within North Korea,” the call says, including those involving “the production of media, including visual/video content, for DVDs, USBs, and other methods to send information into North Korea.” But while many oppose North Korea’s long-standing information blockade and strict censorship laws, several observers told NK News that there could be serious risks for those involved in the transport or consumption of DRL funded information, with provisions in the call clearly implying activities that both North Korean and Chinese authorities may view as illegal.
“[The call] is encouraging people to break their country’s laws, with no consideration of the possible consequences,” said James Hoare, a former British Charge D’affaires to Pyongyang. “I doubt whether those who devised these policies have given much thought to the likely consequences.” Although the DRL grant call welcomes proposals “that support recommendations from the recently released report from the Commission of Inquiry on North,” a close look at the call reveals serious contradictions with the United Nations’ own recommendations. While the United Nations Commission of Inquiry (COI) operated on a strict “first do no harm” basis to ensure the safety of those contributing to the report’s findings, the risks involved in moving information in and out of North Korea suggest a contradiction with the State Department’s own strategy to improve human rights in North Korea. In particular, the COI’s 372 page report detailed the consequences faced by those found in possession of the type of external media the DRL is proposing grant winners create and deliver into North Korea. The COI report also referenced the North Korean criminal code, which says that those found “listening to hostile broadcasting and collect[ing], keeping and distribut[ing] enemy propaganda”, would be sentenced to hard labor. “They (DRL) may not be aware of the complications of what they are doing – i.e. that by paying people to go into North Korea with anti-government propaganda on USBs that they are effectively choosing to send people off to labor camps.” The report, therefore, underscores some of the very serious dangers involved in moving information in and out of North Korea. “They (DRL) may not be aware of the complications of what they are doing – i.e. that by paying people to go into North Korea with anti-government propaganda on USBs that they are effectively choosing to send people off to labor camps,” said Hazel Smith, Professor and Director of the International Institute of Korean Studies at the University of Central Lancashire. Because the trafficking of physical information takes place along the Chinese-North Korean border, it could logically require the illicit movement of individuals and materials, likely counter to both Chinese and North Korean laws. And for North Koreans in particular involved in physically smuggling information and operating along the Chinese border, there is a high risk of repatriation or punishment in the event of their interception. “Given (that) there is no organizational basis for this activity in North Korea or support networks for them there or in neighboring China or Russia, this means that participating individuals – perhaps tempted by the financial ‘honoraria’ they receive – will put themselves in harm’s way,” Smith said. “The way this call is worded would seem to be an attempt to get round the necessity of informed consent and public accountability,” Smith added. The State Department – on several occasions – refused to respond to concerns that the DRL’s funding call could pose risks for grant winners. “We do not provide information to any bidder that we do not provide to all. That’s why there are no private conversations about grants or contracts,” the DRL’s Press and Policy Advisor Carole Jackson said, despite NK News making clear the information was requested for an article. “The way this call is worded would seem to be an attempt to get round the necessity of informed consent and public accountability.” Despite the risks involved with getting information into and out of North Korea, two human rights activists told NK News that the dangers were worth the benefits. “Brave policies, activists and strong convictions have made progress in human history…Doing nothing for fear that such grants may irritate the North Korean regime is cowardly,” said Eunkyoung Kwon, of Open Radio North Korea, an organization that has previously received DRL funding. “Our priority is the NK
people’s safety and well-being. Therefore, we have to be extremely cautious when we send those media gadgets into North Korea…[and] require extreme caution” Kwon added. “Doing nothing for fear that such grants may irritate the North Korean regime is cowardly.” Bada Nam, Secretary General of the People for Successful Corean Reunification (PSCORE), an organization that helps North Korean defectors in China, told NK News there was a net benefit to the process of getting outside information into North Korea. “Even though it is so dangerous to deliver information inside NK, it is worth it to change the people inside,” Nam said. The growing popularity of South Korean TV shows and music in North Korea meant that local citizens would learn that the government propaganda was a lie, Nam said. “If there is no one providing information into North Korea, the NK people will not gain any access to the real world. I think they have the right to know the truth,” Nam said, adding that “the future is made by the people who take danger together.” Nicholas Hamisevicz, a researcher at the Washington, DC, based Korea Economic Institute, echoed Nam and Kwon and said that the benefits were worth the risks. “While many can have concerns about the call because of North Korea’s potential reaction, which could include persecution, jailing, and execution of North Korean citizens found to be connected or engaged with human rights activities, and the imprisonment of foreigners deemed to be undertaking these efforts in North Korea, I am still in favor of this call for grant applications,” Hamisevicz said. However, Hamisevicz also noted that it would be important for State Department to “lay out the concerns, ramifications, and actions the U.S. government can and cannot take to the potential final applicants”. “The future is made by the people who take danger together.” Although the UN’s COI report made no recommendations for individuals to smuggle external media into North Korea, it did suggest that external governments and organizations foster “inter-Korean dialogue,” which can be furthered through engagement initiatives of an academic and scholarly nature. But in marked contrast to the COI proposals, the DRL call explicitly discourages projects with an “academic, research, conference, or dialogue focus”, adding that it “strongly discourages health, technology, or science related projects.” “To me, this basically reads: keep it propaganda. Korean War-esque propaganda leaflets falling from balloons and messages regarding human rights on USB drives do little to serve the North Korean people, but rather lead to increased tension and further crack-downs on information flows,” said Matthew Reichel, founder of the Pyongyang Project, an NGO that works inside the DPRK. “Korean War-esque propaganda leaflets falling from balloons and messages regarding human rights on USB drives do little to serve the North Korean people, but rather lead to increased tension and further crack-downs on information flows” Because of the limited scope of activities that State was seeking to fund, Hoare, the former Charge D’Affaires to Pyongyang, said the call represented an approach that will be of little significance to average North Koreans, calling it “just another example of people taking the high moral ground without any intention of getting to a solution.” “It will not help those suffering human rights’ abuses in North Korea nor advance democracy, but those concerned can bask in their own goodness,” he said. Reichel contrasted the DRL call with a recent request for proposals from the European Commission for projects aimed at North Korea and Iran, which allows for state involvement in, among other things, developing capacity in the health, education and environmental sectors. “This serves to highlight two very different approaches taken towards improving the lives and human rights of the North Korean people,”
Reichel noted, comparing the U.S. with the European Union. Beyond the dangers posed by moving information in and out of North Korea, some observers criticized the tone of the State Department call and said that it was reflective of a lack of will to proactively deal with North Korea. “Given the duration and severity of North Korean human rights atrocities, it seems odd, if not pathetic, that the U.S. Department of State needs to solicit ideas from independent experts on how to improve Pyongyang’s adherence to international norms of behavior,” said Bruce Klinger, a former CIA analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation think-tank in Washington, DC. Klinger, who advocates further sanctions against Pyongyang, said that despite the scale of the UN COI report, the U.S. government had been “remarkably silent” about the actions it intends to take to address human rights in North Korea. “Given the duration and severity of North Korean human rights atrocities, it seems odd, if not pathetic, that the U.S. Department of State needs to solicit ideas from independent experts on how improve Pyongyang’s adherence to international norms of behavior.” Washington’s policy of “strategic patience” – an approach that chooses to exclude engagement and dialogue with North Korea until it backs away from its controversial nuclear weapons program – might help explain the tone of the call. “At the macro level the grant call here is an excuse for the U.S. government to argue it is doing something on North Korea when in fact it has no political strategy other than what I have called ‘strategic paralysis’,” Hazel Smith said. However, other observers commenting on the call cautioned against interpreting it as any statement of U.S. policy on North Korea. “(The) DRL has specific responsibilities and is one bureau in the whole Department of State, so this RFP shouldn’t necessarily be seen as representing some sort of broader government policy,” said Sokeel Park, Director of Research and Strategy at Liberty in North Korea (LiNK). “DRL’s remit is in their name. It’s not all-encompassing, but it’s part of the puzzle,” he added, underscoring that the call would not be relevant for LiNK, as they do not accept government funding to remain independent. Echoing Park’s view, Executive Director of the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK) Greg Scarlatoiu said that “over the years, State/DRL funding has been made available to organizations addressing North Korea from a broad range of angles. “This RFP doesn’t discourage certain types of organizations to apply for funding, but simply defines the scope of work that would qualify for funding. This is the case with any type of procurement,” Scarlatoiu added. The DRL’s call is nothing new, but indicates changing priorities at the State Department. While grant winners could previously receive grants of up to three million dollars per year, the $350,000 ceiling meant that in 2014 “not many NGOs can work with this funding,” Bada Nam of PSCORE said. ‘There are a lot of brilliant ideas to bring information into North Korea. Lots of NGOs are working on this but recently stopped due to financial problems. There is no cost effective way to do this,’ Nam explained. Open Radio for North Korea, a private radio station previously funded by the State Department, ended its broadcasts into North Korea earlier this year, apparently due to a grant coming to an end. “We need more on-the-ground programs. There are things that can be done on the ground, but they are very under-resourced.” “We need more on-the-ground programs. There are things that can be done on the ground, but they are very under-resourced,” said Sokeel Park, noting that the funding environment for North Korea-related NGOs in South Korea is often particularly difficult, because “it’s so politicized and there’s not a lot of philanthropy directed towards them.” Despite the DRL calling for proposals that support the UN’s
COI report, the final report did not make any recommendations that encouraged individuals to create or smuggle external media into North Korea. Neither Chairperson of the COI, Michael Kirby, nor his colleagues were sought for consultation by the DRL or State Department in the development of the call, something that Commissioner Kirby said was expected. “It is unsurprising that the United States DRL did not consult me or my colleagues. They have to make their own decisions,” Kirby told NK News. (Hamish MacDonald and Ole Jakob Skatun, “State Dept. North Korea Grants Could Entail Risk of Criminal Punishment,” NKNews, May 8, 2014)

Alexander Vorontsov: “Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Russian Federation, and the President in the Far Eastern Federal District of the Russian Federation, Yury Trutnev’s three day long visit to the DPRK (April 28-30, 2014) symbolized the culmination of a new phase in Russian-North Korean relations taking shape—a sort of renaissance if you will. Indeed it was the first time in the last 30 years—since 1985—that a top deputy in the Russian government has visited North Korea. Even last July, during the DPRK’s celebration of the 60th anniversary of the end of the “hot phase” of the Korean War, Moscow demonstrated its negative attitude toward the North’s third nuclear test (conducted in February 2013), as well as its “adventurous” behavior during the acute crisis on the Korean peninsula over the following two months, and maintained only a very modest presence at the anniversary event (the deputy head of its diplomatic mission in Pyongyang). In contrast, China, despite its irritation for the same reasons, sent the third highest ranking member in Beijing’s hierarchy to Pyongyang who was seen at Kim Jong Un’s side throughout the festivities. What has caused this metamorphosis in Russian-DPRK relations? First, the North Koreans have exerted a consistent effort to improve bilateral relations with Russia. For example, despite Moscow’s low-level representation at the 60th anniversary celebration, Pyongyang took unprecedented steps during those festivities to demonstrate Pyongyang’s intention to bolster bilateral relations with Russia. Large scale athletic and artistic representations of “Arirang” began with a scene symbolizing friendship between the Russian and Korean peoples, accompanied by a slogan on the “live” platform: “Korean-Russian friendship—From generation to generation.” Even more significant was the episode during the military parade, when (for the first time in history!) the North Koreans acknowledged with gratitude the participation of Soviet troops in the Korean War. A large banner with the image of a Korean soldier, a Chinese volunteer, and what appeared to be a Slavic pilot in a helmet was driven along the stands on a truck. The caption under the banner read: “Thanks to all who fought together with us.” At a reception on the same day, the DPRK’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pak Ui Chun, said directly to his Russian guest: “Did you see the symbol at the parade?... tell your Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, that we ‘aren’t hiding anything.’” It appears that this message was heard in Moscow. In 2014, there has been a flurry of bilateral contacts at a high level. In February, the Chairman of the Presidium of the DPRK’s Supreme People’s Assembly (who is second in command of the state), Kim Yong Nam, traveled to Russia to participate in the opening of the Olympic Games in Sochi and had conversations with President Vladimir Putin and other Russian leaders. In March, Pyongyang was visited by the Russian Republic of Tatarstan President, Rustam Minnihanov, and the Minister of Development for the Far East of the Russian Federation, Alexander Galushka, who also is the new head of the Russian part
of the Bilateral Intergovernmental Commission dealing with economic, trade and scientific cooperation. They were accompanied by teams of officials and businessmen. These visits proved to be very fruitful, and were held in an unprecedentedly open and friendly atmosphere. Both March negotiations resulted in written agreements with the ambitious goal of increasing bilateral trade volume from the current 112 USD million to 1 USD billion by 2020. Finally, a delegation headed by Russia’s Deputy Prime Minister, which included governors from the three adjacent provinces of Amur, Khabarovsk and Primorye (maritime) Areas, visited the DPRK at the end of April. Mr. Yury Trutnev was received by Kim Yong Nam, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister and Head of the State Planning Committee, Rho Doo Chol. In addition, an inter-regional cooperation agreement was signed for the use of North Korean labor in the agricultural and timber areas of Amur province. While the atmosphere was friendly, the talks were not easy. The main reason was the North Koreans tried an old Soviet-era approach: since Moscow had recently written off North Korea’s bad debts from that period, Pyongyang requested new credits, a price reduction in Russian goods, and an easing in Russian quality standards for North Korean goods. The Russian delegation tried to explain that the Soviet-era model of cooperation was no longer acceptable and cooperation should be based on market economy principles. The new principles for bilateral cooperation as well as plans for specific tasks will be elaborated at the sixth meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission dealing with economic, trade and scientific cooperation scheduled to take place in Vladivostok at the beginning of June. At the same time, Moscow has a genuine interest in reducing tensions on the Korean peninsula not only through words but through deeds. One of the vectors of mediation is Russia’s promotion of three major trilateral (RF-DPRK-ROK) infrastructure projects: uniting the railroads in both Koreas with the Transiberian Railway as well as constructing gas pipelines and power lines from Primorye to South Korea through North Korea, in which Russia has already invested significant funds. Moscow is not inclined to underestimate the serious interest of Pyongyang in broadening Russia’s economic presence, including as a means for reducing its one-sided over-reliance on China. In this regard, Moscow also realizes that this “window of opportunity for Russian business will not be open forever, and may quickly slam shut in the event of a change in the foreign policy situation and the large scale arrival of major economic players such as the United States, Japan, South Korea and the European Union in North Korea. After all, there is considerable evidence that even now during a time of harsh economic sanctions imposed by these governments, representatives of their business communities are seeking and finding diverse opportunities to implement projects in North Korea. One successful effort by the Russian Federation took place in February 2014, when a group of businessmen from South Korea—from Hyundai, the steel giant Posco, and the railroad company Korail—visited the North Korean port of Rajin, where it successfully operates the Russian-North Korean joint venture RasonKonTrans. Last year, the joint venture completed the construction of a modern railway from the Russia-DPRK border to this port and the reconstruction of one of its piers. It is noteworthy that this visit by Southerners to the North was conducted while the law adopted by the previous South Korean administration of President Lee Myung-bak that forbids any trade or economic collaboration with the North was in effect. Regarding this unprecedented trip, the ROK Ministry of Unification issued a special comment that this contact did not represent a repeal of that law, but simply an exception to it.
Nevertheless, the meeting in Rajin was considered fruitful by those involved, and this line of inter-Korean cooperation has gained serious prospects for development. The second visit of the same South Korean delegation is scheduled to take place this month. Russia has also played an important role in promoting a dialog between North and South Korea. This was demonstrated during the visit by Russian President Putin to South Korea in November 2013, when a memorandum of intent was signed by the above-mentioned champions of South Korean businesses wishing to join the activities of the Russian-North Korean joint venture in Rajin. The objective will be to transform this port into an important transshipment hub, a sort of “Rotterdam in Eastern Asia.” This effort, as we see, continues and has good prospects for further development. As a symbolic gesture, representatives from the Russian Federation, the DPRK and the ROK took part in a regular meeting of the “Railroads Cooperation Organizations General Directors” held at the Koryo Hotel in Pyongyang also at the end of last month. Russia has also been active in efforts to revive the Six Party Talks and in the search for realistic solutions to existing regional security challenges. So far, it does not appear that differences over Ukraine have had any effect on Moscow’s position on these matters. Russia continues to do its best to persuade North Korea to come back to talks and to refrain from new nuclear and missile tests. As for “preconditions” for restarting talks, those may be discussed in a mutually acceptable and face saving manner. Moreover, all parties involved should be prepared to make compromises, not just Pyongyang.

One important requirement, however, is that the North reaffirm its commitment to the September 19, 2005 Six Party Joint Statement in which it pledged to denuclearize. One additional issue that has arisen since 2005 and will require the attention of the international community is North Korea’s development of its own nuclear power plant, the Experimental Light Water Reactor (ELWR) intended for civilian uses. With the construction nearly complete, there are concerns among nuclear engineers that this facility, and any others like it that the North may build in the future, could pose potential safety problems. This danger is particularly pronounced since the reactor has been built without any professional consultation or observation from abroad. As a result, the compliance of this facility with international safety standards—which have been substantially bolstered since the tragedy in Fukushima—cannot help but be held in serious doubt; a danger of significant concern among the North’s neighboring countries, including Russia. …It is still an open question whether the current crisis in Ukraine will result in any more substantial shifts in Russian policy towards North Korea, particularly in dealing with the nuclear and missile issues. Certainly, one immediate impact appears to have been the speeding up of plans for bilateral economic cooperation and the exchange of high-level visits that were already in place, perhaps out of appreciation for Pyongyang’s support in the United Nations. Though some would argue that those efforts already undermine policies designed to increase pressure on the North as will a further acceleration in bilateral economic ties. With the West increasing pressure on Russia as a result of differences over Ukraine, the very fact that Moscow and Pyongyang are subject to US sanctions will objectively draw them together (as well as with China). At the same time, Moscow separates the nuclear dimension that relates its obligations and interests concerning the NPT and global non-proliferation regime. On this point, Russia’s stance toward North Korea has not and is unlikely to change.” (Alexander Vorontsov, “Is Russia-North Korea Cooperation at a New Stage?” 38North, May 8, 2014)
After President Obama and South Korea’s president, Park Geun-hye, warned North Korea of harsher sanctions if it continued pursuing nuclear weapons, the North has responded with harsh invective against both leaders. Last week, KCNA posted a racist rant against Obama, saying a steel mill worker had made the slurs and quoting him at length. But in the North, no ordinary citizen quoted in the state media says anything that deviates from the official line, and what are presented as interviews with people on the street are often used to propagate the government’s message. The release of the dispatch was reported on the website of the Washington Post. It contained comments from three other people aside from the steel worker and released May 2, and unlike one from the same day that insulted Park it had no matching English translation on the news agency’s website. At an April 25 meeting, Obama and Park appeared to reaffirm that they would not engage North Korea with dialogue or other incentives unless it took steps toward abandoning its nuclear weapons development. Pyongyang’s tone turned markedly uglier after that. On April 27, a North Korean government agency called Ms. Park a “dirty prostitute” in thrall to the “pimp” Obama. (Choe Sang-hun, "Ugly Words from North Korea," New York Times, May 9, 2014, p. A-8)

Rodong Sinmun: “The DPRK recently staged rocket launching and shelling exercises. These were justifiable and self-defensive measure to frustrate the hostile forces’ ever-growing reckless challenges for aggression and reliably defend the peace and security on the Korean peninsula. The south Korean authorities are terming them "provocation" and "threats." Lurking behind this is their intention to secure a pretext for justifying their confrontation racket and realize at any cost their ambition for escalating confrontation with fellow countrymen in the north in collusion with foreign forces. No one will remain a passive onlooker to the outbreak of a war. **Nukes should be countered with nukes and missiles with missiles.** There is nothing strange even if the DPRK immediately takes measures stronger than what the hostile forces are touting. The history and reality eloquently prove that only one’s own powerful military muscle can defend the destiny of the nation and pave the way for an independent life and development. The DPRK clarified its resolute stand that it would take countermeasures including nuclear test to protect the sovereignty and dignity of the DPRK from the evermore mounting challenges for aggression by the hostile forces. No one has the right to criticize it. If the U.S. and its following forces persist in their moves to isolate and stifle the DPRK under the pretext of its exercise of the just right to self-defence, its service personnel and people will wipe out all provocateurs and surely achieve the reunification of the country, the cherished desire, by giving fullest play to their tremendous deterrence for self-defence they have consolidated. The U.S. and the south Korean puppet forces should stop acting rashly, clearly understanding the indomitable spirit and iron will of the service personnel and people of the DPRK.” (KCNA, “No One Can Bar DPRK from Exercising Its Right to Self-Defense: Rodong Sinmun,” May 10, 2014)

The Defense Ministry is planning to deploy missile batteries in central Tokyo within three years to shield the capital from potential attacks, informed sources said. The move is designed to beef up the capital’s defenses against ballistic missiles from North Korea, the sources said. The plan makes use of the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile defense system, which would be deployed at the Self-Defense Forces’
headquarters in the Ichigaya district in Shinjuku Ward as early as fiscal 2017. Construction of the facilities will begin this fall, they said. If ballistic missiles look like they’re headed for Japanese territory, the SDF will first order Aegis-equipped destroyers to shoot them down from space using Standard Missile-3 interceptors. If that fails, the PAC-3 is the next line of defense, but its missiles only have a range of about 20 km. PAC-3 batteries have been deployed to four places near Tokyo, including the SDF’s Narashino camp in Chiba Prefecture and the Iruma Base in Saitama. Tokyo has none. In April 2013, PAC-3 interceptors were tentatively shifted to the SDF’s Ichigaya base from Narashino amid more bellicose rhetoric from North Korea. The ministry has concluded that shifting PAC-3 batteries to Tokyo only when necessary is not sufficient to protect the capital, the sources said. (Jiji, “Tokyo to Get PAC-3 Missile Batteries,” Japan Times, May 10, 2014)

DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman: “accusing U.S. officials of pulling up the DPRK over its residents’ criticism of Obama reported by its media: “The resentment expressed by individuals of the DPRK at Obama recently was a proper reaction to him who malignantly insulted and slandered the dignified DPRK during his junket to south Korea. Obama termed the DPRK’s inevitable steps for self-defence a “provocation” and “threats” and cried out for tougher “sanctions,” “pressure” and “not ruling out the use of military force.” Not content with this vitriol, he went the lengths of letting loose a spate of such invectives that the DPRK is a “country which makes its people go hungry and takes a lonely path,” “isolated state,” “abnormal state” and “reckless and irresponsible” government. This is an unpardonable insult to the people of the DPRK who are leading a happy life under the benevolent socialist system and considering independence dearer than their life and their resentment at the U.S. is running high. The U.S. had better stop letting loose rhetoric about the resentment expressed by DPRK residents at Obama and look back on his unspeakable invectives which enraged them so much. The U.S. is trying to cover up the thrice-cursed wrongs committed by Obama and divert elsewhere criticism of him while finding fault with the bitter accusations of Koreans against him, but such a move would get it nowhere.” (KCNA, “DPRK FM Spokesman Slams U.S. for Pulling up DPRK,” May 12, 2104)

A U.S. envoy suggested Washington could accept "reversible steps" from North Korea on denuclearization in order to jump-start frozen negotiations. "What they do, quite frankly, in the initial stages would be perfectly reversible steps that they would take, declaratory steps," said Glyn Davies, the Obama administration’s special envoy for North Korea policy. He emphasized, however, that Pyongyang could only return to the long-paralyzed six-party process if it accepted the “fundamental premise” that the negotiations were focused on the permanent shuttering of its nuclear weapons program. Davies was responding to a reporter’s question on whether the United States was still demanding from Pyongyang concrete proof of its commitment to irreversible denuclearization as a precondition to returning to the negotiations, which also involve China, Japan, Russia and South Korea. "Davies’ answer suggests that if the six-party talks were to begin, […] the first actions the U.S. and its partners would demand would be aimed at limits that curb the D.P.R.K.’s nuclear and missile potential," said Daryl Kimball, Arms Control Association executive director, in an email. Speaking during an evening panel discussion at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in
Washington, Davies rejected any chance of the Leap Day deal’s precepts being revived. “We’d like to see them take concrete actions,” he said of North Korea. “The stuff they gotta do -- they know what they have to do.” Davies painted an overall dim picture of the current state of the nuclear impasse with the North: “The fact that they’re not interested in resolving the cases of Americans who have been imprisoned in North Korea tells you something about their current interest in going back to multilateral diplomacy.” Since Kim Jong Un came to power in late 2011, the North Korean regime has published a number of statements that underline how central nuclear weapons are to the regime’s sense of identity. “This new leader has done us a favor, in a back-handed fashion, of making it quite clear that he has no intention of meaningfully denuclearizing, and that presents a problem. But it also is a clarifying moment,” said Davies, who formerly served as U.S. ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Victor Cha, who served as special envoy to North Korea during the George W. Bush administration, said he did not believe there was anything left of the six-party talks to salvage. “The last meeting was in 2008. It’s been six years. If you don’t do something for six years, you probably don’t do it anymore,” said Cha, who is a senior adviser to the CSIS think tank and participated in Tuesday’s panel. Kimball, who attended the event, warned that if Washington waits too long for the North to “recommit to the goals” of a 2005 six-party talks joint statement on denuclearization, Pyongyang’s leaders could expand their fissile material stockpile and further improve their missile and nuclear capabilities. “It is past time to make the necessary adjustments to the strategy of the United States and its partners to limit [the North’s] capabilities before they become even more dangerous to the region,” he said. (Rachel Oswald, “‘Reversible Steps’ Could Restart North Korea Nuclear Talks: U.S. Envoy,” Global Security Newswire, May 14, 2014) What on earth can anyone offer Kim Jong-un that’s more valuable than his nukes, in terms of ensuring his personal survival and that of his dynasty? I asked Victor Cha, holder of the Korea Chair at CSIS and a veteran of Bush administration negotiations with the North. “That’s clearly a problem now, because I think the predominant negotiating template in the past was that they’d be willing to trade at least some of their weapons,” Cha told me and other reporters after Amb. Davies’ remarks. But it’s become clear that, while Pyongyang might be willing someday to limit the size of its nuclear arsenal – once they feel it’s big enough – its existence is not a matter for negotiation. “They want to have an arms control discussion,” Cha said, not a “denuclearization” one. “It’s ridiculous, [but] they want to be recognized as a nuclear weapons state…. The problem for people like Glyn is, that’s just not acceptable, so what do you do then?” Cha left the question hanging unanswered. So what’s the plan? “The strategy is to ensure… as great [a] unanimity as we can achieve on what it is that North Korea must do,” Davies told the audience at CSIS. “We’ve made great progress on that,” he said, especially with China. Beijing has its own anxieties about instability in the region, Davies emphasized, which increasingly “converge” with US interests – and, though the ambassador didn’t say it, Beijing seems increasingly frustrated with its ally-cum-albatross in Pyongyang. “The problem becomes working through what we like to call the road map, which is the how and when of North Korean denuclearization,” Davies went on, “and the truth is, no secret, that the interests of the five partners are not perfectly congruent. That’s just life.” (Sydney J. Freedberg, Jr., “U.S., China, Russia, Japan, South Korea Willing to Push on North Korean Nukes, But…” Breaking Defense, May 14, 2014)
The Korean government will help attract foreign capital into North Korea if the regime opens up its economy, said Shin Je-yoon, chairman of the Financial Services Commission, in an introduction to the Park Geun-hye administration’s financial policies for unification. “It is a good point to think about how to monitor, encourage or regulate investments in North Korea,” Shin said at the 2014 Korea Economic Forum hosted by the Korea JoongAng Daily at the Westin Chosun Hotel in central Seoul. About 150 foreign diplomats, chief executives and financial institution executives attended the forum to hear the top financial regulator talk on the latest buzzword in the financial world: “unification finance.” “But it depends on North Korea’s policy changes. “For now, we don’t encourage investment, because they don’t have basic legal structures yet. If they open the market to global markets, then we will help them induce foreign investment for development. If those kind of basic areas like legal services or consulting services by commercial entities like investment banks are prepared, we will encourage foreign investors to make investments. We are always ready to help,” he added. Foreign direct investment in North Korea has steadily inched up in recent years, although the inflows remain among the lowest in the world. North Korea attracted $79 million in foreign investment in 2012, up 41 percent from a year earlier, according to data by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. In 2009, only $2 million flowed in. As in Germany’s case, unification can be sudden, led by political changes. On the other hand, as seen in the Hong Kong case, it can be achieved very slowly, mainly through economic cooperation. Shin said neither scenario is what the government is looking at. “We think a scenario that falls in between the two will be the most desirable and an optimal model for Korea,” he said. “But since we have to guard against any political changes, the government will study hard and prepare measures for every scenario, in case unification arrives suddenly.” The FSC, the Financial Supervisory Service, the Bank of Korea and the Ministry of Strategy and Finance will set up a task force to prepare for unification, he added. At the forum, FSC Chairman Shin proposed four key tasks in preparing for unification in the financial sector: resetting the monetary system, adjusting the exchange rate system, reforming the financial infrastructure and financing development needs. “First, the monetary system should be reset,” Shin said. Currently, in North Korea, the central bank functions as both a central bank and a commercial bank. After economic integration, the commercial banking functions should be removed from the central bank, he explained. “In the period leading up to integration, the value of the North Korean won should be accurately determined,” he said. He said the currency conversion should be pursued “simultaneously with economic integration.” As for the changing the exchange rate regime, Shin said it is “essential to helping North Korea move toward an open market economy.” For North Korea, which currently maintains a system of multiple currencies and exchange rates, it is important to establish a single and universal exchange rate, Shin explained. “North Korea should undergo external debt restructuring so it can access the global financial market,” the chairman said. “South Korea should set up emergency credit lines - for example, a currency swap arrangement with the North.” Shin also proposed setting up a financial infrastructure for the North, including a financial regulatory system, a deposit insurance system and a payment and settlement system. The Korean government will also help North Korean meet the needs for its development, the chairman added. “The government plans to obtain basic funding from taxes, sovereign bonds and investment funds,” he said. “It
will also encourage domestic and foreign private investors to invest in North Korea, and request funds from international organizations.” The government plans to set up a policy finance institution to coordinate all steps of the funding process, he added. “It will request special funds from international organizations, including the ADB and the World Bank,” Shin said. Shin, who was born in Kaesong, found himself on the same page as the president. “The topic is very close to my heart,” Shin said. “Unification is an imperative mission for me and my generation.” As for public worries about the immense costs of unification, Shin flatly said, “Unification is a smart investment.” He added, “In the short-term, the pecuniary burden will be incurred. But in the long run, unification will pave the way for a strong, sustainable and good economy, which I dubbed a SSG economy,” The chairman stressed unification will create a combined population of almost 100 million people who speak the same language and share a long-standing cultural and historical legacy, serving as the foundation for a strong economy. The economy will be sustainable because of its young and well-disciplined labor force from North Korea and abundant capital and high technology from the South, Shin said. A unified Korea will be nuclear-free without an arms race, sparing more money for development and welfare, Shin said. Since the two Germanys couldn’t prepare for their sudden unification, there were many difficulties, Rolf Mafael, the German ambassador to Seoul, said at the forum. “The currency union and the exchange rate of one to one from East German mark to West German mark was, from a political point of view, indispensable, but from a purely economic point of view it had quite heavy consequences for the competitiveness of East German industry,” Mafael said. “In a similar way, the decisions to immediately and fully integrate East Germans into the West German social security system put a very heavy burden both on citizens in West Germany and on the government,” the ambassador added. “Given that the challenge of unifying the two Koreas might be even greater than was the case in Germany, it is indeed imperative for the South Korean government to develop detailed plans and models on how to proceed in case prospects of unification materialize, thus being able to take well prepared and efficient decisions.” Economic analysts also say Korea’s unification will be more arduous than Germany’s and the government needs concrete action plans. “The four tasks proposed by the FSC chairman are still too broad,” said Kang Moon-seong, a senior fellow at Hana Institute of Finance. “The government should be able to discern what is more important and what is less.” The analyst said in a recent report that unification of the Korean Peninsula needs a phase-by-phase scenario. “The first phase is to establish a separated banking system in North Korea,” Kang said. “The second is to introduce a single currency before economic integration of the two.” (Song Su-hyun, “Shin Sketches Unification Hurdles,” JoongAng Ilbo, May 14, 2014)

Hansen and Liu: “For the past month, the international community has been on edge expecting a fourth North Korean nuclear test, which the South Korean Foreign Minister recently characterized as a “game changer.” The high level of anxiety has been the result of a stream of warnings emanating largely from the ROK Ministry of Defense and parroted by various news media, predicting a test would occur during President Barack Obama’s visit to South Korea. Of course, that visit came and went without a blast and warnings since then from Seoul as well as leaks to the press have also come up short. Interested observers would be justified in asking themselves: “What is going
“on here?” It is worth noting that since early April there has been an increased level of activity at the Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site visible in commercial satellite imagery used by non-government analysts, specifically in the South Portal area where it is suspected there are two completed test tunnels. There has been stepped up movements of vehicles and crates, and boxes have appeared and disappeared near tunnel entrances, all consistent with possible test preparations. New commercial satellite imagery from May 9, 2014 essentially shows more of the same. There is activity at both tunnel entrances in the South Portal area, although less than in previous imagery. There are two vehicles in front of the eastern tunnel entrance: one small truck with a white body and what appears to be a military truck on the bridge spanning a nearby creek. Also present are two white crates or boxes in the same location as seen in imagery from May 1 near the western tunnel entrance as well as a small vehicle directly across the road. There are more crates and one vehicle visible across the bridge. The May 9 imagery indicates activity in other areas at the site as well, but none seems to show a test is “imminent.” As noted in previous 38 North analyses, activity in the West Portal area includes continued excavation of a new tunnel that has been ongoing since May 2013 (the North Koreans seem to now be using an old dump site for spoil), work to widen and level a portion of a road leading to the new tunnel’s portal, the continued construction of a new support building which now has a wooden roof and the appearance of a new logging area and a further skid trail to the east of the other three identified in May 1 imagery. There is even a new rectangular area—possibly a garden—inside the fence to the north of the tunnel excavation. In short, the imagery shows activities, even the most mundane, that you would not expect if a test were imminent. The same is true for the Main Support Area, which in the past has been a key facility used to prepare for a nuclear detonation. If a test were imminent, there would be a high level of activity, special vans used for secure communications and other vehicles spotted in the past that were unidentified but may have been somehow related to the nuclear device. However, in the May 9 imagery, activities in this area seem consistent with those needed for routine maintenance. There are some vans present, a number of crates appear throughout the area and piles of lumber are visible near work underway on the roof of one building. Based on available evidence (and that phrase should be in bold letters since all we have are commercial satellite images every few days at best) as well as having spent the past month listening to pronouncements about the likelihood of a test occurring, it appears that a nuclear test is not imminent. Indeed, given previous North Korean practices, one possible conclusion is that if the North is planning a test, it may still be weeks away. What does all this mean? There are a variety of possible explanations: First, the North Koreans may be planning another test but never intended to conduct one this soon. Leaving statements aside about the North’s plan to conduct a “new form” of test, activity on the ground at Punggye-ri may have been more related to other purposes, for example, maintenance after the end of winter, general upgrading of facilities, or activities other than test preparation. Alternatively, the North Koreans may have decided to play the public attention generated by predictions of an imminent test for all it was worth. Given recent US-ROK joint exercises and the deterioration of relations with the Park Geun-hye administration, hyping the threat of an imminent test served an important objective for Pyongyang, namely, to never appear weak, and stay in the news headlines. Third, the North Koreans may possibly have been planning an imminent fourth nuclear test but
decided not to do it at the last minute. It is likely they didn’t care about pronouncements by the United States and South Korea urging them not to test. But it may be that behind the scene efforts by Beijing could have dissuaded the North to hold off. Of course we may never know if any of these explanations is correct. Another possibility is that neither governments nor non-governmental organizations have a particularly good track record predicting the North’s behavior (although 38 North’s record is better than most) because of analytical shortcomings. Aside from the inherent problems discerning what is happening inside test tunnels and the shortcomings of “crate-ology,” given the small number of North Korean tests conducted thus far, we simply do not have enough experience to create a reliable predictive model. 38 North has tried to develop a set of indicators that might show preparations for a test. But that still remains a working hypothesis rather than a definitive method of prediction since, at the end of the day, tests only occur after a political decision by the North Korean leadership. The limits of analysis are perhaps best demonstrated by the case of the ubiquitous “tarps” at the North Korean test tunnel entrances. These have been cited on a number of occasions over the past month, most recently in a CNN report quoting an unnamed Pentagon official, as proof, now more than a week ago, that a test may be imminent. The theory is that these tarps appear when the North Koreans want to hide what is going on inside a test tunnel from the spying eyes of photographic satellites. This makes a certain amount of sense since camouflage was present at the two tunnels used in the 2009 and 2013 North Korean detonations. However, a closer look at older satellite imagery of the South Portal area (where it is suspected a forth test will take place) indicates that, in fact, tarps have been present several times even when tests were not believed imminent. One possible explanation is that they were intended to protect mining carts carrying excavated spoil from overhanging trees and snow. That means what some analysts have been citing as the indicator of an imminent test may not be an indicator of anything at all. It may indicate that a test could be imminent—as in the 2009 and 2013 tests in the West Portal area—or it may indicate that there are ongoing routine activities—as in the 2013 image of the southern portal area. appears the odds-on favorite now is that a test is not imminent and in fact, may be some days, weeks or even months off. Pyongyang is certainly planning more tests; we know that if only because of the tunneling activities at the Punggye-ri facility. Moreover, it is entirely likely that the North is not only planning but will conduct more tests in the future. Leaving aside all the political reasons for testing, such as demonstrating military strength, Pyongyang is currently being driven by one important imperative: its new persona as small, emerging nuclear power. That means developing more and better nuclear weapons, along with the missiles to deliver them. That means more future nuclear tests.” (Nick Hansen and Jack Liu, “Why a Nuclear Test May Not Be Imminent: Update on North Korea’s Pungye-ri Nuclear Test Site,” 38North, May 13, 2014)

Last year, Russia provided North Korea with its oil, which was a 60 percent increase from the previous year. This took place at a time when the international community step up sanctions on North Korea in the wake of its third nuclear test. Analysts say that the Kim Jong Un regime is trying to get closer to Russia to reduce the country’s dependence on China. According to the Federal Customs Service of Russia and KOTRA (Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency) Moscow office on Tuesday, Russia exported 36.89 million U.S. dollar-worth oil to North Korea last year. This is a
58.5 percent increase from 23.28 million dollars in 2012. As a result, Russia’s oil exports to North Korea are now similar to those before its second nuclear test on May 25, 2009 (41.61 million dollars in 2008). Although Moscow decreased oil exports to North Korea by 56.7 percent year on year in 2007 following the North’s first nuclear test on Oct. 9, 2006, it recovered them back in 2009. While the oil export volume significantly decreased in 2012, Moscow increased it again last year when Pyongyang conducted its third nuclear test. With Russia’s increased oil exports to North Korea, its total export volume to North Korea of last year jumped 48.6 percent year-on-year. Meanwhile, North Korea’s exports to Russia shrank by 29.9 percent from 11 million dollars to 7.71 million dollars over the same period. Whereas North Korea increased its exports to China by 17.2 percent, which accounts for around 90 percent of its foreign trade, its imports from China increased only by 5.4 percent. This shows a change in North Korea’s trade with China and Russia, its biggest and second biggest trading partners, respectively. A North Korea source in Beijing said, “Pyongyang seems to diversify its import locations. It is noteworthy that the country tries to strengthen the relationship with Russia, in particular.” Many analysts say that Pyongyang is looking to Moscow since Beijing is increasing pressure on Pyongyang by prioritizing denuclearization in its policy on the Korean Peninsula. It can be interpreted that North Korea seems to go back to the policy of dealing Russia and China equally. Russia is also paying attention to North Korea as a foothold in the Asia Pacific region, which would allow the North to keep Japan and China in check and realize its “Look East Policy.” Russia’s recent write-off of 10 billion-dollar debt owed by North Korea and Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Trutnev’s visit to Pyongyang seem to be part of these efforts. Another evidence is that the North’s only international route is open to a diesel ship shuttling between Russia and Najin Port of North Korea, and the two countries are initiating a railroad project between the North Korean port and Russian town of Khasan. However, many observers say that Pyongyang cannot get closer to Russia than to China, which is the regime’s economic lifeline. Other sources say, “Chinese regions bordering North Korea such as Liaoning Province and Jilin Province have large trade volume and industrial bases, but Russia’s Far East does not. Nonetheless, Pyongyang tries to strengthen ties with Moscow to keep China in check.” (Dong-A Ilbo, “N. Korea Gets Closer to Russia to Reduce Dependency on China,” May 14, 2014)

Abe Shinzo declared his support for the biggest shift in Japan’s defence policy in decades: the end of a prohibition on overseas combat missions by the military in a change that would stretch the limits of its anti-war constitution. A panel of experts picked by the prime minister recommended a new interpretation of the constitution that would allow Japan to participate in so-called collective self-defence – fighting to protect allied countries even in cases where Japanese territory was not threatened. Conservatives like Abe have for years chaffed against the legal consensus that Japan can deploy fighting forces only if attacked - something that has not happened since Tokyo renounced violence as a means of settling international disputes after WWII. Overseas deployment of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces has subsequently been limited to humanitarian relief missions, non-combat peacekeeping duties and minor logistical roles in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even those operations have been contentious: many Japanese treasure their country’s low military profile. However,
some see it as an anachronism or a humilitating holdover from a long-ago war. “It’s a huge change,” says Bryce Wakefield, a Japan expert at Leiden University in the Netherlands. “The current interpretation of the constitution, which does not allow for collective self-defence, has been more or less in place since 1954,” when the Self-Defense Forces were established. Even some in Abe’s Liberal Democratic party have balked at the possible change of tack and the risks and responsibilities it would imply for a country whose soldiers have not fired a shot outside target practice in generations. “This is a line of constitutional interpretation that we have not crossed in 60 years,” Noda, Seiko head of the party’s general council, wrote in a magazine article this month. “The Self-Defense Forces would become an army. In armies, people kill and are killed.” Abe’s supporters portray collective self-defence as a natural and legitimate extension of Japan’s right to protect itself and say the country needs more autonomy to deal with new regional rivalries and threats to its security. “President Obama says the US is no longer the world’s policeman,” says Nishi Osamu, an emeritus professor of law at Komazawa University and member of Abe’s advisory panel. “The US is getting weaker and China is getting stronger.” Obama endorsed Abe’s plans during a visit to Asia in April. In contrast, China and South Korea, whose relations with Japan have been poisoned by disputes over wartime history, have been critical of the prime minister’s efforts to “normalise” the military. Abe’s views will need to be incorporated in new defence-related laws as well as guidelines covering the US-Japan military alliance, a process that could take years. Although a solid majority in his party is behind him, he must also win over its more pacifist coalition partner, the Buddhist Komeito, or find allies among rightwing opposition parties. The public is also increasingly wary. A year ago, more were in favour of collective self-defence than against. But a poll this month by NHK, Japan’s national public broadcaster, showed the situation has reversed, with 41 per cent now opposed and 34 per cent in favor. “The more people engage with this issue the more pacifist they become,” said Yamaguchi Jiro, a professor at Hosei University who is part of a group of 670 scholars that have denounced Abe’s plans on constitutional grounds. He believes people distrust official promises that some restrictions on military deployments will remain – such as parliamentary oversight and a condition that Japan use only the minimum necessary force. “These requirements can be interpreted however the government wants.” Japan’s supreme court would ultimately judge the collective self-defence issue. But it rarely strikes down laws as unconstitutional and has a history of deferring to the government on defence-related matters. That, in effect, gives the government the power to do what it pleases, says Aoi Miho, a law professor at Gakushuin University. “It’s the same as actually amending the constitution,” she says of Abe’s reinterpretation. “Abe says Japan is all about liberty, democracy and the rule of law, but I don’t think he understands his own words.” (Jonathan Soble, “Japan Prepares Largest Defense Shift since Second World War,” Financial Times, May 14, 2014)

A former National Security Council chief said the strategic flexibility agreement between South Korea and the U.S. forced Washington to abandon military plans to use South Korea as a launching base in the event of an emergency involving Taiwan. Lee Jong-seok, who served as NSC chief and Minister of Unification during the Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003-2008), said the US plan was ultimately changed by the
insertion of a clause into the agreement preventing South Korea from being drawn into Northeast Asian conflicts. Lee related the information in his recently published book “Peace on a Knife’s Edge,” which gives the behind-the-scenes story of his experience in policy-making under the Roh administration. According to the book, Washington had been demanding strategic flexibility for USFK since early 2003. The aim was to allow greater ease of USFK movement from the Korean Peninsula to other regions, and vice versa, in the event of an emergency. But while the Roh administration agreed to USFK flexibility, it also insisted that South Korea should not be drawn into any Northeast Asian conflicts. Eventually, the US effectively bowed to South Korea’s demands at a summit in Washington on June 10, 2005, at which point the strategic flexibility approach began to take shape. A month later on July 15, then Defense Department Deputy Undersecretary for Asia-Pacific affairs Richard Lawless admitted to Kim Sook, head of the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s North America bureau, that “readiness plans to date for an emergency involving Taiwan have presumed operations out of South Korea.” “Now that the South Korean government has stated that it cannot accept this, the US understands and needs to change the fundamental assumptions of its readiness plan for a Taiwan emergency,” Lawless was quoted as saying at the time. This would mean that the strategic flexibility discussions resulted in changes to the role the Pentagon had assumed for USFK bases in a Taiwan emergency scenario. Also revealed was the content of a personal letter from Roh delivered by actor and politician Moon Sung-keun when he visited North Korea in late 2003 as a special envoy. “The crux of the issue is how quickly the nuclear issue can be resolved,” Roh wrote in the letter. “Rather than splitting the issue down into parts and going back-and-forth as we resolve the nuclear situation and improve inter-Korean relations, we should resolve things fundamentally, generously, and comprehensively,” he recommended. Following Moon’s visit, Pyongyang began holding more proactive discussions with Seoul on the nuclear issue, using its National Intelligence Service line to provide notice on the status and North Korean position regarding dialogue with Washington (on Dec. 9) and the results of discussions with Beijing (on Dec. 29). This marked a change from its previous refusal to discuss the nuclear issue under the framework of inter-Korean relations. The book also reports that the so-called “Banco Delta Asia affair,” where the US designated the Macau bank as a major concern for possible laundering of North Korean money in Sept. 2005, not only prevented implementation of the six-party talks joint statement of 2005 but also resulted in a tentative agreement with Pyongyang for an inter-Korean summit being called off. According to the book, when a North Korean delegation led by Workers’ Party of Korea secretary Kim Ki-nam visited Seoul in Aug. 2005 for an event to celebrate Korea’s liberation from Japanese occupation, Pyongyang relayed that it committed to a summit, which it describe as “something we have already determined to do.” (Lee Yong-in, “New Book Reveals U.S. Abandoned Military Plans,” Hankyore, May 15, 2014)

A former U.S. Defense Department official who negotiated for the return of Okinawa to Japan in 1972 has expressed regret over the continued presence of U.S. military bases in the small southern prefecture. “I’m astonished that there are so many bases, so many years later,” said Morton Halperin in an interview with The Asahi Shimbun during a visit to Japan. Halperin, 75, was involved in the talks to return Okinawa when he served as deputy assistant secretary of defense during the Johnson administration.
Wakaizumi Kei, a personal envoy of Prime Minister Sato Eisaku at the time, described Halperin as the "virtual top official" in the U.S. administration concerning the negotiations. Recalling his first visit to Okinawa in 1967 when negotiations had begun in earnest, Halperin said: "At that time, the American military did not believe there were bases on Okinawa. They believed 'Okinawa' was a military base. Literally, they viewed the whole island as one military base." He added that Okinawans "were viewed as people who were unfortunate enough to live on an American military base." No other island in the world was like Okinawa with its huge U.S. military presence, he said.

Halperin explained that to ensure smooth negotiations for the return of Okinawa, neither U.S. nor Japanese officials raised the issue of reducing the base presence in the future. "My expectation was that two or three years after reversion was fully completed, my successors would open up this issue and start pressing to reduce the base structure in Okinawa," he said. According to Halperin, this was because U.S. officials were aware that bases had been built by the U.S. military during and after World War II by expropriating residential and farm land plots from Okinawa residents. "We knew the bases had been put where they were without regard to the concerns of the civilian population," Halperin said. Before he took on a post in the U.S. government, Halperin met with Japanese defense experts in the 1960s. They told him that an indefinite military occupation of Okinawa by the United States would not be accepted by the Japanese public. The Japanese experts pointed to the provision in the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty that would allow either nation from 1970 to terminate the treaty by informing the other nation one year ahead of time. "Unless there is a commitment by 1970 for the reversion of Okinawa sometime in the early 1970s, there will be a crisis in Japan. There will be demonstrations that make the 1960 demonstrations look very small," Halperin said the experts told him. In 1960, huge crowds surrounded the Diet building as debate continued on whether to extend the security treaty. The government railroaded the treaty through the Diet despite the often violent protests. For that reason, Halperin became concerned about the Okinawa issue. After joining the U.S. Defense Department in 1966, "I had a small list of things that I wanted to try to get done and very high on the list was to have the United States agree to the reversion of Okinawa," he said. Japan and the United States agreed in November 1969 on the reversion of Okinawa. Halperin left the White House National Security Council two months earlier because of differences with Henry Kissinger, U.S. President Richard Nixon’s national security adviser. The joint statement that was issued at the time of the agreement said that nuclear weapons believed to have been deployed in Okinawa would be removed. However, it was later learned that Sato and Nixon had agreed to a secret pact that would allow the United States to bring nuclear weapons to Okinawa in the event of a military encounter. Regarding that secret pact, Halperin said, "I knew it was going to be negotiated from the time I was in the government, and I assumed that it had been done." While the Japanese government faced sharp criticism for breaking its promise to keep nuclear weapons out of the country, Halperin said he feels the secret pact was necessary. This was because the U.S. military would never have gone along with the reversion of Okinawa unless it had assurances that nuclear weapons could be brought into Okinawa in the event of a military emergency, he said. He added that it would also have been impossible for the Japanese government to publicly allow such weapons to be brought in. Although 75 percent of U.S. military bases in Japan are now concentrated on Okinawa, Halperin
said the U.S. military presence could be sharply reduced if the Japanese government made a strong push for such a move. "The Japanese people need to decide for themselves whether they want the Marines to stay," he said. "If they don't, then I think the United States can and will find another way to perform whatever functions the Marines perform." He added that there was no secret pact that would restrict Japan from asking for a reduction in the U.S. base presence. Regarding the move by Prime Minister Abe Shinzo to change the government’s constitutional interpretation to allow for the exercise of the right to collective self-defense, Halperin said Washington would welcome such a move. “There are many Americans who have argued for years that we have an unequal (security) treaty," he said. But, he added: "I think Japan should proceed cautiously and in full consultation with the Japanese public, with the American government, and with other countries in this region. (The change should not be seen) as part of a movement toward a very nationalistic Japanese government. I think the Japanese government needs to make clear that in doing so, that it accepts its responsibility for what happened during the war." However, Halperin indicated the Abe administration was not taking such action and said, "It is moving away from accepting past positions with regard to such issues as the comfort women." (Okumura Satoshi, “Key Negotiator in Okinawa’s Return Amazed at Continued U.S. Presence,” Asahi Shimbun, May 15, 2014)

Bermudez: “Recently, commercial satellite imagery has identified two new North Korean helicopter carrying frigates. These are the largest surface combatants constructed by the DPRK’s Korean People’s Navy (KPN) in 25 years and appear to be primarily designed to counter what Pyongyang sees as a growing threat from South Korea’s acquisition of submarines that began in the early 1990s. Moreover, these vessels may have an important secondary role: the protection of fisheries in the West and East Seas, which has obvious important security implications for the Republic of Korea, Japan and China. Their introduction into the North Korean fleet may also represent an evolutionary step in the development of naval strategy to include helicopter anti-submarine operations. Construction began in 2006-07 and both ships were launched during 2011-12. However, it is unclear whether they have been commissioned and are ready for service. Nevertheless, should the KPN push aggressively to commission and operate these new vessels, it will still likely take several years to fully integrate their new capabilities into fleet operations. The construction of these vessels and other new classes of naval combatants over the past decade has been achieved during a period of prolonged and expanding international economic sanctions against North Korea as well as almost weekly media reports of its military decline, and national economic and industrial stagnation. North Korea’s deployment of new helicopter frigates may be an important wakeup call not only about the overall effectiveness of sanctions in constraining Pyongyang’s conventional military programs, but also the need to carefully and realistically reevaluate reports of its conventional military decline. During the late 1990s, as North Korea was emerging from a prolonged period of famine, floods and economic collapse, the Korean People’s Navy initiated a modest but wide-ranging modernization and shipbuilding program. That program included: introduction of 14.5 mm and 30 mm Gatling-gun close-in-weapon-systems (CIWS) to replace old single- and twin-mount systems on existing patrol vessels; construction of a class of small catamaran-hulled fast patrol craft with at least
two subclasses (PCF and PCFG); construction of a class of very slender vessels (VSV) with at least three subclasses including patrol (PCF) and high-speed infiltration landing craft (HILC); construction of a anti-submarine warfare helicopter frigate (FFH). Of particular note, the KPN attempted for the first time to incorporate a degree of stealth technology in the design and construction of the catamaran-hulled fast patrol craft and very slender vessels. A key component of this program was a new ASW helicopter frigate. The KPN’s interest in such vessels dates back to the late-1970s when it began design of the helicopter carrying Soho-class guided missile frigate (FFGH). The design of this vessel was unusual and may have reflected indecision on the part of the KPN as to the vessel’s mission. The frigate had a catamaran-type hull, a flight deck that could accommodate one Mi-4PL ASW helicopter, four RBU-1200 anti-submarine warfare rocket launchers, depth charges, four SS-N-2 Styx anti-ship cruise missiles, a 100 mm gun for surface warfare and various air-defense weapons. The hull was laid down in June 1980 at the No. 28 Shipyard in Najin (Rajin), launched in November 1981 and commissioned in May 1982. The vessel design was not successful, reportedly having problems with seaworthiness. As a result, only one was constructed and it passed the majority of its career in port, only occasionally venturing out to sea and never far out into the East Sea. Despite reports during the late 1980s that the North acquired new Soviet ASW helicopters, there is no evidence they were used on this vessel. During the 1990s, the vessel was moved to the Singyō-ri Patrol Base on the east coast and in the mid-2000s underwent refitting and its landing deck was refurbished. The vessel spent most of its remaining career at Singyō-ri until June-July 2007 when it was moved back to the No. 28 Shipyard in Najin and finally scrapped in mid-2009. …While it is too soon to reach an assessment of the capabilities of these two vessels, it is likely that their greatest potential weaknesses are in radar, sonar and electronic warfare capabilities and antiaircraft/antimissile defense since the North’s defense industry is known to have serious shortcomings in both areas. This suggests that Pyongyang may reach out to external partners such as China and Iran for technology or equipment to address these shortcomings. Regardless, should the KPN push aggressively to commission and operate these new vessels it will still likely take several years to fully integrate their new capabilities into fleet operations. These two new vessels are the largest surface combatants constructed by North Korea in 25 years and represent a new capability for KPN. Their introduction suggests that Pyongyang sees the growing South Korean submarine fleet as a credible threat and may represent an evolutionary step in the development of naval strategy to include helicopter anti-submarine operations. Additionally, the construction of these and other new classes of naval combatants during the past 15 years has been achieved during a period of prolonged and expanding international economic sanctions against North Korea as well as almost weekly media reports of its military decline, and national economic and industrial stagnation. North Korea’s deployment of new helicopter frigates may be an important wakeup call about the overall effectiveness of sanctions and the need to carefully and realistically reevaluate reports of its conventional military decline.” (Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., “New North Korean Helicopter Frigates Spotted,” 38 North, May 15, 2014)

China has used diplomatic channels to warn North Korea against conducting a fourth nuclear test, multiple China-based diplomatic sources told Reuters, after the reclusive
state renewed its threat of “counter-measures” against perceived U.S. hostility. "China has told North Korea that there is no justification for a new nuclear test and that they should not do it," said a Western diplomat who was briefed by Chinese officials. The sources said China had used diplomatic channels in Beijing and Pyongyang to convey its anxiety about the possibility of a fourth test to the North. China had not threatened the North with explicit consequences, the sources said, and its message to the North had remained consistent. “They are against another nuclear test - but it is a mistake to believe that China is getting more severe,” said a second diplomatic source, adding that China had raised the issue with a special envoy appointed by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Zhang Liangui, a North Korea expert at China’s Central Party School, said it was likely China would support another round of sanctions on the North if it went ahead with another test. “It’s very possible that China would support even tougher sanctions on North Korea,” he said. "I think China should also think about adjusting the aid it provides. (Megha Rajagopalan, “China ‘Uses Channels’ to Warn North Korea against Nuclear Test: Sources," Reuters, May 19, 2014)

North Korea, which this month threatened to carry out a fourth nuclear test, may be closer than previously thought to putting a nuclear warhead on a missile, some experts say, making a mockery of years of U.N. sanctions aimed at curbing such a program. North Korea has long boasted of making strides in acquiring a "nuclear deterrent," but there had been general skepticism that it could master the step of miniaturizing a nuclear warhead to mount on a ballistic missile. No one outside the inner circle of North Korea’s nuclear program likely knows what advances the country has made. But there has been a shift in thinking by some who study North Korea full time since it conducted a nuclear test in February last year and amid on-off indications it is preparing another. And there was now “tremendous technological motivation” to conduct a nuclear test as it races to perfect the technology to miniaturize warheads, a South Korean nuclear expert said. "The field deployment of a nuclear missile is imminent," said Kim Tae-woo, former head of South Korea’s state-run Korea Institute for National Unification, who also served as head of research at the state-run Korea Institute for Defense Analyses. Experts say the delivery vehicle of choice for the North’s first nuclear warhead would most likely be the mid-range Rodong missile, which has a design range of 1,300 km (800 miles). "Given the number of years that North Korea has been working at it, my assessment is that they can mount a warhead on a Rodong," Mark Fitzpatrick, director of the non-proliferation at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, said. "...Also, there is no doubt that Pakistan can mount a nuclear warhead on its version of the Rodong ...It is reasonable to assume that North Korea can too. How reliable the warhead would be is another question." A South Korean government official involved in monitoring the North’s nuclear capabilities said miniaturization was "within sight." "It is likely there has been progress, but on the question of whether they have actually achieved it, I’d have to say not yet," he said. In March, the North fired two Rodong missiles which flew about 650 km (400 miles) before splashing into the sea off the east coast, well short of their full range. Some experts interpreted the short flight as a test of a modified missile designed to carry a nuclear warhead by cutting the amount of fuel on board. "A long-range missile test makes little sense for North Korea as a test to deliver a nuclear warhead," Kim said. "...if the North deploys a nuclear weapon, the strongest candidate to carry it will be the
Rodong.” David Albright of the Institute for Science and International Security based in Washington, cited the low yields of the North’s previous nuclear tests as consistent with the type of yield to be expected from a crude miniaturized warhead. “North Korea is well aware of Pakistan’s and Iran’s work on miniaturizing nuclear warheads for (their) missiles, which originally were copies of the Rodong missile,” he said. “North Korea would have likely made the same judgment as the two countries about the importance of starting early to develop a nuclear warhead for its missiles.” For North Korea at present, what was likely more at stake was winning “the political poker game where risks and vague possibilities are seen as matter-of-fact situations”, said Markus Schiller of Schmucker Technologie in Germany. For a nuclear missile to reach its target with precision and undamaged from the stress of launch and re-entry, everything must work flawlessly and that could be achieved only through repeated testing, said Schiller, a missile technology expert. A mid-range Rodong would still require a flight into space and return to the atmosphere, bearing the full stress of the re-entry of peak loads of almost 20 times the force of gravity for a few seconds, he said. “The big question is whether this warhead would still function after re-entry,” he said. “My current guess is rather no than yes.” But putting most of Japan within range of a nuclear-tipped ballistic missile will be sobering for the world’s third-largest economy and its ally, the United States. “If you can take Tokyo hostage with nuclear weapons, you can do a lot of things,” said Narushige Michishita, a defense expert formerly involved in Japan’s security policy. (Jack Kim, “North Korea May Be Close to Developing Nuclear Missile, Experts Say,” Reuters, May 19, 2014)

South Korea offered its condolences to the North over the recent collapse of an apartment building in Pyongyang, which is presumed to have resulted in heavy casualties. The accident occurred on May 13 in the Pyongchon district, where the construction of the 23-story building was nearing completion, prompting People’s Security Minister Choe Pu-il and other senior executives to offer a rare public apology. The extent of the damage remains unknown but the death toll is expected to be high as 92 households had already moved in, Seoul officials said. “We convey our deepest condolences over the loss of many lives in the accident,” the message reads. It was delivered in the morning via a telephone link based in the border village of Panmunjeom under the name of Red Cross president Yoo Jung-keun, the Unification Ministry said. The consolation dispatch, the first since 2006, marks an unusual cordial gesture between the two sides. Pyongyang also sent a similar message to the South in the wake of the ferry disaster last month that left more than 300 people dead or missing. (Shin Hyon-hee, “Seoul Sends Condolence Message to N.K.,” Korea Herald, May 20, 2014)

New commercial satellite imagery from May 10, 2014, indicates that North Korea is conducting a number of important construction projects at the Sohae Satellite Launching Station (“Tongchang-ri”). While it is too soon to make a definitive judgment on their purpose, one working hypothesis is that the North is building a new complex to conduct future training and launches for mobile missiles such as the KN-08 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Moreover, that hypothesis is consistent with ongoing KN-08 engine tests being conducted Sohae’s rocket engine test stand, where a probable KN-08 first stage is currently seen on the stand, possibly left there after
early April 2014 tests or for use in the future. New developments since early 2014 that are consistent with this hypothesis include: construction of an unidentified circular facility with a diameter of 50 meters—a possible launch pad designed for the research and development test phase for mobile missiles; a cleared area, connected to the circular facility that could eventually be used as a flat pad for training mobile missile units and perhaps conducting launches from transporter-erector launchers (TELs); a new reinforced concrete road connecting the possible new launch pad to the missile assembly building located about 1 kilometer by road to the northeast; a smaller circular pad at a nearby lower elevation that may be designed for the use of radar or optical instrumentation equipment intended to support launches from the larger possible launch pad above it. Recent imagery also indicates that Pyongyang’s effort to upgrade the existing Sohae launch pad to handle space launch vehicles (SLVs) larger than the Unha-3 (launched in 2012) is continuing but work has slowed. That may be due to the greater priority placed on the construction projects outlined above. As a result, North Korea will be unable to conduct SLV tests from this site until at least mid to late summer 2014 when work should be completed. Imagery from May 10 indicates that a probable first stage of the KN-08 mobile ICBM is on the engine test stand, possibly left there after tests in early April (the stage’s dimensions and coloring are similar to the one spotted in early April imagery) or for use in the future. In addition, a heavy lift crane—used to lift the rocket stage into and out of the stand—is seen on the ramp in front of the entrance to the test stand. There are approximately 25 tanks are just off the sides of the pad for fuel and oxidizer necessary to conduct tests. However, it cannot be determined if they are full or empty. (Nick Hansen and Jack Liu, “Update on North Korea’s Sohae Satellite Launching Station: Rapid Construction of Possible New Launch Complex,” 38North, May 20, 2014)

KPA Southwestern Front Command open report: “The Park Geun Hye-led military gangsters’ provocative hysteria has reached an extreme phase. On May 20 alone, gangsters of the south Korean puppet navy perpetrated such a grave military provocation as firing at random at the warships of the Korean People’s Army which were on regular guard duty in the southwestern waters of the DPRK side and peaceable Chinese fishing boats. This was a deliberate grave provocative act of firing bullets and shells perpetrated by the south Korean puppet hooligans despite the fact that they were well aware warships of the KPA navy were operating to check the illegal fishing operations of Chinese civilian fishing boats in the sensitive waters. The deliberate preemptive firing perpetrated by those military gangsters in the waters of the West Sea of Korea where the situation always remains so tense that a war may break out any moment can never be overlooked. The gravity of the provocation lies in that it was timed to coincide with the mad-cap live-shell firing drills being staged by the gangsters everyday on Paekryong, Yonphyong and Taechong Islands, etc. while escalating their military intrusion into the waters of the DPRK these days. Such premeditated military provocations being perpetrated by the Park Geun Hye group after amassing huge quantities of destructive weapons are not unrelated to its serious ruling crisis. Angry south Koreans are now staging candle-light demos demanding “impeachment of Park Geun Hye” and the puppet military is being hit hard by the public for unceasing breach of military discipline and such foolish anti-DPRK racket kicked up by it, describing even a “door of toilet” as a “drone from the north.” The Park
group let loose such unpardonable invective as terming the DPRK a "country which should disappear," triggering off an all-out retaliatory battle of its service personnel and people. It is a sinister intention of the Park Geun Hye-led military gangsters to tide over its serious crisis and escape its shameful defeat in the local elections at hand by making military provocations against the DPRK in the sensitive waters. The Command of the Southwestern Front of the KPA sends the following open notice: 1. From this very moment, all warships of the south Korean puppet navy, big and small, which recklessly maneuver in the sensitive waters of the southwestern front, hot spots, will become without exception targets of the direct sighting firing by all strike means under the above-said Command. The warships of the puppet navy recklessly maneuvering at the direct instigation of the military hooligans are the root cause of military provocations deliberately straining the situation in the above-said hot spots and they are, therefore, targets of physical strikes which should be blown up without fail. 2. The south Korean side will face military strikes of the KPA without any warning at the moment the latter detects any trifle provocation near the maritime guard demarcation of its army and around the five islands in the West Sea of Korea. It is the most urgent task for providing a sure guarantee for the peace of the country and the security of the nation to put under control the reckless preemptive firing, the height of confrontation with compatriots, in advance. 3. We unhesitatingly clarify before the world our will to settle accounts with the villains of the south Korean puppet army right now if they are to fight us at any cost. We advise them not to fire bullets and shells in the back lane awkwardly and cowardly but seek a formal military solution. This stand is based on our resolute decision to wipe out the sworn enemy, confrontation maniacs, on this land to the last man. The determined and practical military actions on the Southwestern Front of the KPA will help people clearly see in reality who will disappear and who will tower high on the ground and in the sea.” (KCNA, “KPA Will Wipe out Park Geun-hye-Led Military Hooligans to Last One: Command of Southwestern Front of KPA,” May 21, 2014)

North Korea’s chief nuclear envoy is scheduled to hold an informal meeting with former U.S. government officials on the sidelines of an academic conference in Mongolia this week, a diplomatic source with knowledge of the matter said. The planned meeting between Ri Yong-ho, Pyongyang’s chief negotiator to the stalled six-party talks, and former U.S. officials, including Joel Wit, a former U.S. State Department official specializing in North Korean issues, comes as Pyongyang has threatened to conduct its fourth nuclear test. Ri arrived in Beijing yesterday on his way to Mongolia. Although no incumbent U.S. officials will attend the conference in Mongolia, such informal meetings between North Korea’s nuclear diplomats and former U.S. officials have served as venues for them to share ideas about resuming the six-party talks aimed at ending the North’s nuclear weapons program. “Like previous informal meetings, this week’s meeting in Mongolia is expected to allow the two sides to exchange views on ways to resume the six-party talks,” the source said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Envoy, U.S. Experts to Hold Informal Meeting in Mongolia,” May 21, 2014)

A U.N. panel has reportedly advised sanctioning a North Korean military missile unit for its March test of a pair of Nodong ballistic missiles. Unidentified diplomatic sources told Kyodo News that the committee of experts that reports to the U.N. Security
Council on North Korean sanctions has recommended expanding the black list to cover the North Korean army’s Strategic Rocket Force Command and its head, Kim Rak Gyom. The commander is thought to be close to ruler Kim Jong Un. (Global Security Newswire, “N. Korean Missile Unit May Be Sanctioned over Nodong Tests,” May 21, 2014)

Naval vessels from North and South Korea exchanged artillery fire, raising tensions along a disputed maritime boundary. Neither hit the other. According to a South Korean Defense Ministry official, a North Korean patrol boat fired first, shooting two rounds that fell about 500 feet from a South Korean Navy ship. The South Korean ship responded with several rounds of its own, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity under the ministry’s rules. The shells fired by both sides fell harmlessly into the sea, and no damage or casualties were reported. As a precaution, hundreds of residents of Yeonpyeong, a nearby South Korean island, took refuge in a bomb shelter. The firing came two days after South Korean naval vessels fired warning shots at three North Korean patrol boats that crossed the Northern Limit Line. The North responded in anger, saying that it would fire on the South’s vessels in the disputed waters. The North said that its boats were chasing away Chinese fishing boats poaching in the waters on Tuesday when the South opened fire. The disputed western waters are the most volatile section of the inter-Korean border. North Korea conducted live-fire drills there on March 31, firing more than 500 rounds of artillery and rockets; more than 100 of them fell south of the Northern Limit Line. South Korean marines on an island near the line responded, firing 300 artillery shells. The North conducted another live-fire drill in the area on April 29. (Choe Sang-hun, “Kores Exchange Artillery Fire across a Line in the Water,” New York Times, May 23, 2014, p. A-11) 5/22/14 North Korea fired two artillery shells near a South Korean Navy boat that was on patrol south of the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the de facto inter-Korean maritime border in the West Sea, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. In return, the Navy frigate fired five rounds back. The military also ordered local residents of Yeonpyeong Island to evacuate to shelters, while directing fishing boats operating in nearby waters to return to port. No casualties or property damage have been reported. “At around 6:00 p.m., two shells fell near our boat, 14 kilometers southwest of Yeonpyeong Island,” said an official from the JCS. “The military is closely watching the North and preparing against additional provocations,” the official said, adding that it is looking into the motivation for the firing. The latest provocation came a day after it threatened the South, saying, “All military vessels of the South will be the targets of strikes.” It made the remarks while protesting the South’s warning shots against three North Korean Navy vessels that violated the NLL, May 20. In response, the Navy said that Seoul will strongly handle any provocative actions. “The North has repeatedly made absurd threats to the South’s normal coastal activities,” it said in a statement. Yang Moo-jin, a political scientist at the University of North Korean Studies, said that Pyongyang seems to be attempting to gauge how the South reacts amid a series of confusing situations it faces — the sinking of the ferry Sewol, the upcoming June 4 local elections and the resignation of Kim Jang-soo, chief of the National Security Office. “It could also be seen as an indirect expression of its hopes for talks,” Yang said. However, he added that the isolated state must be aware that such provocative actions will never help improve inter-Korean relations including economic cooperation. “The government also needs to cope wisely
with the situation,” he said. (Jun Ji-hye, “N.K. Fires at ROK Patrol Boat,” Korea Times, May 22, 2014)

North Korea’s State Security Department has been in communication with Japan, raising hopes that Pyongyang will comply with Tokyo’s request to reinvestigate the whereabouts of Japanese nationals abducted decades ago. Bilateral talks began this January and representatives of the agency are expected to attend the next round of discussions in Stockholm May 25-27. The two countries last held official talks in Beijing at the end of March. (Nikkei, “North Korean Secret Police in Touch with Japan,” Japan Times, May 22, 2014)

President Park Geun-hye nominated a former Supreme Court justice to be her new prime minister and sacked the spy chief and the national security adviser in surprise decisions aimed at regaining public confidence after a ferry disaster. Ahn Dai-hee, 59, was named to replace Chung Hong-won as the country’s No. 2 official, presidential spokesman Min Kyung-wook said. Chung will remain in the job until Ahn takes office after a parliamentary confirmation hearing, the spokesman said. Chung offered to quit last month as head of the Cabinet, taking responsibility for the poor government response to the April 16 ferry disaster that left more than 300 people dead or missing. Park said at the time she would accept the resignation after the crisis is brought under control. Park nominated the new prime minister “in order to eliminate ill practices in our society and accumulated evils in the bureaucracy revealed through the Sewol accident and push for national rebuilding,” Min said. Ahn is the right person to carry out the job, he said. The prime minister nominee, Ahn, is a former prosecutor well known for leading a high-profile investigation in 2003 into allegations that political parties collected huge amounts of illegal political funds ahead of the 2002 presidential election. The probe brought heavy criticism on the then main opposition Grand National Party, which is the predecessor of the ruling Saenuri Party, as it was found to have collected a truckload of cash from large businesses to fund the presidential campaign. In another surprising decision, Park also accepted the resignations of National Intelligence Service Director Nam Jae-joon and national security adviser Kim Jang-soo. Successors will soon be announced, the spokesman said. Nam has been a main target of opposition criticism of the government over a series of scandals, including allegations that the spy agency meddled in the presidential election and that the agency forged evidence to charge a North Korean defector with espionage. Park had shown deep trust in Nam, rejecting long-running calls for firing him. Kim, chief of the presidential national security office overseeing security, defense and foreign policy issues, has also come under public ire after he said his office is not the “control tower” for disasters and disavowed responsibility for handling the Sewol’s sinking. The sacking of Nam and Kim shows that Park takes the current situation seriously and must have determined that it would be difficult to regain public confidence in her administration without sacking the unpopular officials. Park has also been under pressure to fire her chief of staff, Kim Ki-choon, but it appears she decided to keep him. The main opposition party urged Park again to fire Kim, saying whatever personnel shakeups would be “meaningless” without Kim’s replacement. (Chang Jae-soon, “Park Nominates New Prime Minister, Sacks National Security Adviser, Spy Chief,” Yonhap, May 22, 2014)
North Korea saw its trade volume reach a record high last year despite tough international sanctions, according to figures from the state-run Korea Trade Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), mainly due to robust trade relations with China, its main ally. The KOTRA data showed Pyongyang’s total trade volume jumped to $7.3 billion last year, up 7.8 percent compared to the previous year, with both exports and imports growing by 11.7 and 5 percent, respectively. Consequently, the trade deficit for the country was also reduced to $980 million from about $1 billion a year earlier, according to the trade agency. The total trade volume marked a record high since the trade agency began compiling the data of North Korea’s state of trading in 1990, said KOTRA. But the data showed that the reclusive nation’s reliance on China still remained high, accounting for almost 90 percent of all trading. The North’s export items are largely natural resources including bituminous coal, iron ore and mineral ore, whereas, its major import items from China are electricity, grain and transportation devices. (Chung Min-uck, “N. Korea’s Trade Volume Posts Record High,” Korea Times, May 22, 2014) Foster-Carter: “South Korea has released fresh statistics on North Korea’s economy. But unfortunately the numbers are wrong. And the problem lies not with the mendacious North, but the self-effacing South. Sadly, you can’t trust any trade figures about North Korea issued by the South. Why? Because with maddening false modesty, Seoul excludes inter-Korean trade as supposedly not foreign. Since South Korea is in fact the North’s number two trade partner after China – and had looked set to grab the #1 slot, just a few years ago in the sunshine era - this seriously messes up the stats. According to a May 23 report from the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency, or Kotra, North Korea’s trade in 2013 totaled $7.34 billion, up 7.8% on 2012. The true total was $8.49 billion, of which $1.15 billion was with South Korea. The total is actually down 3.3% from 2012’s $8.78 billion, which included a record $1.97 billion in inter-Korean trade. The latter plunged in 2013 due to the five-month closure of the Kaesong Industrial Complex, the sole commerce with the North that Seoul now allows. With the KIC back in business, North-South trade is perking up again. 2014’s total may well approach the 2012 figure, so excluding this really is inexcusable. Russia is named as North Korea’s second-largest partner in 2013, with trade up 37.3% to $104 million. The truth is that even with Kaesong out of action for almost half the year, inter-Korean trade was still 11 times larger than that puny trickle with Moscow, a distant third.” (Aidan Foster-Carter, “How Seoul Distort’s Pyongyang’s Trade Statistics,” WSJ Korea Realtime, May 30, 2014)

The U.N. World Food Program faces daunting challenges in its programs in North Korea as a “critical” lack of funding threatens their viability, its chief said Thursday, calling on Pyongyang to make “changes” such as improving transparency with aid delivery to help court more donors. Executive director Ertharin Cousin was here for a two-day stay after spending three days in Pyongyang until May 21. In Seoul, she and Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se initialed a partnership framework agreement designed to lay the legal and institutional groundwork for the country’s contribution to the world’s largest humanitarian agency. Though crop yields have reportedly increased in the impoverished state over the last couple years, Cousin expressed concerns about the WFP’s “critically underfunded” projects. “We are concerned about our ability to continue to operate if we don’t receive additional funding for that program,” she told reporters after the inaugural ceremony. The WFP’s food aid to the communist country...
hit an all-time low last year with some 38,000 tons, less than one-third of its target of 130,000 tons. Early this year, the agency called for about $200 million for nutritional support to some 2.4 million North Koreans until June 2015 but said it had collected only some $48 million as of May. Pyongyang, for its part, should take the WFP’s “suggestions” made during her visit, Cousin said, which included talks with Supreme People’s Assembly president Kim Yong-nam and Foreign Minister Ri Su-yong. She did not elaborate, but the centerpiece is likely to be greater transparency and access to monitor food distribution, officials here said. “We’re hopeful that we will see changes that are necessary to ensure that the donor community will provide us with additional assistance required so that we can continue our efforts in the country,” Cousin said. Praising South Korea’s ascent from an aid recipient to a provider, the latest pact marks a “milestone moment” for the WFP’s relationship with Seoul, she said. “It formalizes a growing partnership between the two (sides) to ensure that not only do the hungry and chronically (undernourished) children in the world benefit from the investment of the government, but they benefit from the capacity of the government that has moved from a nation where people were hungry to now being a significant donor in the world in hunger,” Cousin noted. (Shin Hyon-hee, "Lack of Funding Threatens WFP Programs in N.K.," Korea Herald, May 22, 2014)

North Korea announced it will take part in the 2014 Asian Games competition to be held in South Korea, despite heightened tensions between the archrivals. In a short dispatch carried KCNA, the North Korean Olympic Committee said it will participate in this year’s quadrennial, multisport competition to be hosted by Incheon from September 19 to October 4. “The DPRK Olympic Committee officially informed (the Olympic Council of Asia) of the decision and will soon make necessary applications according to the rules set by the Council and the organizing committee of the Games,” the English-language statement read. Incheon organizers welcomed North Korea’s decision to participate in their Asiad. “Through our close coordination with the OCA, we confirmed the North Korean decision to take part (in the Asian Games),” the organizing committee for Incheon said in a statement. “We welcome the opportunity to host the perfect Asian Games with all 45 OCA members in action, which will contribute to peace in Asia and development of sports in the region.” Last July, the North Korean women’s football team competed at the East Asian Cup held in South Korea, and went on to win the tournament over South Korea, Japan and China. It was the first trip to the South by the North Korean women’s football squad since the 2005 East Asian Cup. The North Korean players mostly had warm reception from South Korean fans during the tournament, despite icy relations between their two governments. In August, Pyongyang extended an invitation to South Korean weightlifters to compete at the 2013 Asian Cup and Interclub Weightlifting Championship in the North Korean capital. The North also approved the hoisting of the South Korean national flag and playing of its national anthem on the communist country’s soil for the first time. The Koreas competed as one nation at the 1991 FIFA World Youth Championship, and also at the 1991 World Table Tennis Championships in Japan, where they won the women’s team title. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Says It Will Participate in 2014 Asian Games in S. Korea,” May 24, 2014)
The Chinese Defense Ministry said that the country’s military scrambled fighter jets yesterday in response to Japanese Self-Defense Forces aircraft entering an air defense identification zone that China unilaterally established over the East China Sea last year. According to the ministry announcement, an OP-3C surveillance plane of the Maritime Self-Defense Force and a YS-11EB of the Air Self-Defense Force entered China’s ADIZ and “monitored and interfered with a joint military drill by the navies of China and Russia.” In response, the Chinese fighters were scrambled and necessary identification and security measures were taken, it said. It added that China protested the monitoring by the Japanese side, and requested it to cease “all activities of monitoring and obstructing” the exercise. (Kyodo, “China Says It Scrambled Fighters after SDF Planes Entered Its ADIZ,” May 26, 2014) In an ominous display of growing territorial tensions between China and Japan, the Japanese Defense Ministry said that Chinese jet fighters had flown dangerously close to two of its reconnaissance planes in overlapping air defense zones claimed by both nations. Japan has routinely ignored the Chinese air defense zone since Beijing declared it late last year. China had also not pushed its new air zone, apparently backing off after the United States immediately challenged the Chinese claim by sending a pair of unarmed B-52 heavy bombers to fly through the airspace without incident. The Chinese stance toward at least Japanese military flights appeared to change on May 24, when a pair of Chinese Su-27 fighters flew within 100 feet of a Japanese YS-11 propeller-driven reconnaissance plane. Earlier in the day, another pair of Chinese fighters flew within 150 feet of a Japanese P-3C, another type of propeller-driven reconnaissance plane, the ministry said. It said the Chinese fighters took no other measures against the Japanese planes, which returned to base safely. The Chinese Ministry of National Defense confirmed that the Chinese military jets had approached the Japanese planes, but, in a statement on its website, it defended the action as a legitimate enforcement of Beijing’s air defense zone. The ministry accused the Japanese aircraft of interfering in Chinese-Russian military exercises in the area. “Chinese military aircraft have the right to maintain air safety, and to take the necessary identification and prevention measures against foreign aircraft that enter the airspace of China’s air defense identification zone over the East China Sea,” the ministry said. It warned Japan to “halt all surveillance and interference” over the area declared for the Chinese-Russian military exercises. “Otherwise, all the possible repercussions will be borne by Japan,” the ministry said. Japan’s Defense Ministry said that the surge in the number of intercepts of Chinese aircraft began in 2010, after the Japanese Coast Guard arrested a Chinese trawler captain near the disputed islands, known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China. That, and Japan’s purchase of three of the five islands two years ago, brought angry reactions from China. Defense Minister Onodera said that Japan had lodged a protest with China over the close approaches by the fighters. “These approaches were meant to intimidate, and were not actions that would normally be taken,” he said. (Martin Fackler, “Chinese Flybys Alarm Japan as Tensions Escalate,” New York Times, May 26, 2014, p. A-4)

North Korea has agreed to open a new investigation into the fate of Japanese citizens abducted by its agents during the Cold War, the two countries said May 28, signaling a possible diplomatic breakthrough in an emotional issue that has divided Japan and the North. At talks held in Stockholm, North Korean negotiators agreed to Japanese
requests to investigate what happened to more than a dozen Japanese believed to have been kidnapped by the isolated Stalinist regime decades ago, reversing the North’s earlier insistence that the issue had been settled. The top Japanese government spokesman, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide, said that in return, Japan would start lifting sanctions that it had imposed on the North over the abduction issue. Those include a ban on travel between the two countries, on the transfer of money, and also on visits by North Korean ships to Japanese ports, he said. “We expect this to yield concrete results in quickly resolving problems involving Japanese, including the return of any surviving abductees,” Suga told reporters. The deal could lead to a resolution of a problem that had driven Japan to cut off virtually all ties with North Korea ever since the North admitted in 2002 that it had kidnapped Japanese citizens, and returned five of them alive. The North’s willingness to reverse that stance may signal a new desire by the dictator Kim Jong-un to open his impoverished nation ever more slightly to the outside world, either to bolster its decrepit economy or to reduce its dependence on China, its main trading partner. For Japan, the possible breakthrough is a rare diplomatic success for Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, a conservative who has presided over a souring of ties with other neighbors, China and South Korea. “The complete resolution of the abductee issue is one of the top priorities of the Abe administration,” Abe said in announcing the deal. “Our mission is not over until all the families of abductees can once again hold their children in their arms.” As part of the deal, Suga said, North Korea agreed to set up a committee to conduct an internal investigation into what happened to the abductees. The committee will also examine the fate of other Japanese in the North, including those who accompanied their Korean spouses to the country in the 1950s, and search for the remains of Japanese who died there in the chaotic final days of World War II. Suga also said that North Korea had agreed to return any surviving abductees that it found. Though it is unclear if any could still be alive after so many years, and after the North had already declared them all to be dead, the statement reflected the hopes of Japanese families to be reunited with their missing loved ones. (Martin Fackler, “North Korea Will Investigate Fate of Abducted Japanese,” May 30, 2014, p. A-6) “The DPRK side ... expressed the willingness to conduct a comprehensive and full-scale survey for the final settlement of all issues related to Japan,” KCNA said in a near-simultaneous announcement. “When survivors are found, while handling the remains of Japanese, the DPRK side agreed to discuss the issue of course of action and take the necessary measures in the direction of sending them back to Japan.”(Elaine Lies and Tetsushi Kajimoto, “N. Korea Agrees to Reopen Probe into Japan Abductees,” Reuters, May 29, 2014) Japan will send officials such as diplomats and members of its National Police Agency to North Korea to monitor Pyongyang’s reinvestigation into the whereabouts of Japanese citizens it abducted decades ago, the top government spokesman said June 1. “Staying in North Korea and doing such things as seeing relevant people and visiting local areas have been accepted,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide said on an NHK talk show. (Kyodo, “Japan to Send Officials to N. Korea for Abduction Probe: Suga,” June 1, 2014) “We must think constantly what would be the most effective response and method in order to bring results,” Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida told a parliamentary committee on June 3. “In doing so, we will consider (Abe’s) making a visit to North Korea,” he said, according to Jiji Press. (AFP, “Japan P.M. May Visit North Korea in Kidnap Probe,” June 3, 2014) “The North Korean figure
behind the agreement approached the Japanese Foreign Ministry in 2011 identifying himself as the successor to former State Security Department director Ryu Kyong. “Asahi Shimbun” reported on May 31. Ryu, who played a leading role in the Pyongyang Statement of Sept. 2002, was one of former leader Kim Jong-il’s closest associates who helped arrange for a Pyongyang visit by then Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. He also appeared as “Mr. X” in “The Peninsula Question” a book on the North Korean nuclear issue by former Asahi Shimbun editor-in-chief Yoichi Funabashi, before he was executed in 2011. Based on this analysis, Japan is interpreting that the “special authority” of the special investigation committee mentioned by Pyongyang in the agreement could be the authority to investigate any and all organizations in North Korea on orders from Kim Jong-un. (Gil Yun-hyung, “What Is Japan Offering N. Korea on the Abductee Issue?” Hankyore, June 2, 2014) Japan agreed to a North Korean request for food and medical supplies during talks last week in Sweden but said the aid would be delivered through nongovernmental or private sector organizations, a government source said on June 2. Pyongyang asked for rice and medicine. Tokyo stopped short of promising direct government aid because of generally anti-North Korean public sentiment over the abductions, the source said. Nevertheless, Japan’s response was aimed at encouraging the unpredictable communist nation to fulfill its promise to reinvestigate the abductions. It said the aid would arrive after Japan detects tangible progress, the source said. “We must think constantly what would be the most effective response and method in order to bring results,” Kishida told a Diet committee June 2. “In doing so, we will consider (Abe) making a visit to North Korea.” Kishida noted that the government needs to act swiftly as the families of the kidnap victims are growing older, but he said nothing has been decided about a possible visit to Pyongyang by the prime minister. (Japan Times, “Historic North Korea Trip May Be in the Cards for Abe,” June 4, 2014)

KCNA: “Substance of the agreement reached at the DPRK-Japan inter-governmental talks held in Stockholm, Sweden on May 26-28, 2014 is as follows: Both sides had an in-depth discussion on the issues of settling the inglorious past, settling pending issues and normalizing the bilateral relations according to the DPRK-Japan Pyongyang Declaration. The Japanese side requested the DPRK side to conduct a survey of all Japanese including the remains and graves of the Japanese who died in the territory of the DPRK before and after the year 1945 and the remaining Japanese, Japanese spouses, victims of abduction and missing Japanese. The DPRK side appreciated the Japanese side’s recognition of the efforts made by the DPRK to settle the abduction issue in the past and expressed the willingness to conduct a comprehensive and full-scale survey for all the Japanese for the final settlement of all issues related to Japanese though there is its previous stand. According to this, the Japanese side voiced its intent to finally lift the measures against the DPRK (sanctions) which it is slapping on its own at present. (The measures taken as regards resolutions of the UNSC are not included.) The action measures to be taken by both sides are as follows: Both sides decided to implement the following specific measures at an early date and have a close consultation to do so: -Japanese side First, the Japanese side re-clarified its will to settle its inglorious past, solve the pending issues and normalize the relations together with the DPRK side according to the DPRK-Japan Pyongyang Declaration and agreed to take a sincere approach towards building
confidence between the two countries and settling issues of improving the bilateral relations. Second, it agreed to lift restrictions on visits of persons, special measure of restrictions taken against the DPRK regarding money remittance and money carried by visitors and the embargo on the entry of the DPRK-flagged ships with a humanitarian mission into the Japanese ports once the DPRK side sets up a "special investigation committee" for the comprehensive survey and starts it. Third, it highly appreciated the cooperation rendered by the DPRK side in realizing the visits to ancestral graves in the DPRK by bereaved families of Japan as regards the issue of the remains of Japanese and agreed to take necessary measures, furthering the consultation with the DPRK side in connection with the handling of the remains of Japanese and their graves left uncared in the territory of the DPRK and the visits to the ancestral graves. Fourth, the Japanese side agreed to continue the survey of the Koreans who went missing in the past as requested by the DPRK side and take relevant steps through discussion with the DPRK side. Fifth, it agreed to have a sincere discussion on the issue of the status of the Koreans in Japan according to the DPRK-Japan Pyongyang Declaration. Sixth, in order to confirm issues arising in the comprehensive and full-scale survey, it agreed to take appropriate measures including the meeting with personnel concerned from the Japanese side and sharing of relevant information about the issues, raised by the DPRK side. Seventh, it agreed to examine humanitarian aid to the DPRK at an appropriate time from a humanitarian stand. DPRK side. First, the DPRK side agreed to conduct a comprehensive and full-scale survey of all Japanese including the remains and graves of those who died in the territory of the DPRK before and after the year 1945, remaining Japanese, Japanese spouses, victims of abduction and missing Japanese. Second, it agreed to conduct a simultaneous survey of all matters raised, not just giving priority to some of them. Third, it agreed to set up the "special investigation committee" invested with special mandate (mandate to survey all organs) with a view to conducting specific and in-depth survey of all matters. Fourth, it agreed to inform the Japanese side of the survey and confirmation of Japanese when necessary including the issues of the remains of Japanese and their graves, remaining Japanese and Japanese spouses. It agreed to have an appropriate discussion with the Japanese side on the issue of handling the remains unearthed in the course of work and the issue of course of action concerning the survivors including their repatriation. Fifth, as for the abduction issue it agreed to inform the Japanese side of the survey of the abductees and missing Japanese when necessary. When survivors are found in the course of survey, it agreed to inform the Japanese side of it and discuss the issue of the course of action and take measures in the direction of sending them back to Japan. Sixth, in order to ensure the confirmation of the issues raised by the Japanese side as the survey progresses, it agreed to take appropriate measures for stay in the DPRK of the Japanese personnel concerned and meet with persons concerned and visits to the places concerned while sharing relevant information with the Japanese side. Seventh, it agreed to make a prompt survey, further consultation of issues arising in this course in various forms and methods and take appropriate measures.” (KCNA, “Substance of Agreement at DPRK-Japan Inter-Governmental Talks,” May 30, 2014)
sinister provocations against the DPRK in Panmunjom where forces of the two sides are standing in acute confrontation: As recognized by public at home and abroad, Panmunjom is a sensitive area where the two sides are leveling guns at each other. So, any slightest accidental mistake and undesirable behavior may lead to a catastrophic military clash any moment in the area of Panmunjom with a military demarcation line in between. Nevertheless, the U.S. forces side has resorted to sinister provocative acts getting on the nerves of the DPRK recently in such an acute area. For example, servicemen of the U.S. forces unilaterally read out ‘notices’ over a loudspeaker from the military demarcation line under various pretexts. They stealthily left there envelopes with dishonest contents like thieves before disappearing. They also staged such a clumsy farce as waving what they called ‘letters of invitation’ after opening the northern door of the former conference room of the ‘Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission,’ regardless of the time though they have been totally rejected by the KPA side. They have gone the lengths of staging such a charade as openly displaying the flag of Italy recently in the wake of the display of those of Norway and Denmark on a photo board for flags of states which participated in the Korean war at the former conference room of the ‘Military Armistice Commission’ although they didn’t participate in the war. It is an ulterior aim sought by the U.S. forces side to deceive the world public by creating through such a ridiculous farce the impression that the “UN Command” and the armistice mechanism are still functioning and to invent a pretext for hurling a single more countries into the Korean front in contingency. What merits a more serious attention is that the U.S. forces side is conducting surveillance and espionage against the DPRK side after setting up a huge steel-made watchtower on a ridge in the area of the conference room at Panmunjom. The DPRK side has called the tower project into question since the U.S. forces side began it and urged the latter to properly clarify the purpose and scale of the project and warned against any act disturbing the security order. At that time, the U.S. forces side repeatedly claimed that it was entirely for ‘guard in the area of Panmunjom.’ However, it has undisguisedly perpetrated acts of spying on the depth of the DPRK far beyond the boundary of Panmunjom by using a vertical elevator installed in the 3-layer tower and various kinds of surveillance and eavesdropping equipment there. The DPRK can never overlook such ill-boding moves of the U.S. army as they are becoming evermore undisguised since Obama let loose invectives inciting confrontation with the DPRK during his visit to south Korea. The sentinels of the KPA in Panmunjom reliably standing guard over the outpost of the country are closely following with high vigilance such provocative moves of the U.S. forces side and keeping themselves fully combat-ready to counter them. The U.S. forces side should stop their rash acts, thinking twice about the serious consequences to be entailed by its hostile acts. We solemnly demand the U.S. forces side stop at once all the hostile acts seriously rattling the nerves of the other side and straining the situation in Panmunjom. The combatants of the KPA in Panmunjom will never pardon any slightest provocation by the U.S. forces side in the sensitive area of Panmunjom.” (KCNA, “U.S. Forces Side Warned against Its Hostile Acts in Panmunjom,” May 27, 2014)

President Park Geun-hye said, “North Korea’s additional nuclear test could trigger ‘nuclear domino’ effect by providing neighboring countries with cause for independent nuclear armament.” In an interview with the Wall Street Journal, Park
made the remarks, saying, “Additional nuclear test means that the North is genuinely taking a path of no return.” Park went on to say, “China plays an important role of buttress in maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula,” adding, “We are continuously discussing various ways to practically materialize non-tolerance for North Korea’s nuclear use with parties to the six-way talks.” (JoongAng Ilbo, “Park Warns N.K. Nuke Test to Cause Domino Effect in Neighbors,” May 31, 2014)

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in his visit to Seoul described to Korean counterpart Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se the need to actively push for a resumption of the six-party talks, particularly with a visit by President Xi Jinping to Seoul, which is expected as early as later this month. Hwang said he plans “to hold an in-depth discussion with the U.S.” on the issue. “Because the South Korea-China summit is a very important diplomatic event, we are discussing the condition to resume the talks between the three countries, South Korea, U.S. and China,” he said. (Sarah Kim, “Seoul to Discuss Six-Party Issues in Washington,” JoongAng Ilbo, June 3, 2014)

Prime Minister designate Ahn Dae-hee withdrew himself from nomination amid spiraling controversy over his high income and accusations that he received special favors. “It would be a burden to the government if I stay as a prime minister nominee,” Ahn said at a news conference. “I apologize to the president for causing concern.” The resignation came six days after President Park Geun-hye nominated Ahn, a former star prosecutor, for the country’s No. 2 post. Park’s choice was seen as a fresh start for her government amid growing public criticism for its failure during the ferry disaster. Presidential spokesman Min Kyung-wook told reporters that President Park “looked disappointed” when she was briefed on his decision ahead of the announcement. (Cho Chung-un, “P.M. Nominee Steps Down,” Korea Herald, March 29, 2014)

South Korea has no knowledge of a reported U.S. plan to deploy an advanced missile defense (MD) system here, a Seoul official said, stressing its long-held position of not joining the U.S.-led missile shield. The Wall Street Journal reported that the U.S. has conducted a site survey in the South for possible locations for a Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery, though no final decision has been made. The report came as the U.S. appears to be pushing South Korea to join its MD system, an option rebuffed by the South as Japan takes part in the system, which aims to counter a rising China in the region. “As of now, the South Korean defense ministry is unaware of whether the U.S. is reviewing a plan to send the THAAD battery here,” defense ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok told a regular briefing. “We do not consider (the introduction) of the THAAD system, which is for the upper-tier defense system,” different from “our own lower-tier one,” Kim added. (Yonhap, “Seoul Unaware of U.S. Plan to Deploy MD System in S. Korea,” May 29, 2014)

A key U.S. House committee approved a bill calling for tougher sanctions on the North Korean regime and holding it accountable for human rights abuses there. The legislation, titled the North Korea Sanctions Enforcement Act, strengthens existing sanctions against the communist nation by prohibiting its access to critical resources such as hard currency and other goods, according to the panel. H.R. 1771 was
After a year and a half since President Park Geun-hye took office, relations between the two Koreas appear to be hanging in midair as the North escalates military tension while sending conciliatory signals at the same time. The communist state has in recent months threatened a fourth nuclear test, fired artillery shells toward southern waters, and churned out acerbic criticism against Seoul and Washington over their joint military drills and summit. Yet Pyongyang last week said it would join this year’s Asian Games in the South Korean port city of Incheon. The announcement was chiefly in line with leader Kim Jong-un’s drive to promote sports among the public, but may also reflect his willingness to unfreeze ties with Seoul, experts say. “If no nuclear test took place and the two sides managed to show signs of amity, we would see a much weaker backlash than usual from the North during the drill and look to the next step,” a Seoul official said. Kim Yong-hyun, a North Korea studies professor at Dongguk University in Seoul, said Pyongyang’s decision on the Asiad may be a “signal that it wants dialogue” and “would help bring a turning point in the strained cross-border relationship.”

Despite lingering differences, the latest ministerial talks and Chinese President Xi Jinping’s upcoming visit to Seoul could help build momentum to close the gap and pave the way for a fresh round of six-way talks. “During past denuclearization talks, the North took advantage of them to beef up its nuclear capability and after the talks fell apart, we restarted them from a different starting point, with the North having an enhanced capability,” another Seoul official said after Monday’s meeting. “If it is sincere about coming back to the negotiating table, there should be measures to preclude such an upgrade. ... And I think China understood about the threshold.” (Shin Hyon-hee, “Inter-Korean Ties at Crossroads amid Mixed Signals,” Korea Herald, May 29, 2014)

The defense chiefs of South Korea, the United States and Japan said they reached a consensus over the necessity of sharing their military intelligence to better deal with threats from North Korea. During the trilateral talks among Seoul’s Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin, his U.S. counterpart, Chuck Hagel, and Japan defense chief Onodera Itsunori in Singapore, the allies “reaffirmed the importance of sharing intelligence about North Korea’s nuclear and missile threats,” they said in a joint statement. They also “shared the view that a continued review of the issue is necessary,” it said, indicating the three sides will push for the signing of a much-expected trilateral memorandum of understanding on the matter. “Based upon the shared value and security interests, the three ministers will proceed with trilateral security cooperation and vowed to expand cooperation to contribute to peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and the world.” (Yonhap, “S. Korea, U.S., Japan Agrees on Need for Info-Sharing to Deter N. Korea,” May 31, 2104)

President Park Geun-hye nominated the defense minister to be her new national security adviser amid growing concern over the prolonged absence of the nation’s "control tower" for security. Kim Kwan-jin was named replace Kim Jang-soo, who resigned from his post last month in the wake of his controversial remarks on April’s deadly ferry sinking, presidential spokesman Min Kyung-wook said. Park also named
Han Min-koo, a former chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), as the new defense chief, Min said. Kim will serve both posts until Han’s nomination is approved by parliament. The former security adviser stepped down last month after he came under public ire for his remarks that his office was not the “control tower” for disasters and disavowed responsibility for handling the April 16 sinking of the ferry Sewol that has claimed nearly 300 lives. President Park appointed the new national security adviser and the defense minister to avoid a leadership vacuum in national security and to strengthen national security amid North Korea’s consistent provocations and threats that are endangering the safety of the people, Min said. Nominee Kim has devoted his whole life to national security after holding various positions in the areas of combat operations and strategy, Min said, adding that his experience as minister for the past four years will help him serve as Park’s top security adviser. Career military man Kim was appointed in 2010 by Park’s predecessor, former President Lee Myung-bak, and was retained after Park took office. The reform-minded ex-Army general has already become one of the longest-serving defense chiefs. Han, who served as the JCS chairman between 2010 and 2011, is widely considered an expert in military policy and strategy. “The presidential office) believes that Han is the right person for the position as he has knowledge in various fields of combat operations and policy, and is largely trusted by his colleagues in the military,” the spokesman said. (Yonhap, “Park Taps Defense Minister as New Security Adviser,” June 1, 2014) Opposition parties are likely to grill Defense Minister nominee Han Min-koo over the South Korean military’s weak response to North Korea’s shelling of Yeonpyeongdo Island in November 2010, which killed two marines and two civilians. They claimed that the South Korean military’s response was “weak,” noting that it fired only 80 shells while the North fired some 170 rounds. Of the shells fired by the North, about 80 landed on the border island. The bombing destroyed more than 50 buildings and facilities. Hundreds of islanders evacuated and stayed in temporary shelters on the mainland for months. Amid growing criticism, Han countered the claims. “At the time, I directed the military to employ air power to deal with additional provocations, along with sufficient counterstrikes,” said Han. “Since then, the military has adopted a proactive deterrence concept to strongly respond to future provocations in light of self-defense.” The ex-JCS chairman said he would elaborate at the confirmation hearing. “(Response toward the North’s) shelling of Yeonpyeongdo Island was a (military) operation, so the military has its position, and I also have something to say,” Han told reporters at the Ministry of Defense June 2. When asked how he would react if North Korea carried out another provocative attack, Han said he would maintain the military’s hard-line defense policy. “A strict and ruthless response toward the enemy’s provocation is the principle of the military,” he said. “I will, of course, keep that basis.“ (Cho Chung-un, “Defense Nominee Faces Mounting Criticism over ‘Weak’ Response to N.K.’s Attack,” Korea Herald, June 2, 2014) South Korea called on North Korea to free and repatriate a South Korean missionary who was sentenced to hard labor for life for allegedly spying and committing several other crimes in the North. Pyongyang’s state media said yesterday that the Supreme Court had handed down the sentence to Kim Jong-uk, convicting him of crimes such as “state subversion and espionage.” (Yonhap, “S. Korea Urges N. Korea to Deter Detained Minkster,” June 1, 2014)
A top Chinese general has lashed out at the US and Japan, accusing the two countries of teaming up against China and making “provocative” comments amid escalating Asian maritime tensions. Speaking at a defence forum in Singapore, Wang Guanzhong, deputy chief of the Chinese general staff, lambasted the US and Japanese defence ministers for telling Asian counterparts that China was using intimidation to assert its territorial claims. US defense secretary Chuck Hagel said yesterday that the US would “not look the other way when fundamental principles of the international order are being challenged”. He added that China was undermining its claims that the South China Sea was a “sea of peace, friendship and co-operation” by using coercive tactics.

The spat came as President Barack Obama prepared for a trip to Europe where he will attend a G7 meeting and Second World War D-day commemorations. Republican senator and presidential candidate hopeful Ted Cruz attacked Obama’s foreign policy, saying: “Every region of the world has gotten worse; America has weakened, our enemies have been strengthened.” In the face of mounting efforts by the US and Japan to shore up new security relationships in Asia, Gen. Wang said China opposed both the practice of building military alliances and “attempts by any country to dominate regional affairs.” Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo said on May 30 that Japan would give more support to southeast Asian nations facing Chinese pressure. Gen. Wang said: “The speeches by Mr. Abe and Mr. Hagel gave me the impression that they coordinated with each other, they supported each other, they encouraged each other and they took the advantage of speaking first … and staged provocative actions and challenges against China.”

Asked to clarify the “nine-dash line,” Gen. Wang said that while China respected the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos), the law did not apply retroactively - a view that is not commonly accepted. He stressed that China discovered many of the Paracels and Spratly Islands, another disputed group closer to the Philippines, more than 2,000 years ago during the Han dynasty. Some experts questioned whether a new cold war was emerging in Asia. Anatoly Antonov, Russia’s deputy defence secretary, took exception to comments by Mr Hagel that the US was the only power that could lead in the Asia-Pacific region. “Why does the US have to lead? To lead what?” One Chinese participant said Beijing viewed the forum as a western “set up”, but that it attended to ensure its voice was heard. He said China sends a lower level delegation than other countries - which send their defence ministers - to avoid giving it too much legitimacy. (Demetri Sevastopoulo, “Beijing Hits out at U.S. and Japan Alliance,” Financial Times, June 2, 2014, p. 1)

6/2/14

South Korea is cooperating with China to persuade its traditional ally the United States to ease conditions for a resumption of the stalled six-party talks. It remains to be seen how the US will respond to this odd couple’s proposal with representatives now meeting in Washington. “Given the importance of a summit between Seoul and Beijing, South Korea, China and the U.S. are in negotiations on conditions,” Hwang Joon-kook, special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, told reporters on his arrival in Washington June 1. “There should be appropriate conditions before reopening the six-party talks because North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests so far – two of them five years after the suspension of the talks.” (Kang Seung-woo, “Seoul, Beijing Persuading Washington N.K. Nuke Talks,” Korea Times, June 2, 2014) South Korea and the United States have agreed that North Korea’s intent to denuclearize will be a prerequisite to revive the long-dormant six-party talks, according
to a senior envoy from Seoul. Hwang Joon-kook, Seoul’s special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, also said South Korea and the U.S. agreed to cooperate more closely with China in efforts to revive the talks related to North Korea’s nuclear program. “We shared the position that it should be intended for meaningful dialogue to achieve substantial progress in denuclearizing North Korea and curbing the advancement of its nuclear capability,” Hwang said after a meeting his U.S. counterpart Glyn Davies in Washington. “North Korea should show, to some extent, seriousness on denuclearization. For instance, if it states a plan to abandon the policy of the simultaneous development or removes a stipulation related to nuclear possession from the Constitution, it could be important progress,” he said. (Yi Whan-woo, “U.S. Insists on Nuke-Free Korea,” Korea Times, June 3, 2014) A South Korean government official told reporters that a meaningful dialogue in the six-party talks is out of the question as long as Pyongyang keeps describing itself as a nuclear state in its constitution and sticks to the policy of seeking nuclear weapons development and economic growth at the same time. “North Korea should show, to some extent, seriousness on denuclearization,” the official said. “For instance, if it states a plan to abandon the policy of the simultaneous development (of nuclear weapons and economy) or removes a stipulation related to nuclear possession from the constitution, it could be an important progress.” The official added South Korea and China will soon have high-level discussions on conditions for the resumption of the six-party talks that also involve Russia. Earlier in the day Hwang Joon-kook, Seoul’s special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, met with his American counterpart Glyn Davies. Hwang said they agreed to cooperate more closely with China in efforts to revive the six-way talks. “(Regarding the resumption of the six-party talks), we shared the position that it should be intended for meaningful dialogue to achieve substantial progress in denuclearizing North Korea and curbing the advancement of its nuclear capability,” Hwang told reporters, emerging from a meeting with Davies at the State Department. Seoul and Washington plan to seek close consultation with China on the issue, he added. (Korea Herald, “‘No Meaningful Talks If N.K. Sticks to Nike State Claim,’” June 3, 2014) A senior South Korean government official said that, if North Korea created the conditions for resuming dialogue by showing some degree of sincerity about denuclearization, Seoul would be willing to take action to reopen the six-party talks. This official spoke to Washington correspondents from the South Korean media after meeting with officials from the State Department. “We are interested in meaningful dialogue about denuclearization,” the official said on condition of anonymity. “Therefore, for negotiations to take place, there needs to be some degree of sincerity from North Korea to show it is really trying to join in talks about denuclearization.” “There is little if any point about talking with them if they keep saying that they will not get rid of their nuclear weapons. That is why South Korea and the US are unable to create the conditions for resuming dialogue. North Korea must create those conditions,” the official said. “We are currently talking with the US and China about what would enable us to confirm that sincerity, and the US and China are talking about that, too,” the official also said. He added that there are plans for follow-up deliberations with China before long. The remarks are taken to mean that the US and South Korea are interested in getting the six-party talks moving again, but that instead of setting up a roadmap to lead the negotiations, they want North Korea to be the one to bring forward a proposal for negotiations. It seems that they have asked
China to serve as a mediator in that process. What is attracting notice is what this official said about the preconditions for resuming talks. While the US and South Korea had been insisting that North Korea must fulfill the terms of the Feb. 29 Agreement, among other things, the official said, that “when South Korea, the US, and China talk about preconditions, they are not referring to that framework.” In the February 29 Agreement of 2012, North Korea agreed to suspend nuclear testing and long-range missile launches, to temporary suspend activity at the Yongbyon Reactor, and to permit inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The preconditions not included in this agreement included North Korea making public its uranium enrichment facilities. “If North Korea wants to show it is serious about denuclearization, there shouldn’t be a problem,” the official noted. “Whether we require seven preconditions or two preconditions, why would we need to make that kind of effort?” (Park Hyun, “S.K. Senior Official: N.K. Must Create Conditions for Resuming Dialogue,” Hankyore, June 4, 2014)

6/4/14 Despite a wave of anti-government sentiment in the wake of a deadly ferry disaster, South Korea’s ruling party managed to avoid a crushing defeat in today’s nationwide local elections that were seen as a midterm vote on President Park Geun-hye. The ruling Saenuri Party won eight of the 17 key races for big-city mayors and provincial governors, while the main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy (NPAD) won the other nine races, including Seoul mayorship, according to the National Election Commission. According to the election watchdog, the ruling party won races for mayors of Busan, Daegu, Incheon and Ulsan, and governors of Gyeonggi Province, North Gyeongsang and South Gyeongsang provinces and the island of Jeju. The main opposition NPAD won contests for mayors of Seoul, Gwangju, Daejeon and Sejong, and governors of Gangwon Province, North Chungcheong and South Chungcheong provinces and North and South Jeolla provinces, according to the results. One of the most-watched contests was the race for Seoul mayor. Current Mayor Park Won-soon of NPAD won re-election after beating Chung Mong-joon of the ruling party. Voter turnout in Wednesday’s local elections reached a provisional 56.8 percent, according to a preliminary count by the election watchdog. The turnout was the highest for nationwide local elections since the first such polls in 1995 when it reached 68.4 percent. (Yonhap, “Ruling Party Manages to Avoid Crushing Defeat in Local Elections,” June 5, 2014)

6/6/14 North Korea said it has detained an American citizen who visited the country as a tourist, and that it was investigating him on charges of violating its laws. The man, Jeffrey Edward Fowle, entered North Korea on April 29 and “perpetrated activities that violated the laws of our republic, which did not fit his stated purpose of visiting our republic as a tourist,” KCNA said. “Our related agency has detained him and is investigating him.” (Choe Sanghun, “North Korea Detains Another American,” New York Times, June 7, 2014) A municipal worker from Ohio on a tour of North Korea has been detained there for unspecified illegal acts, making him the third American known to be currently held in the isolated country and threatening to further aggravate its tense relationship with the United States. KCNA reported the detention today, saying the tourist, Jeffrey Edward Fowle, had entered North Korea on April 29 and “perpetrated activities that violated the laws of our republic, which did not fit his stated
purpose of visiting our republic as a tourist.” The agency did not explain the nature of the accusations, but Kyodo, citing unidentified sources, said Fowle had been seized in mid-May as he was about to leave the country and that he had left a Bible in his hotel room, which the North Korean authorities might have interpreted as the subversive work of a missionary. Local media in the Dayton, Ohio, area said that he was a 56-year-old municipal worker in the suburb of Moraine and had a wife and three children. The website of the Dayton Daily News said the Moraine city manager, David Hicks, had described him as a longtime employee. Telephone messages left on Fowle’s home telephone answering machine and with Hicks’s office were not returned. The State Department confirmed Fowle’s detention. “These detentions of Americans are becoming a disturbing pattern by the North Koreans to create bargaining chips and get worldwide attention,” said Bill Richardson, the former governor of New Mexico who has served as a special envoy to North Korea. “What they want in return from the U.S. is anyone’s guess given Kim Jong-un’s unpredictability,” he said. North Korea is still holding at least two other American citizens. Fowle was believed to have traveled to North Korea with a tour group. But John Dantzler-Wolfe said he was not a Uri Tours client. The United States has no diplomatic ties with North Korea and the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang represents the interests of American citizens. North Korea has twice canceled its invitation for Robert King, Washington’s special envoy for North Korean human rights issues, to discuss Kenneth Bae’s case. A State Department spokeswoman said on Friday that King remained ready to go to North Korea. State Department officials also urged Americans considering trips to North Korea to read the department’s advisory that warns against such travel because “U.S. citizen tourists have been subject to arbitrary arrest and long-term detention.” (Choe Sanghun and Rick Gladstone, “North Korea Detains 3rd American in New Threat tp Relations with U.S.,” New York Times, June 7, 2014, p. A-4) American tourist Jeffrey Fowle was arrested by North Korean authorities for leaving a bible under a bin in the toilet at a club for foreign sailors, a source familiar with Fowle’s case told Reuters. On May 4, towards the end of an evening spent eating and drinking in Chongjin, a large industrial city on North Korea’s east coast, Fowle left a bilingual English-Korean bible in the restaurant he and his fellow travelers were about to leave, the source, who wished to remain anonymous because of the sensitivities surrounding the case, told Reuters. In it, Fowle had written his name and phone number, and inserted photos of himself and his family between its pages. He was arrested three days later at the airport where he was due to board a flight out of North Korea. (James Pearson, “Bible Left in North Korean Sailor’s Club Triggered U.S. Tourist’s Arrest,” Reuters, August 1, 2014)

6/7/14 The Japanese government has been omitting an amount of plutonium capable of producing 80 nuclear weapons from its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports since 2012. Kyodo, among other media outlets, reported that the Japanese government has failed to report 640 kg of plutonium from the mixed oxide (MOX) fuel in the third reactor of the Genkai Nuclear Power Plant since 2012. The plant, which is located in Saga Prefecture, is operated by the Kyushu Electric Power Company. (Cho Ki-won, “Japan Fails to Report 640 Kg. of Plutonium to IAEA,” Hankyore, June 9, 2014)

6/10/14 The chief nuclear envoys of South Korea and China held “candid” talks in Beijing on ways to resume long-stalled nuclear talks with North Korea, a South Korean delegate
who attended the meeting said. Hwang Joon-kook, South Korea’s chief envoy for the stalled six-nation talks, met his Chinese counterpart, Wu Dawei, earlier in the day during which the two sides discussed how to reopen the nuclear talks with North Korea. After the talks with Wu, Hwang also met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Hwang and Wu “held an in-depth and candid consultation on ways to resume a meaningful dialogue about denuclearization of North Korea and the latest developments on the Korean Peninsula, including countermeasures against the North’s threat of an additional nuclear test,” the delegate said. Hwang arrived in Beijing earlier in the day for the one-day talks with Wu. “South Korea, the U.S. and China have been seeking for various options to resume a meaningful dialogue on denuclearization (with North Korea),” Hwang told Yonhap News Agency upon his arrival at the Beijing airport. “The meaningful dialogue means that it must produce a practical progress in denuclearizing North Korea and preventing North Korea from advancing its nuclear capability,” Hwang said. Asked about prospects for renewed nuclear talks with North Korea at this stage, however, Hwang replied, “I can’t comment on that.” (Yonhap, “S. Korea, China in ‘Candid’ Talks on N. Korea’s Nuclear Weapons Program,” North Korea Newsletter 317, June 12, 2014)

6/12/14 The Obama administration is expected to replace Glyn Davies, its top point man on North Korea, in the second half of this year, multiple diplomatic sources said, as Washington’s push for the denuclearization of North Korea shows no signs of moving forward. It remains uncertain whether the U.S. will maintain the post of special representative for North Korea policy at the State Department. Some sources raise the possibility that the deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs will double as Washington’s chief interlocutor with Pyongyang. James Zumwalt, current deputy assistant secretary, may be tapped as ambassador to a foreign country later this year. Sung Kim, the outgoing ambassador to South Korea, will likely take the baton from Zumwalt, a source said. (Korea Times, “U.S. Likely to Change Its Top Point Man on N. Korea Later This Year,” June 13, 2014)

6/15/14 Private-sector interchanges are even worse than the previous all-time low under the Lee administration. According to the annual White Paper on unification published in March, the total amount of private aid to North Korea authorized by the Ministry of Unification in 2013 stood at 5.1 billion won (US$5million). This amount not only pales in comparison to the 90.9 billion won (US$89.3million) okayed in 2007, the last year of the Roh Moo-hyun administration, but is only one-sixth the 31.0 billion won ($30.5 million) annual average during the Lee years. Even in 2011 and 2012, years when interchange and cooperation with North Korea were banned under the May 24 measures adopted in the wake of the ROKS Cheonan sinking, aid from NGOs amounted to 13.1 billion won (US$12.9million) and 11.8 billion won (US$411.6million), respectively. Between 120,000 and 180,000 people traveled between the Koreas under the Lee administration in comparison with last year’s total of 76,000. The Ministry of Unification is calling the numbers misleading. “Last year, there was not any real aid to North Korea until August because all ties had been cut off after their third nuclear test in February,” a senior ministry official said on condition of anonymity. “The amount of aid and the number of people involved in exchange fell because there was a six-month vacuum,” the official explained.” The NGOs are countering by arguing aid
has remained at a low 2.1 billion won (US$2.06 million) this year, despite a lack of major frictions. There are, however, signs of some change in inter-Korean interchange though the NGOs are cautioning against reading too much into the government’s decisions. On June 4, the Ministry of Unification approved the first agricultural exchange effort since the May 24 measures. The Gyeongnam Unification Agricultural Cooperation Committee has sent 33 million won (US$32,400) worth of strawberry seedlings to North Korea, where they are to be grown for four months before being brought back South. “It looks more like a desperate measure from the government at a time when virtually all private aid has been cut off,” said one NGO source on condition of anonymity. “It does not look like a change in policy approaches at all.” (Choi Hyun-june, “Park’s Private Sector Aid to North Korea Falls to All Time Lows,” Hankyore, June 16, 2014)

6/16/14

Jeffrey Lewis: “It looks like North Korea is now in the cruise missile business. Talk about translating a noun into a verb. Although most of our attention has been focused on the many kinds of ballistic missiles that North Korea builds, tests and too often sells, modern cruise missiles are a new and potentially destabilizing addition to North Korea’s missile arsenal. Rumors began circulating a week ago, starting with the Chosun Ilbo, that a North Korean propaganda film had surfaced showing a new cruise missile. …The video confirms a surprising fact: the cruise missile is a copy of the Russian-produced Kh-35. Here is a comparison with a photo of a Russian KH-35 being launched from an Indian ship. The two missiles appear to be externally identical. …The Kh-35 Uran is a sea-skimming anti-ship cruise missile similar to the French Exocet or US Harpoon. (Did you know that some people call the Kh-35 the Kharpunski—say it slowly, Harpoon-ski. It’s a joke. …s I have argued before, the implication of new North Korean capabilities is not that Kim Jong Un is crazy or that the KPA is ten-feet-tall, but that Washington needs to work more energetically to engage the North Koreans. I say this fully aware that such engagement is likely to be slow, painful and largely unsatisfying. But it remains necessary. Sloganeering, such as “translate denuclearization into a verb,” is not an adequate response to the North’s growing nuclear and missile capabilities; capabilities that will become harder to address the longer we wait. (Jeffrey Lewis, “Translating a Noun into a Verb Pyongyang-Style: The Case of North Korea’s New Cruise Missile,” 38North, June 16, 2014)

6/17/14

Mark Lippert, the nominee to serve as US ambassador to South Korea, called for continued isolation and sanctions against the North Korean regime in response to the country’s nuclear program. Lippert also called for expansion of missile defense by the US and its allies. His remarks came in response to a question at his Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearing on how he would respond to the North Korean risk. Observers are taking them as a sign that Lippert holds a relatively hard-line position on North Korea, and that more pressure on South Korea to expand its missile defense is coming. At the hearing, Lippert listed three approaches to responding to the North Korean threat. “The first is continue to build international consensus to isolate North Korea and its regime,” he said, adding, “perhaps one of the best examples would be to isolate them on human rights issue.” He also advocated continued military exercises and multilateral and independent sanctions and pressure
“to send a strong signal that the U.S. is watching [North Korea’s] behavior.” Finally, he stressed the need for “strong defense and deterrence.” As examples, he advised “stay[ing] one step ahead of the North Korean threat” with stronger missile defense by increasing the number of ground-based interceptors in Alaska, installing a second TP2 surveillance radar and adding two ballistic missile defense cruisers by 2017 in Japan, and moving the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system to Guam. Lippert also echoed the current US line on tensions between Seoul and Tokyo, saying Washington “wouldn’t play a mediation role” but adding that the State Department “obviously would have conversations to encourage better dialogue between the Japanese and South Koreans to work through some of these very difficult and painful historical issues.” “We can play an important role in encouraging that dialogue back and forth,” he said. (Park Hyun, “Incoming U.S. Ambassador Calling for More Isolation of North Korea,” Hankyore, June 19, 2014)

South Korea has made it clear that it has no plan to buy an advanced missile defense (MD) system from the United States and deploy it on Korean soil, Seoul’s defense chief said. His remarks during the parliamentary interpellation session came as the U.S. has been considering deploying the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery in South Korea, an integral part of the U.S.-led air defense system. "The plan to deploy THAAD here is under discussion by the U.S. side. We’ve made it clear that we have no plan to purchase the missile system and deploy it here," Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin said. THAAD is designed to shoot down short-, medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles at a higher altitude in their terminal phase, using a hit-to-kill method. "We’ve asked the U.S. for data on THAAD battery as a reference to use in establishing our own interceptor system," he noted. The defense chief, however, said South Korea “does not care if the U.S. Forces Korea adopts and deploys the system here” as it will "boost the capacity to shoot down North Korean ballistic missiles." (Yonhap, “S. Korea Has No Plan to Buy Deploy U.S. MD on Its Soil,” June 18, 2014)

North Korea has established a new ministry to take care of external trade affairs by combining two committees in charge of luring foreign investment and developing special economic zones established in 2010 and 2013, respectively. KCNA said on June 18 the country decided to reorganize the Ministry of Foreign Trade as the Ministry of External Economic Affairs by merging the Joint Venture and Investment Commission and the State Economic Development Committee with it. It reported the new ministry was established due to a decision by the North’s parliament, the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly. It did not name the specific duties of the new ministry or who leads it. With the launching of the new ministry, the North Korean leadership may be trying to concentrate resources and expertise in foreign trade and investment into one place in order to improve its ability to bring in more money to the country, according to experts. In addition, North Korea has appointed a new economy-related official to a vice premier of the Cabinet. In its report on June 19, the KCNA announced that Choe Yong-gon was appointed vice-premier of the DPRK (North Korea) in accordance with a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly on June 19. Choe is the third man to be appointed to a vice premiership since April 9, when the North’s SPA conducted a Cabinet reshuffle. In May, the country named Kim Tok-hun, chairman of the people’s committee of Jagang Province, as vice
premier of the Cabinet. Also on May 29, Rim Chol-ung, senior official of the North’s Railway Ministry, was named a vice premier. The three newly appointed vice premiers were all connected with economic affairs, an indication that the socialist country is now speeding up its economic rehabilitation and luring more foreign investment from overseas. The reclusive communist country has been redoubling its efforts to attract investment from overseas in line with its leader’s policy platform of putting a greater focus on its economy, which is critical for achieving sustainable growth so as to guarantee the survival of the regime. Choe Yong-gon visited Seoul in 2005 as a member of the North Korean delegation for the South and North Korean ministerial talks. Experts explained that his appointment will be connected to various economic cooperation projects between the two Koreas in the future when their sour relations turn into normal ones. Moreover, Pyongyang has been rushing to set up special economic zones all across the country, easing relevant regulations and giving greater leeway to managers of factories and cooperative farms to boost production. In a move to boost economic cooperation with Koreans overseas, Pyongyang has sought ways to make access to the North easier for businesspeople. “North Korea seems to be turning more to overseas Koreans amid difficulties in attracting foreign investment due to international sanctions,” said Kim Yong-hyun, a professor of North Korea studies at Dongguk University in Seoul. “Kim Jong-un has been pushing for such economic cooperation projects in an organized fashion compared to his predecessors,” he added. Commenting on the newly established ministry, Cho Bong-hyun of the IBK Economic Research Institute in Seoul said recently, “The new ministry merges committees which carried out nominally different functions but in fact mostly did the same things. The latest step seems to be aimed at streamlining the process and boosting economic development.” (Yonhap, “N. Korea Establishes New Foreign Trade Ministry by Merging Two Committees,” North Korea Newsletter, 319, June 26, 2014)

The South Korean Ministry of Defense said it would hold a rare live-fire drill near islets also claimed by Japan in a move likely to further raise diplomatic tensions with Tokyo. “The navy plans to hold live-fire exercises near Dokdo tomorrow as part of its regular training,” the ministry said in a statement. Seoul’s navy and coastguard have for years staged joint exercises near Dokdo but those do not involve live-fire drills. Tomorrow’s naval drill by the navy is not part of the biannual exercises. (AFP, “S. Korea to Hold Live-Fire Drill in Disputed Islets,” June 19, 2014)

The World Food Program (WFP) has decided to curtail its nutrition program for North Korean babies and pregnant women by about 30 percent due to a lack of funding, Radio Free Asia reported. The WFP is operating the two-year nutrition program worth $200 million in North Korea through 2015, targeting 2.4 million children under the age of 5 as well as pregnant women. But a lack of funding seemed to lead the U.N. food agency to decide to reduce the operation of its nutrition program, according to RFA. The WFP’s total budget for its humanitarian aid to North Korea reached $137.5 million, down about 30 percent from its original plan, according to the report, it added. The number of North Korean children and pregnant women who benefited from the WFP’s program reached some 840,000 last month, far below the agency’s target. (Korea Herald, “Underfunded WFP Cuts Nutrition Program for N. Korea: Report,” June 19, 2014)
North Korea’s test-firing of two midrange Rodong ballistic missiles on March 26 seems to have been aimed at testing if its midrange ones could target South Korea by skirting South Korean and U.S. interception systems, military sources here said. Though the missiles have an estimated range of 1,000 kilometers to 1,500 km, those in March flew about 650 km before dropping into the East Sea. “North Korea fired the Rodong missiles at a higher than usual launch angle in order to shorten their maximum range,” a senior military officer here said, requesting anonymity. Though Rodong-class missiles mostly target American bases in Japan, while parts of China and Russia are within their range, shooting them in the way that was adopted in March could cause them to hit South Korea. “By carrying out such a test, North Korea appears to have come up with a way not to be caught by either the South Korean or American missile interception system when launching an attack against South Korea with its midrange missiles,” he added. “At that time, the Rodong missiles flew at altitudes of more than 160 kilometers and with a top speed of over Mach 7.0. In that case, it is not easy for Patriot PAC-3 missiles to shoot them down,” Seoul’s defense ministry spokesman said at a regular briefing. South Korea now has a missile interception system with Patriot PAC-2 missiles, and the U.S. Forces Korea employs PAC-3 missiles. Both PAC-2 and PAC-3 missiles target Scud short-range missiles with a range of up to 500 kilometers. They also can intercept missiles at an altitude of under 40 kilometers. “That’s why we have been developing our own long-range surface-to-air missiles (L-SAM) with our indigenous technology,” the spokesman said, reaffirming the government’s earlier stance that it will not buy the U.S. Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery. THAAD, which can shoot down missiles at an altitude of up to 150 kilometers, is an integral part of the U.S.-led missile defense (MD), and South Korea has said it will not join the air defense system that Japan takes part in and aims to counter a rising China in the region. (Yonhap, “N.K.’s March Missile Test Aimed at Evading Interceptor Systems: Sources,” June 19, 2014)

6/20/14

The South Korean navy held a rare live-fire drill near the disputed Takeshima islets, brushing off angry protests Japan, which called the exercise “deplorable.” The South Korean Defense Ministry said the drill was part of the military’s “regular” national defense training. The islets are controlled by South Korea, which calls them Dokdo. South Korea’s navy and coast guard have staged joint exercises near the outcroppings many times, but a live-fire drill is rare and it prompted an angry response from Japan. “Japan can never accept the drill given its position on Takeshima, and so we strongly demanded that the South Korean government stop its plans,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide said. He said the decision to push ahead with the exercises was “extremely deplorable.” Seoul dismissed the protest out of hand. “This is a military drill to bolster the defense of the Republic of Korea, so any outside demand or interference is not a subject for consideration,” ministry spokesman Wi Yong-Seop said. “The drill is now being carried out as scheduled.” (AFP – Jiji, “S. Korea Holds Live-Fire Drill despite Japanese Protest,” Japan Times, June 20, 2014)

The legitimacy of the 1993 Kono statement of apology to former “comfort women” was never compromised during a compilation process that involved negotiations with Seoul and testimonies of aging witnesses, a government panel concluded. The panel, consisting of experts in law and other areas, focused on these two points for its study
of how the wording was decided upon in the statement issued in the name of then Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei. The panel found that officials of Japan and South Korea had contact on several occasions before the Kono statement was released in August 1993. On one occasion, South Korean officials asked that “remorse” be added to the draft that expressed “sincere apologies” to the former comfort women, a euphemism for women forced to provide sex to Japanese troops before and during World War II. Japanese officials consented to that addition. On another occasion, South Korean officials proposed wording that “the (Japanese) military or agents that received instructions from the military” were involved in the recruitment of comfort women. However, Japanese officials rejected that proposal, maintaining that recruitment was handled by agents who were only requested--not ordered--to do so by the military. Keiichi Tadaki, a former prosecutor general at the Supreme Public Prosecutors Office and the chairman of the government’s panel, said no evidence was found on the Korean Peninsula to confirm what he called “forced transport conducted through the exercise of tangible power organized and based on the will of the military.” During their exchanges, South Korean officials asked for “partial revisions because the final wording had to be in a form that would be evaluated positively by the South Korean people.” The Japanese side decided to coordinate “to the extent that factual matters were not distorted.” The panel said facts were not compromised during the process. “Japanese officials never admitted to facts that absolutely could not be accepted,” Tadaki said at a June 20 news conference. The admission to “coercion” in the Kono statement is a broad definition of the word that covers anything that goes against the will of the individual involved. In October 1992, Japanese officials informed their South Korean counterparts “while it is difficult to clearly certify the coercive nature of the act, there is no denying some elements of a coercive nature in some of the acts.” The panel did not touch upon a response made in March 1993 during an Upper House Budget Committee session by Sakutaro Tanino, an official in the Cabinet Secretariat handling foreign policy at the time. He said, “Coercion does not only mean the use of physical means but also includes a wider range of situations that go against the will of the individual by threatening or invoking a sense of awe.” Regarding the testimonies of 16 former comfort women, the government again did not reveal the contents of their statements. The interviews were conducted on condition the contents would be kept secret to protect the privacy of the women. The panel did not attempt to evaluate the accuracy of their testimonies. But Tadaki noted: “There was a gap of 48 years between the end of the war and the interviews. We have no way of knowing if the responses were based on accurate memories.” The panel said “rather than uncover the facts, the main intent was to show the sincere posture of the Japanese government by demonstrating its concerns for the former comfort women and to deeply understand their feelings.” The panel also concluded that the testimonies did not have a decisive influence on the Kono statement because the draft had already been written before the conclusion of the interviews. (Asahi Shimbun, “Panel Backs Kono Statement Legitimacy, Says Facts Never Compromised,” June 21, 2014) South Korea on June 20 criticized the results of a Japanese study on the 1993 Kono statement, denying that Seoul played a role in compiling Japan’s landmark apology to wartime “comfort women.” “The results of the re-examination have misleading content that undermines the credibility of the Kono statement,” the South Korean Foreign Ministry said in a statement. According to the Japanese government
panel that studied how the Kono statement was compiled, the wording changed through frequent exchanges of opinions between officials of the Japanese and South Korean governments. However, the South Korean Foreign Ministry statement said: "The Kono statement is a document that the Japanese government drew up based on its own investigation and judgment. The ROK (Republic of Korea) government merely presented its views informally." The South Korean statement also said it is contradictory for the Japanese government to study the drafting process of the Kono statement while saying that it will uphold it. (Asahi Shimbun, "South Korea: Japanese Study on Kono Statement 'Misleading'", June 21, 2014)

Tokyo plans to call on Pyongyang to provide more convincing answers to 150 questions and issues it raised in 2002 over North Korea's abductions of Japanese, a government source said Saturday. Japan will bring up the matter during talks with North Korea in the hope that it can clarify issues that were not fully addressed regarding Japanese kidnapped by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s, the source said. The move comes as North Korea, based on an agreement with Japan after intergovernmental talks in late May, said it will set up a special committee to reinvestigate the whereabouts of the abductees. (Kyodo, "Japan Wants North Korea to Clarify 150 Points over Abduction Issue," Japan Times, June 21, 2014)

The U.S. says it has succeeded in testing a defense system intercepting intercontinental ballistic missiles from North Korea or Iran in the exosphere. The exosphere is the outermost layer of Earth's atmosphere at an altitude of more than 500 km. In a Boeing-run Ground-based Midcourse Defense system on Sunday, a 5-feet-long (about 152 cm) "kill vehicle," detached from a ground-based interceptor missile precisely hit a target missile launched from a test site on Kwajalein Atoll west of the Marshall Islands in the Pacific toward the U.S. mainland, the Pentagon said. The interceptor was launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. A kill vehicle must fly at a speed of more than Mach 20 to intercept an incoming missile. It was the first time in six years that the U.S. has succeeded in a GMD test. The interceptor made by Raytheon is an improved version of an earlier kill vehicle that failed in two tests in 2010. (Chosun Ilbo, "U.S. Missile Intercept Test a 'Success,'" June 24, 2014) Sunday's event marked the first time that a second-generation kinetic kill vehicle mounted atop a GBI missile performed correctly. Both previous missile intercept attempts using the "CE-2" Exoatmospheric Kill Vehicle were unsuccessful. "I am very proud of the government and industry team conducting the test today," Navy Vice Adm. James Syring, head of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency, said in a press release. "This is a very important step in our continuing efforts to improve and increase the reliability of our homeland ballistic missile defense system." Syring said the agency would continue with its plans to deploy additional Ground Based Interceptors. The Defense Department last year announced plans to spend $1 billion to field 14 more GBI missiles at Fort Greely in Alaska by 2017, but senior officials have been circumspect in their recent statements about what would happen to those plans if Sunday's test had been unsuccessful. The Missile Defense Agency said "initial indications" show that all components in the test -- including the interceptor, kill vehicle, an AN/SPY-1 radar onboard the USS Hopper and a sea-based X-band radar system -- performed as intended. Over the next few months, program specialists will use telemetric
information and other data collected during the test to conduct a more thorough analysis. Reactions to the test were varied, with longtime proponents of missile defenses saying it validated the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system. U.S. Representative Mike Rogers (R-Ala.), chair of the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee, in an emailed statement called the test "a critical success to rebuild[ing] the reliability of the only system currently deployed to defend our country from the threat of ballistic missile attack." "Yesterday's successful missile intercept test is great news for our nation's security," said U.S. Senator Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) in a statement to Global Security Newswire. "Ground-based Midcourse Defense is critical to our efforts to protect the U.S. and our allies from rogue and unpredictable nations who seek to do us harm." Meanwhile, program skeptics argued that one successful test did not fully assuage concerns about the reliability and efficacy of the antimissile technology. "I think it means less than it appears. This kill vehicle is only one hit for three attempts and that's not enough to base a billion-dollar decision to move ahead with expansion," said Tom Collina, research director at the Arms Control Association, in a Monday phone interview. "They need to do more testing to determine reliability" and move forward with plans to redesign the kill vehicle, he said. The Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance in a press release asserted that the successful test "reduces the amount of interceptors required to be fired at an incoming long-range ballistic missile, thereby increasing the capability of the limited number of 30 interceptors and reducing the cost of engagement." However, Philip Coyle, a former chief Pentagon weapons tester and now a senior science fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation, pointed out that the Ground Based Interceptor has never been tested against an intercontinental ballistic missile target even though the system is principally focused on defeating a limited-range ICBM attack. "In addition, given the difficulties MDA has had with configuration control, and the changes it has made and is planning to make to the [CE-2] kill vehicle, it is far from clear that the performance of the kill vehicle in [Sunday's] test will be representative of other configurations already deployed and planned for deployment in silos at Fort Greely," he said in an emailed statement. Of the 30 interceptors currently fielded at bases in Alaska and California, 10 missiles are equipped with the second-generation kill vehicle. The 14 new interceptors slotted for deployment in Alaska are to be outfitted with the CE-2 version. (Rachel Oswald, “U.S. Ends Losing Streak with Successful Missile Intercept Test,” Global Security Newswire, June 23, 2014)

6/23/14  North Korea’s rivers, streams and reservoirs are running dry in a prolonged drought, state media said, prompting the isolated country to mobilize some of its million-strong army to try to protect precious crops. The drought is the worst in North Korea for over a decade, state media reports have said, with some areas experiencing low rainfall levels since 1961. Office workers, farmers and women have been mobilized to direct water into the dry floors of fields and rice paddies, KCNA said. (Reuters, “North Korea Faces Worst Drought in over a Decade,” June 24, 2014)

6/24/14  South Korea’s prime minister nominee withdrew his name amid mounting criticism of his alleged pro-Japanese views, in what is seen as a fresh blow to President Park Geun-hye’s efforts to contain the fallout from a deadly ferry sinking. Moon Chang-keuk’s withdrawal comes two weeks after President Park named him to the post in a Cabinet
reshuffle aimed at restoring public confidence in an administration battered by its
botched handling of the April sinking that left more than 300 people dead or missing.
Moon, a former chief editorial writer for *JoongAng Ilbo*, had been under pressure from
both the ruling and opposition parties to quit following revelations that he described
Japan’s 1910-45 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula and the subsequent division into
South and North Korea as God’s will. (Yonhap, “PM Nominee Quits amid Controversy
over Historical Views,” June 24, 2014) President Park Geun-hye, whose approval
ratings have fallen since an April ferry disaster that left hundreds dead, suffered a new
political blow as her second consecutive nominee for prime minister stepped aside,
amid an uproar over his suggestion that Korea’s colonization by Japan had been
“God’s will.” “Since I was appointed as prime minister, this country has plunged even
deeper into severe confrontation and divide,” the nominee, Moon Chang-keuk, said at
a news conference. “I have decided that I should help President Park by stepping
down of my own will.” Moon Park’s second nominee for prime minister to withdraw
before his confirmation hearings in the National Assembly could even begin. The first,
Ahn Dae-hee, a former Supreme Court justice, stepped aside last month because of a
controversy over his post-retirement earnings. Each had been nominated to replace
Prime Minister Chung Hong-won, who resigned over the government’s handling of the
April 16 ferry sinking, in which more than 300 people were killed, most of them
students. The post of prime minister is a largely ceremonial one in South Korea. But the
botched appointments cast doubt on Ms. Park’s ability to choose a candidate who
could pass the test of public opinion in a country deeply divided over her
administration. Moon’s trouble began when a national television network, KBS,
broadcast footage from a 2011 lecture he had given at his Presbyterian church in
Seoul. “We may protest, ‘Why did God make this nation a colony of Japan?’” Mr.
Moon, an elder at his church, said from the pulpit, according to the video, which
circulated widely online. “But as I said earlier, there is God’s will in it.” Mr. Moon also
said that the Korean elite had been hopelessly corrupt and inefficient before
colonization began in 1910. “Laziness, lack of independence and a tendency to
depend on others were in our national DNA,” he said in the speech. God’s message,
he said, was that the Koreans “needed hardship,” in the form of colonization. Mr. Moon
also said that “in retrospect, it was also God’s will” for Korea to be divided into a
Communist North and a pro-American South after Japan’s rule ended with its defeat in
World War II. Noting that there were many Communists among Korea’s elite at the
time, Mr. Moon said, “Given the way we were then, had Korea been liberated as a
whole, it would have been Communized.” Critics interpreted the remarks as a prime-
minister-to-be’s justifying his own country’s colonization. They argued that nationalist
politicians in Japan, including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, would use his remarks to
strengthen the case that colonial rule was not as bad as many Koreans have made it
out to be. Relations between Japan and South Korea have chilled in recent years, with
historical and territorial issues at the root of many disputes. Moon expressed regret
over what he called a “misunderstanding” arising from “a little gap between what can
be said inside a church and sentiments of ordinary people.” But he said that political
opponents had distorted comments he had made to a private audience. The uproar
led to Mr. Moon’s being labeled “pro-Japanese,” a toxic political epithet in South
Korea. Even some prominent members of Ms. Park’s party joined the opposition in
demanding that Mr. Moon step down. Historical issues involving Japan’s rule over
Korea have been problematic for Ms. Park. Her father, the former dictator Park Chung-hee, was once an officer in Japan’s Imperial Army. During Park’s presidential campaign in 2012, her most outspoken critics cited that part of her family history to argue that she could not be trusted. (Choe Sang-hun, “Nominee for South Korean Premier Exits over Colonization Remarks,” New York Times, June 25, 2014, p. A-8)

Fearing heightened opposition from its junior coalition partner, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party shelved a proposal to allow Japan to use force in collective security operations sanctioned by the U.N. Security Council. The proposal was broached on June 20 in discussions between the LDP and New Komeito on changing the government interpretation of the pacifist Constitution to lift Japan’s self-imposed ban on exercising the right to collective self-defense. New Komeito strongly opposed the proposal on collective security because it would have opened the door for the Self-Defense Forces to join multinational operations sanctioned by U.N. Security Council resolutions to apply military sanctions on a nation that has invaded another. (Kuramae Katsuhisa, “LDP Retracts Proposal on Using Force in Collective Security Measures,” Asahi Shimbun, June 24, 2014)

Stephan Haggard: “SWIFT activity is measured by the unit of a FIN message, which also anchors the SWIFT index, a leading indicator of GDP growth. To give some sense of the density of financial integration, SWIFT carried 5.066 billion FIN messages in 2013, or about 20 million messages per day. The overwhelming majority of these were payments settlement or security transactions, although the organization also handles treasury business and even some trade-related messaging. … After some oscillation in 2001-3, North Korea’s SWIFT traffic jumped to 50,000 sent/received FIN messages in 2004, from which it witnessed a slight secular decline through 2011. But the big news is that SWIFT messaging virtually collapsed in 2012-2013. In 2013, seven North Korea shareholders and 16 institutions connected to SWIFT received only 2,000 messages and sent nothing. To put this in perspective, South Korean institutions sent and received about 69 million FIN messages that year. Rather, more appropriate comparison countries to North Korea in 2013 would include Kiribati (9 thousand messages), Tuvalu (6 thousand), or Somalia (0). What is going on here? Of course, we don’t really know so the possibilities remain speculative. First, the timing does not fit well with the multilateral sanctions efforts. UNSC 1874 introduced financial sanctions in 2009, but there is no significant change in DPRK messaging until 2012. The 2012 fall off does not correspond with the more targeted sanctions introduced in 2013, when a number of additional individuals and entities were named. Our favored explanation is that the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) might be having an effect. Back in August 2013, I did a post suggesting that North Korea was reaching out to the FATF. The organization issued a statement in 2011—no doubt at US urging—that North Korea had failed to address significant deficiencies in its anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) regime. As we learned from the Banco Delta Asia case, even issuing such an advisory is enough to give financial institutions pause. In February of this year, the FATF reaffirmed its statement on the DPRK (reproduced below). Under this view, the FATF notice probably triggered a tightening up of surveillance of business with the country. There is, however, a third possibility: that North Korea is increasingly operating outside of the SWIFT network through the use of
cash or other informal financial networks. How this might work is even a deeper mystery, but would presumably rest on a network of couriers, informal financial institutions, or perhaps banks that are not connected with the SWIFT network, nor vulnerable to FATF pressure.” FATF Public Statement of February, 2014: “The FATF remains concerned by the DPRK’s failure to address the significant deficiencies in its anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) regime and the serious threat this poses to the integrity of the international financial system. The FATF urges the DPRK to immediately and meaningfully address its AML/CFT deficiencies. The FATF reaffirms its 25 February 2011 call on its members and urges all jurisdictions to advise their financial institutions to give special attention to business relationships and transactions with the DPRK, including DPRK companies and financial institutions. In addition to enhanced scrutiny, the FATF further calls on its members and urges all jurisdictions to apply effective counter-measures to protect their financial sectors from money laundering and financing of terrorism (ML/FT) risks emanating from the DPRK. Jurisdictions should also protect against correspondent relationships being used to bypass or evade counter-measures and risk mitigation practices, and take into account ML/FT risks when considering requests by DPRK financial institutions to open branches and subsidiaries in their jurisdiction. The FATF urges the DPRK to engage again with the FATF to address its AML/CFT deficiencies.” (Stephan Haggard, “North Korea in SWIFT,” North Korea: Witness to Transformation, June 24, 2014)

Japan’s ruling coalition has agreed in principle to a draft document that would change the government interpretation of the Constitution to allow for the exercise of the right to collective self-defense. The agreement for the landmark shift in security policy was reached in part because the ruling Liberal Democratic Party bowed to the concerns of junior coalition partner New Komeito and revised wording in the draft document to limit the exercise of the right to collective self-defense. In the June 24 discussions between the two parties, LDP officials presented new wording for three new conditions that would have to be met before the use of force could be allowed. When LDP officials presented the initial draft on June 13, one new condition said military force could be used if “Japan has come under military attack as well as when another nation has come under attack and that leads to the possibility that the survival of Japan is threatened and the right of the Japanese people to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness could be fundamentally overthrown.” LDP officials included the part about another nation coming under attack to open the door for allowing the exercise of the right to collective self-defense. However, New Komeito officials said the new condition was too ambiguous. In the draft presented June 24 by the LDP, "another nation" was changed to "another nation that has a close relationship with Japan." The part about "leads to the possibility" was also changed to "a clear danger exists." Once the draft document is formally approved by the two parties, it will form the basis for the document that will be presented to the Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for approval to change the longstanding government interpretation of the Constitution with regard to collective self-defense. In another move designed to overcome New Komeito resistance, wording was included in the draft document that said use of force "under the Constitution is only permissible as an unavoidable means of self-defense to defend Japan and protect the people." There was no wording to differentiate the use of force in exercising the right of individual or collective self-defense. By using
"measures for self-defense," the document takes into consideration the strong resistance put up by New Komeito members about the right of collective self-defense. Such sentiments were not raised by New Komeito members at the June 24 session. One party executive said, "We evaluate the draft document highly because it includes our views." (Asahi Shimbun, "New Komeito Agrees to Revised Collective Self-Defense Proposal," June 25, 2014)

DPRK FoMin spokesman: "The enemies have gone beyond the tolerance limit in their despicable moves to dare hurt the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK. A preview of a film on insulting and assassinating the supreme leadership of the DPRK is floating in broad daylight in the U.S., a kingpin of international terrorism and its cesspool, shocking the world community. The U.S. has gone reckless in such provocative hysteria as bribing a rogue movie maker to dare hurt the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK. This act of not fearing any punishment from Heaven is touching off the towering hatred and wrath of the service personnel and people of the DPRK. Absolutely intolerable is the distribution of such film in the U.S. as it is the most undisguised terrorism and a war action to deprive the service personnel and people of the DPRK of their mental mainstay and bring down its social system. The dignified and worthwhile life the Korean people enjoy at present and the great changes taking place in the country as well as everything valuable that will belong to the rosy future when the dreams and ideals of the people will come true would be unthinkable apart from the supreme leadership of the DPRK. That's why they regard the supreme leadership as dearer than their own lives. It is their firm determination and stamina to mercilessly destroy anyone who dares hurt or attack the supreme leadership of the country even a bit. Those who defamed our supreme leadership and committed the hostile acts against the DPRK can never escape the stern punishment to be meted out according to a law wherever they might be in the world. If the U.S. administration connives at and patronizes the screening of the film, it will invite a strong and merciless countermeasure." (KCNA, "DPRK FM Spokesman Blasts Move to Hurt Dignity of Supreme Leadership," June 25, 2014)

North Korea has fired People’s Armed Forces Minister Jang Jong-nam after barely over a year in office, the fourth replacement in the job since leader Kim Jong-un took power in December 2011. He has been replaced with rising apparatchik Hyon Yong-chol. Meanwhile Ri Yong-gil, the chief of the Army’s General Staff, has not been seen in public for two months, giving rise to rumors that he too has been replaced. North Korean state TV introduced a speaker at a mass rally on the building site of a housing complex for scientists in Pyongyang as “Minister of the People’s Armed Forces Comrade Hyon Yong-chol.” Jang was last publicly described as armed forces minister on June 4. Jang, who is in his 50s, replaced hardliner Kim Kyok-sik in May last year, but has now in turn been replaced by Hyon, a 65-year-old veteran and hardliner. In July 2012, Hyon replaced Ri Yong-ho as Army chief after Ri, the then military strongman, was purged. But he was demoted to the commander of the Fifth Army Corps in June last year. Ri Yong-gil has disappeared from view since he accompanied Kim Jong-un
on a visit to a long-range artillery unit in April. “According to North Korean sources, it’s highly likely that Ri Yong-gil too has been replaced,” said Chung Sung-jang at the Sejong Institute. Ri, also the fourth Army chief since Kim Jong-un took power, was seen as one of the Young Turks alongside Jang. Experts speculate that Kim is rapidly oscillating between Old Guards and Young Turks to tighten his grip on the military and leave no one with a sense of security in their position. Another speculation is that Hwang Pyong-so, who rose to military politburo chief replacing Choe Ryong-hae last month, is pulling the strings.

Hwang, who used to work in the Workers Party’s Organization and Guidance Department, helped Kim succeed his father. He is also said to have played a leading role in the execution of former eminence grise Jang Song-taek late last year. “Hwang is taking notes on all instructions given by Kim Jong-un and following him on every visit,” a researcher with a government-funded think tank here said. “It’s possible that Jang Jong-nam and Ri Yong-gil have been called to account for some problems during Kim’s visits to military units.” Park Hyeong-jung of the Korea Institute for National Unification said, “It seems that there’s power struggle still underway between the Old Guards, who followed Ri Yong-ho, and the Young Turks who have emerged since Kim Jong-un took power.” (Chosun Ilbo, “N. Korea Fires Armed Forces Minsiter Again,” June 25, 2014)

North Korea fired three short-range projectiles from its east coast into the East Sea, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The rockets were fired from a site near its eastern city of Wonsan at around 5 p.m. and landed in international waters, according to the JCS. “Their range is some 190 kilometers, and we are now looking into exactly what type of rockets North Korea fired,” a JCS official said, noting that the North’s 300-millimeter multiple rocket launcher KN-09 has a similar range. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Fires 3 Short-Range Missiles into East Sea,” June 26, 2014) According to KCNA, it successfully launched “cutting-edge ultra-precision tactical guided missiles,” and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un supervised the test. “The test-firing clearly proved that the tactical guided weapons did not have an inch of deviation in their scientific and technological performance,” the KCNA said. “This has helped the Korean People’s Army get the master key to putting all strike means including short- medium- and long-range guided weapons on an ultra-precision basis at a world level and opened the prospect for maximizing their striking accuracy and power.” South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JSC) speculated that the projectiles were launched from the North’s new multiple rocket launcher, better known as KN-09 firing 300-millimeter rockets with a maximum range of about 160 kilometers. “It is seen as a test-fire to extend its range further,” a JSC official said. (Kang Seung-woo, “N.K. Test-Fuires ‘New’ Missile,” Korea Times, June 27, 2014) A U.S. defense official on Thursday dismissed North Korea’s claim of testing newly developed missiles. “There is no indication of new North Korean technology,” said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.Kim Min-seok, a spokesman for the South Korean Defense Ministry, said Friday that what North Korea launched appears to have been an improvement of an existing weapon, rather than an entirely new technology. The improvements were in the weapon’s range and the guided technology, he told a regular news briefing. (Barbara Starr, “United States Casts Doubt on North Korean Missile Claim,” CNN, June 26, 2014)
KPA Southwestern Front Command “crucial report”: "On Thursday [today] the warmongers of the south Korean puppet military committed such a grave military provocation as firing shells at the waters of the DPRK side from the waters around Yonphyong Island without any prior notice. This reckless military provocation is an undisguised revelation of their sinister design to ignite a war against the DPRK by deliberately making a clumsy fire on its inviolable territorial waters. This is fully evidenced by the recent situation prevailing in the hot spot of the West Sea of Korea. The intrusion into the territorial waters of the DPRK side being perpetrated by warships of the puppet army under the pretext of intercepting fishing boats is escalating day by day and there continues day and night the mad-cap firing and shelling on Paekryong, Yonphyon, Taechong and other islands. In order to cope with the prevailing situation, all the strike groups of the KPA in the southwestern sector of the front rounded off preparations for devastating strike after having a complete retaliatory posture. We clearly know that not only the puppet Ministry of Defense but also Chongwadae are behind the reckless clumsy firing perpetrated by the bellicose forces of the south Korean puppet military in the most sensitive waters. Park Geun Hye and her group finding themselves in the worst ruling crisis and being driven into a pitfall of destiny are working hard to seek a way out by desperately perpetrating provocations in the hotspot waters and pushing the situation to the brink of a war. All the service personnel of the KPA in the southwestern sector of the front are full of the strong will of retaliation to punish the provocateurs to the last one by giving vent to their pent-up grudge. What they are waiting for is only the order to be given by the Supreme Command to strike the provocateurs. The provocateurs will have to keenly realize what high price they will pay for the consequences to be entailed by their reckless clumsy firing.” (KCNA, “Command of Southwetern Front of KPA Releases Crucial Report," June 26, 2014)

KCNA: “The 5th meeting of the north-south joint commission for the Kaesong Industrial Zone (KIZ) took place in the zone. The meeting was held, divided into a plenary session and contact between the heads of delegations from the north and the south. At the meeting the north side clarified its stand on the principled and important issues to be primarily settled for normalization of the operation in the KIZ and discussed some other matters with the south side. The two sides decided to continue the discussion in the future.” (KCNA, “5th Meeting of North-South Joint Commission for KIZ Held,” June 26, 2014)

The two Koreas held their first talks in six months over a joint factory park in the North amid their strained relations over concerns about Pyongyang’s nuclear test and stringent criticism against Seoul and Washington. The meeting of a joint committee tasked with the operation of the Gaeseong industrial complex took place in the North Korean border city. It was led by Lee Kang-woo, cochair of the panel and director general for inter-Korean cooperation district support at Seoul’s Unification Ministry, and his counterpart Park Chol-su, vice director of the General Bureau of the Special Zone Development Guidance. The delegates were expected to explore ways to improve the passage system and Internet services, and to set up an arbitration body in line with their agreement in August that reopened the business district after a five-month freeze. “There has been a slight change in North Korea’s attitude over the last
two to three weeks,” Ju Chul-ki, senior presidential secretary for foreign affairs and security, told a business forum on Jejudo Island earlier in the day, citing the talks of the Gaeseong complex joint committee and humanitarian program. “We will strive to close the sense of cultural, emotional difference between the two Koreas such as by resuming the unified dictionary project, and discuss ways to hand over our experience in economic education, global finance, special economic zones and small and medium businesses essential for North Korea.” (Shin Hyon-hee and Joint Press Corps, “First Kaesong Talks Held in 6 Months,” Korea Herald, June 26, 2014)

President Park Geun-hye retained Prime Minister Chung Hong-won, who had offered to resign in the wake of April’s tragic ferry accident, a sign that underscores the difficulty in finding a qualified nominee for the country’s No. 2 job. Chung had offered to quit in April following the deadly maritime disaster, but Park turned down his resignation offer and asked him to stay in his post, said Yoon Doo-hyun, the senior presidential press secretary. It is the first time in the country’s history that a prime minister who offered to resign has been retained. (Yonhap, “Park Retains Prime Minister Chung,” June 26, 2014)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, first secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea, first chairman of the National Defense Commission of the DPRK and supreme commander of the Korean People’s Army, guided the test-fire of newly developed cutting-edge ultra-precision tactical guided missiles. At the central monitoring post he acquainted himself with the tactical and technological information of the newly developed guided missiles before giving an order to test-fire them. The moment the guided missiles soared into the sky with thunderous roar. The test-fire proved that the tactical guided weapons didn’t have an inch of deviation in their scientific and technological performance. They are another shining success made by scientists in the field of national defence and workers in the field of munitions industry in their efforts to implement the WPK’s policy of manufacturing high-precision, lighter, automatic and intelligent weapons and equipment. The test-fire helped the KPA get the master key to putting all strike means including short-, medium- and long-range guided weapons on ultra-precision basis of the world level and opened a bright prospect for maximizing their striking accuracy and power. The successful test-fire at a time when the U.S. and the south Korean puppet regime and all other allied forces are going extremely reckless in the moves to isolate and stifle the DPRK and unleash a war of aggression marked a significant event in bolstering up the defence capability for self-defense. This greatly encourages the service personnel and people of the DPRK. Kim Jong Un expressed great satisfaction over the results of the test-fire. Expressing belief that the officials and workers in the fields of national defense science and munitions industry would manufacture more ultra-precision tactical guided weapons capable of taking the decisive initiative in any operation and battle of the modern warfare through accurate preemptive strikes, always bearing in mind the expectations of the party and the people, he advanced new tasks to be fulfilled by the field of national defense science and technology. He was accompanied by Hwang Pyong So, Pyon In Son, Pak Jong Chon and Hong Yong Chil.” (KCNA, “Kim Jong-un Directs Test-Fire of Newly Developed Ultra-Precision Tactical Guided Missiles,” June 27, 2014)
The South Korean military said what the North calls “tactical guided missile” refers to the new KN-09 multiple rocket launcher, which it fired into East Sea waters from a base in north of Wonsan, Gangwon Province. A source in the South Korean military said, “North Korea is believed to have completed verification of precision strike capability with its KN-09. The North Korean military’s conventional 240-mm multiple rocket launcher offers a max range of 50 to 65 km and a low accurate rate due to lack of a guiding device. In fact, of more than 170 shots fired by the North during its artillery attacks on the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong in 2010, 90 shots fell into the sea and the remaining 80 fell to random locations of inland areas on Yeonpyeong Island. In contrast, the KN-09 is reportedly equipped with “Glonas,” a Russian-made global positioning system. The launcher provides a max range of 180 to 190 km, nearly three times that of its conventional multiple rocket launchers. If deployed near Kaesong, the launcher can allow precision strike at a target not only at the U.S. military bases in Osan and Pyeongtaek but also Gyeryongdae (the headquarters of the Army, Navy and Air Force) in South Chungcheong Province. A source in the South Korean military said, “The North could have reduced the KN-09’s scope of target error margin to within dozens of meters,” adding, “This means that the North’s threat of multiple rocket launchers has evolved from ‘firing in massive volume’ to ‘precision strike.’” Notably, analyst say the fact that the North widely carried the news on the success of the KN-09’s test firing in the presence of Kim Jong Un, who majored in artillery at Kim Il Sung Military University, provides circumstantial evidence in this regard. The South Korean military predicts the North will soon start mass producing the KN-09, and increase the deployment of the artillery gun, while accelerating work to install guiding systems in the conventional multiple launchers. A multiple launcher fires cannon balls rather than missiles, and the South Korean military will be able to intercept them with the Korean Air and Missile Defense (KAMD), which the military is pushing to introduce by the early 2020s. Meanwhile, the U.S. raised doubt about the North’s claim that it succeeded in test firing of a missile. Quoting an official with the U.S. Defense Department who reportedly monitored the North’s test firing of missile, CNN reported, “There was no sign whatsoever that the North has developed a new technology.” (Dong-A Ilbo, “N.Korea Claims ‘Successful Test of Tactical Guided Missile,’” June 28, 2014)

Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit South Korea next week, the two countries announced, with North Korea’s pursuit of nuclear weapons featuring prominently on the agenda in summit talks. It will be Xi’s first visit to South Korea as president but his fifth summit with South Korean President Park Geun-hye. South Korea’s presidential Blue House said North Korea would be high on the agenda when the two leaders discuss regional security and cooperation. (Jack Kim, “North Korea on Agenda as Chinese President Visits South,” Reuters, June 27, 2014)

North Korea’s economy expanded an estimated 1.1 percent in 2013, marking the third consecutive year of positive growth, South Korea’s central bank said. The Bank of Korea put the North’s nominal gross national income (GNI) at 33.8 trillion won ($33.3 billion), or roughly 2.3 percent of the South’s GNI of 1,441 trillion won. The bank said last year’s expansion reflected gains in agriculture and mining, but a contraction in the construction sector meant the growth rate was slower than the 1.3 percent estimate for 2012. The annual BOK report is based on data collected from the National Intelligence
A U.S. pledge to no longer produce or acquire anti-personnel landmines won’t affect the country’s commitment to defend South Korea, the State Department said. The U.S. made the anti-landmine pledge at a review conference of the Mine Ban Treaty in Mozambique on Friday. The commitment was seen as a step forward toward the U.S. eventually joining the Ottawa Convention that bans the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. “This announcement does not in any way affect the defense of the Korean Peninsula,” Marie Harf, deputy spokesperson of the State Department, said during a regular press briefing. She also said the U.S. has "many tools at our disposals to defend our South Korean allies." Harf also said the U.S. is working very closely with South Korea on the issue. The situation on the Korean Peninsula does present unique challenges when it comes to this topic. We have pursued other solutions that would be compliant with the convention and that would ultimately allow us to accede to the convention,” she said. Rear. Adm. John Kirby, chief spokesman for the Department of Defense, stressed, however, that the U.S. does not have "any mine fields of landmines anywhere deployed in the world," adding, "So to the degree that anti-personnel landmines are being used in Korea, that’s a question for the Korean government to answer, not the United States government." (Chang Jae-soon, “U.S. Says Anti-Landmine Pledge Won’t Affect Defense of S. Korea,” Yonhap, June 28, 2014)

North Korea fired two short-range missiles into the East Sea early today, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said, in the second such launch in three days. "North Korea fired each one missile presumed to be Scuds from the vicinity of Wonsan at about 4:50 a.m. and 4:58 a.m. into the East Sea," the JCS said. "Their range is about 500 kilometers," it said. Wonsan is located on the east coast of North Korea. The missiles landed in international waters northeast of the East Sea, a JCS official said, adding that the North did not make any prior announcement for civilian flights or vessels. The missile launch came three days after the North fired three short-range projectiles into the East Sea. This marks the North’s 11th firing of short-range missiles and the fourth ballistic missile launch this year. In March, the North fired two ballistic missiles into the sea off its east coast in protest of regular joint military drills between South Korea and the United States, which it condemned as a rehearsal for invasion. "We presume the short-range ballistic missiles fired on Sunday are Scud-C missiles, the same as ones fired in March," the official said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Fires 2 Shirt-Range Missiles into East Sea,” June 29, 2014)

KCNA: “The National Defense Commission (NDC) of the DPRK sent the following special proposal to the south Korean authorities on Monday [today]: The continued state of frozen north-south relations is making the wounds of the territorial division ever deeper and the nation’s cherished desire for reunification has reached such a phase that can no longer be overlooked. The three principles of national reunification which the north and the south agreed upon to adhere to before the nation and even the ennobling spirit of By Our Nation Itself have been ruthlessly violated. This is the present tragic reality. True to the noble intention of the peerless patriot to set right this
painful situation, the DPRK side sent a crucial proposal and an open letter to the south Korean authorities, political parties and social organizations only to receive a cool response. The valuable agreement reached at the north-south high-level contact, which was arranged with much effort in February, is being reduced to a dead document. The blame for this rests with all members of the nation responsible for setting right this painful reality as they are responsible for their own destiny. But greater responsibility rests with the south Korean authorities who have mocked at the reunification issue by making far-fetched assertions and making public sham declarations, keen on confrontation only, in utter disregard of the north-south relations that have turned more serious. The people of different social standings are becoming more vocal demanding the improvement of the north-south relations against this backdrop and their desire to open up a fresh phase of reconciliation, cooperation and peaceful reunification has become an irresistible trend of the times. This enthusiasm is growing stronger across the 3 000-ri land of Korea with the approach of the 42nd anniversary of the July 4 joint statement and July 7, the 20th anniversary of the event in which President Kim Il Sung, the lodestar of the nation and the great political elder, signed a historical document on the north-south summit in the last moments of his great life. This enthusiasm is becoming unquenchable as diverse political and technical contacts on reconciliation and cooperation expected between the north and the south from July, in particular, draw public attention. The NDC of the DPRK makes the following special proposal to the south Korean authorities, prompted by its firm resolution to bring about a fresh phase in the improvement of the north-south relations on the three principles of independence, peace and the great national unity and in the spirit of By Our Nation Itself, in reflection of the desire of the nation and the wishes of all Koreans:

Let us promise the nation once again to invariably adhere to the principle of independence and solve all pending issues, big or small, between the north and the south on the principle. The principle of independence is one of the basic principles for national reunification which was agreed upon before the nation in reflection of the nation’s desire and wish. This principle calls for settling all issues, big or small, arising in relations between the north and the south including the reunification issue with their concerted efforts from the stand of attaching importance to the nation and giving priority to it without relying on foreign forces or allowing their interference. We reached the agreement on north-south reconciliation, cooperation and non-aggression and adopted the historic June 15 joint declaration and the October 4 declaration on this principle. Hence, we propose promising once again all fellow countrymen to preserve and thoroughly implement all statements, declarations and agreements concluded between the north and the south on the principle of independence on the occasion of the 42nd anniversary of the July 4 joint statement. At the same time, we urge the south Korean authorities to completely withdraw all their far-fetched "assertions” and sham "declarations” contrary to the principle of independence and totally abolish all cooperation mechanisms violating the interests of the fellow countrymen. We courteously advise them not to resort any longer to such harmful acts as taking issue with the DPRK’s nuclear deterrence, a valuable common asset of the nation, and slandering its line of simultaneously developing the two fronts by toeing outside forces' line. For the present, we call on them to make a policy decision to completely stop all sorts of mud-slinging at the
other side and totally cease all psychological and conspiratorial acts from 00:00 of July 4, as was agreed upon between the north and the south at their high-level contact in February from the stand of giving importance to the nation and giving priority to it on the principle of independence. We are ready to implement the February agreement at once as we have already clarified.

2. Let’s show all Koreans and the world a resolute decision to completely stop all military hostile acts of pushing the north-south relations to the brink of a war and to create a peaceful atmosphere on the principle of peaceful reunification. The principle of peaceful reunification is the basic principle for the country’s reunification reflecting the desire of all peace-loving Koreans opposed to a war. It also fully reflects the patriotic spirit to protect the cradle of the compatriots from a war disaster and ensure the prosperity common to the nation. On this principle, we have consistently maintained the stand to settle all issues arising in the north-south relations in a peaceful way, not by military hostile acts. This is because all these matters are internal issues of the nation under any circumstances however complicated they are. They should be, therefore, settled by the Koreans themselves any time as they are to live in harmony in a reunified land. Availing of this opportunity, we once again propose the south Korean authorities to clarify their true and candid stand to ensure the peace of the country by totally stopping all ceaseless military hostile acts in all areas along the line of confrontation including the hotspot waters in the West Sea of Korea from 00:00 of July 4. This proposal includes the issue of stopping the intrusions into waters being escalated by south Korean navy warships recently and the frequent firing of bullets and shells in the waters around the five islands. We, at the same time, demand an end to the acts of blackmailing and threatening the fellow countrymen by introducing U.S. nuclear strike means such as nuclear-capable strategic bombers and super-large nuclear-powered carriers into south Korea and its vicinity and immediately cancel its plan for the joint military exercise Ulji Freedom Guardian to be staged with the U.S. in August this year so as to create in advance the atmosphere of various exchanges and contacts to be brisk between the north and the south including the Inchon Asian Games. This is because the said joint military exercise pushes the situation on the Korean peninsula to the brink of a war as it is a drill for a war of aggression targeting the DPRK under the pretext of "annual and defensive drill." The war drills staged by the south Korean authorities together with the U.S. are the most undisguised and wanton violation of the principle of national reunification which calls for settling all the issues arising between the north and the south in a peaceful way without recourse to the use of force of arms. If they consider the joint drills with the U.S. as indispensable, they had better stage them in the area and waters beyond the territory of the Korean peninsula as already clarified by the DPRK. Many neighboring countries desire joint exercises with the Korean People’s Army recently, but it will never move with foreign armies in the air, waters and land of the DPRK, complying with their requests.

3. Let’s take practical steps for bringing about a new turning phase of reconciliation, cooperation and national prosperity in the spirit of By Our Nation Itself and on the principle of the great national unity. Unity is the nation’s mode of existence and an engine for improving the inter-Korean relations. The nation should be placed above ideology, ism and social system. When both sides pool efforts on the principle of the great national unity in the above-said spirit irrespective of all differences, the national
reunification will come earlier than expected. It is the destiny of the Korean nation that if it remains divided, it is bound to go to ruin and if it becomes one, it will grow strong. The DPRK proposes taking practical steps for bringing about a new turning phase of reconciliation and cooperation on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the historic document of the north-south summit by President Kim Il Sung, the lodestar of the Korean nation, on July 7, 1994, the last period of his great life. The south Korean authorities should declare, first of all, they will not seek any sinister political aim in reconciliation and cooperation. The reconciliation and cooperation between compatriots should be guaranteed by the sincere practical actions for them from A to Z. Nothing is a more foolish behavior than abusing reconciliation and cooperation reflecting sincere compatriotism as fig-leaf for covering up the attempt to bring down the other's social system and the scenario for achieving "unification through absorption." If the south Korean authorities refuse to accept the sincere offer for reconciliation and cooperation or block the way of achieving them, away from the compatriotic approach and stand based on the principle of great national unity, this will amount to the most hideous treason. One should not scheme to use the order of passage, customs clearance and communication for sinister purpose in the Kaesong Industrial Zone, too. An epochal phase of improving the inter-Korean relations lies in preserving the spirit of By Our Nation Itself and the principle of the great national unity. The south Korean authorities should come to their senses. They should approach neither the fellow countrymen through tinted glasses given by foreign forces nor the inter-Korean relations with heads engrossed by sycophancy and submission. They should bear in mind that if they give priority to the nation before outsiders and attach importance to fellow countrymen before international cooperation, they can pave a wide avenue for national reunification, peace and prosperity. It is our stand that all the Koreans in the north, the south and abroad should give vent to their indignation and turn out with the will not to make the nation's history of division of disgrace and tragedy last any longer. The rise and fall of the country and the life and death of the nation hinge on the will of the north and the south. In response to our special proposal, the south Korean authorities should make a bold policy decision and take a great stride towards new future with the will to resolutely break with the inglorious past. They should not forget that the crucial July is watching their movement." (KCNA, “NDC of DPRK Sends Special Proposal to S. Korean Authorities,” June 30, 2014) James Church: “The latest NDC proposal is to some degree in line with one released in January. The fact that the two are similar is useful, because what differences there are can be revealing—in both positive and negative ways. Unlike the earlier proposal, and especially because of the differences in context, the one on June 30 is a little more difficult to pin down. Is it, like the proposal in January, an invitation to the dance, or is it a challenge to a duel? It is easy enough to dismiss the latest NDC proposal as maneuvering by Pyongyang in advance of Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s July 3-4 visit to Seoul. Well, why wouldn’t the North throw something into the pot at such a time? It’s a perfectly sensible thing to do, especially if it works. As usual, the North probably gamed things out to be ready no matter which way the South moved. By rejecting the proposal so quickly and cavalierly, the ROK may actually have acted according to one of the scenarios the North planned for. Pyongyang views President Park’s new national security adviser Kim Kwan-jin as exceedingly hard line and influential in the Blue House. It may well have calculated there was a better than even chance he would
ensure that Seoul rejected the proposal out of hand. To probe what might be possible, however, the NDC proposal noted that next week would mark the 20th anniversary of Kim II Sung’s signing “a historical document on the north-south summit” shortly before he died. Although short of a straightforward offer for a summit, recalling that Kim was preparing in detail to meet the South Korean leader cracks open a window, suggesting that in the right circumstances, Kim Jong Un might be prepared pick up where his grandfather left off. The reason the current context is more disturbing than what surrounded the existed January proposal is that in his New Year’s address, Kim Jong Un had set the stage for a softer line and, potentially, had opened a window for contact. By contrast, in recent days, there have been a number of articles in DPRK media either asserting North Korean independence, warning South Korean President Park against snuggling up to China, or signaling Beijing not to imagine Pyongyang is unprepared for some rough times in relations if it comes to that. Not only that, this triad of messages was neatly packaged, wordlessly, in photographs of Kim Jong Un, standing alone in the dawn, watching two Scud missiles blast off over the East Sea. The North’s party newspaper Rodong Sinmun carried several photos of the Scud launches in its June 30 edition, which, hardly by coincidence, was the same day the NDC proposal was announced. …As in the January proposal, the NDC suggested it was not opposing US-ROK military exercises per se if they were staged off-peninsula. The January formulation had called for the exercises to be held “in the secluded area or in the U.S. far away (emphasis added) from the territorial land, sea and air of the Korean peninsula.” The June formulation is slightly different, calling for the exercises to be staged “in the area and waters beyond (emphasis added) the territory of the Korean peninsula as already clarified by the DPRK.” That might be a distinction without a difference, but there is no way of knowing without someone asking a knowledgeable DPRK official. In a curious assertion, the June NDC proposal claimed that, “Many neighboring countries desire joint exercises with the Korean People’s Army recently, but it will never move with foreign armies in the air, waters and land of the DPRK, complying with their requests.” It’s possible, one supposes, that China may have offered small scale exercises along the border or in the Yellow Sea in part to reduce the fire under Pyongyang’s nervousness about US-ROK exercises. More likely, however, it is the Russians who are nosing around on the peninsula with thoughts of sending more than their military band, which recently participated in a joint march through the streets of Pyongyang. From time to time in the past—notably in the 1980s when Sino-DPRK relations were in a rough patch—the North Koreans have bent their prohibition against joint military activities with foreign forces and publicly welcomed elements of the Soviet navy and air force.” (James Church, “Rough Seas, Rocky Roads,” 38North, July 2, 2014)

KCNA: “The relevant organ of the DPRK has made investigation into American tourists Miller Matthew Todd and Jeffrey Edward Fowle who were detained while perpetrating hostile acts after entering the territory of the DPRK. According to the results of the investigation, suspicions about their hostile acts have been confirmed by evidence and their testimonies. The relevant organ of the DPRK is carrying on the investigation into them and making preparations for bringing them before court on the basis of the already confirmed charges. Contact with an official looking after consular affairs, treatment, etc. in the course of investigation are being made in line with the laws of the
North Korea said that it planned to indict and try two Americans it has held on charges of committing “hostile acts” against the country, just a day after it fired two ballistic missiles off its east coast, flouting a United Nations ban on the country’s testing of such missiles. KCNA said of the Americans, Matthew Miller, 24, and Jeffrey Edward Fowle, 56, “Their hostile acts were confirmed by evidence and their own testimonies.” Miller was detained for his “absurd” behavior after he tore up his tourist visa and demanded asylum upon arriving in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, on April 10, according to state news media there. The arrest of Fowle, of Miamisburg, Ohio, was confirmed in early June when North Korea accused him of perpetrating “activities that violated the laws of our republic, which did not fit his stated purpose of visiting our republic as a tourist.” The missile test came four days before President Xi Jinping of China is scheduled to visit Seoul in his first trip to the Korean Peninsula as Beijing’s leader. The two Scud-type missiles flew about 310 miles and landed in waters between North Korea and Japan, officials at the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the South Korean military said Sunday. North Korea regularly tests short-range rockets and missiles. It fired three short-range projectiles off its coast on June 26. Its state news media later said that its leader, Kim Jong-un, had supervised what it called the test firings of tactical ballistic rockets, apparently in reference to the launchings yesterday. Xi is scheduled to arrive in Seoul on Thursday for a two-day trip that will include a meeting with Park. While announcing Xi’s trip to Seoul, Qin Gang, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, maintained that China had a “fair and objective position” on the Korean Peninsula. But the South Korean news media played up the fact that Xi would be the first Chinese president to visit Seoul before visiting Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, after assuming the top leadership in Beijing. Some interpreted it as a possible sign that Beijing might be rearranging its priorities between South and North Korea, China’s traditional ally. Ms. Park has been eager to reach out to Beijing, meeting Mr. Xi four times and urging China to use its economic leverage to curb North Korea’s nuclear ambitions. In contrast, Kim, the North Korean leader, has never met Xi or visited Beijing since he took over after the death of his father, Kim Jong-il, in late 2011. Analysts here said that had as much to do with Kim’s preoccupation with consolidating his domestic control as with Beijing’s growing frustration with North Korea, which ignored China’s appeals and conducted its third nuclear test in February 2012. There have been indications that North Korea is becoming increasingly concerned that its economic dependence on trade with China has deepened while it struggles to overcome United Nations sanctions. On June 28, the North’s main party newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, carried a full front-page editorial emphasizing the country’s ideology of “juche” – or self-reliance – and warning against “the pressure from big countries.” North Korea has recently appeared to bolster its ties with Moscow as a possible counterbalance against China. On June 28, the North and Russia staged a rare joint march of their military music bands through central Pyongyang, KCNA reported. Russia increased oil exports to North Korea last year and renovated its rail link with the country; the lack of official oil exports to North Korea in China’s recent trade data prompted speculation that Beijing might be increasing economic pressure on the North. Also today, the North’s National Defense Commission, Kim’s top governing
agency, made a “special proposal” to the South, suggesting that the two Koreas cease all of their “hostile military activities,” including annual joint military drills between South Korea and the United States, as of July 4. July 4 is the anniversary of a 1972 joint declaration in which the two Koreas had agreed to ease tensions and work toward reunification of the divided peninsula. The North has often marked the anniversary with similar peace overtures. In its proposal, the North suggested that the two sides end all cross-border slandering of each other’s leadership and that the South cancel its annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian joint military exercises with the United States, which are scheduled to begin in August. It said that the cancellation of the military drills would help improve the mood for exchanges between the two Koreas, including the North’s participation in the Asian Games to be held in the South Korean city of Incheon from September 19 to October 4. North Korea said in May that it would send a delegation to the Games. South Korea did not immediately respond to the North Korean proposal, but it has rejected the North’s frequent previous demands that it cancel joint military drills with the Americans. (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Plans to Try Two Americans; Defies U.N. by Firing Two Missiles,” New York Times, June 30, 2014, p. A-4)

7/1/14 The government decided on a reinterpretation of the Constitution to allow limited exercise of the right of collective self-defense during a Cabinet meeting, a major turning point for the country’s security policy in the postwar era. At a press conference later in the evening, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe explained the significance of reinterpreting the Constitution, seeking the people’s understanding. “The existing principle that dispatching troops overseas is prohibited in general will not change at all,” he said. “There will never be a case in which the Self-Defense Forces will participate in combat in wars such as the Gulf War and the Iraq War.” Abe emphasized that the latest Cabinet decision will further decrease the risk that Japan is dragged into war. “I want to clearly say once again that Japan will never become a country that wages war again,” he said. Under the government’s new view on security legislation, the right of collective self-defense can be exercised as a self-defense measure when three conditions are met: 1: An armed attack takes place against a foreign country with which Japan has close relations and the country’s existence is threatened and there is a “clear danger” that the people’s right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness will be fundamentally undermined. 2. There are no other appropriate measures to ensure the country’s existence and protect the people. 3. The use of force is kept to the minimum necessary. Under the interpretation of the Constitution by past administrations, the country has the right of collective self-defense but cannot exercise it. The Cabinet decision also incorporates the development of legislation to enable the Self-Defense Forces engaged in U.N. peacekeeping operations and other activities to come to the rescue of civilians or foreign troops in geographically distant areas and to protect weapons and other supplies used by U.S. military units engaged in defending Japan. In addition, the SDF will be able to provide logistic support to foreign troops in areas other than those in which the troops are actually engaged in acts of combat, according to the Cabinet decision. Notably, the new interpretation could pave the way for the SDF to provide logistic support in wider areas as long as they are not places where combat is actually taking place. The Cabinet decision also states that discussions will be carried out to speed up procedures to deal with an infringement, not amounting to an armed attack, taking place in areas around remote islands, apparently with the
Senkaku Islands in mind. The Abe administration was eager to allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defense because, as Abe mentioned at the press conference, the security environment surrounding Japan is increasingly severe. This is exemplified by China’s military buildup and recent maritime expansion as well as North Korea’s nuclear and missile development programs.

Points of Cabinet decision:
* The use of minimum necessary force is permitted under the Constitution when an armed attack takes place against a foreign country with which Japan has close relations and there is a clear danger that the people’s right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness will be fundamentally undermined.
* There are cases in which the use of force has its basis in the right of collective self-defense under international law.
* Discussions will be carried out to speed up the issuance of commands and other procedures to deal with an infringement that does not amount to an armed attack. Legislation will be established to enable the Self-Defense Forces to protect weapons and other supplies used by U.S. military units engaged in defending Japan.
* Legislation will be established to enable the SDF to come to the rescue of civilians or foreign troops in remote locations when certain conditions, including the provision of consent by the government of a country to which the SDF is dispatched, are met.
* The SDF will be able to provide logistic support for foreign troops in areas other than those in which the “troops are engaged in acts of combat.”

(Yomiuri Shimbun, “New Defense Era for Japan; Collective Right OK’d in Severe Security Environment,” July 1, 2014)

Since the prime minister started public briefings on the move last month, his cabinet’s approval rating has sagged to 45 per cent, the lowest rating since it was formed in December 2012. Polls taken by three national dailies within the past week showed that at least half of respondents opposed the idea of Japan exercising its right to collective self-defense, with a third or fewer in favor. On June 29 a man set himself alight on a pedestrian footbridge in the busy Tokyo district of Shinjuku, having spent the previous hour denouncing Mr Abe’s plans through a megaphone, according to eyewitnesses. Thousands took to the streets around parliament yesterday and today, some waving posters depicting Abe with a swastika tattoo and Hitler moustache. Many Japanese are not fundamentally opposed to what Abe is attempting to do. The prime minister’s more assertive foreign policy – including the visit last December to the Yasukuni shrine, where Japan’s wartime leaders are honored – has played well among voters. And some see problems with existing restrictions on the country’s Self-Defense Forces. At the moment, for example, troops on overseas relief missions are allowed to discharge their weapons only if they themselves come under fire. But many resent the way the prime minister has gone about it. Critics argue that the shift amounts to, in effect, a rewriting of Japan’s constitution, but without any attempt to clear the requisite hurdle of a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament, followed by a national referendum. The Japanese are still “very attached to the principle of pacifism in the postwar regime”, says Yamaguchi Jiro, a professor of political science at Hosei University, who is among a group of more than 500 scholars opposed to the move. “We are against the amendment of the constitution without formal procedures.” Kitaoka Shinichi, a former Japanese ambassador to the UN who served as the deputy chairman of a panel advising on reinterpreting the constitution, says the shift should be seen as a continuation of the government’s efforts to beef up its defense policy, including the creation last year of a US-style national security council and the introduction of tougher laws to penalize leaks of classified information. Kitaoka also notes that there have been
reinterpretations of the constitution before, allowing Japan to establish the SDF in 1954, for example, and to support US forces overseas in 2001. But to many, defending allies even when Japan itself is not under direct attack stretches the definition of the “minimum” level of armed strength enshrined in Japan’s fundamental concepts of national defense. (Ben McLannahan, “Abe Sparks Constitutional Debate on Defense,” Financial Times, July 2, 2014, p. 3) The decision giving the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) the ability to wage war for the first time in 69 years stands to have a major impact on the Korean Peninsula. The potential effects include both direct and indirect outcomes. To begin with, the Korea could end up in the path of an indirect typhoon: a scenario where a newly empowered JSDF stirs up security fears in Northeast Asia, with the Korean Peninsula becoming a victim of the deteriorating environment. In this sense, the most dangerous outcome would be a regional power struggle between China and Japan. That situation could result in a vicious cycle where China takes the larger JSDF role as an excuse to beef up its military spending, prompting Japan to assume an even greater role. It’s a set of circumstances where the sense of mutual wariness turns into an arms race, and South Korea is forced to think seriously about whether or not to join. Another potential factor is that growing nationalism in China and Japan, along with antagonistic attitudes toward the outside, could provoke negative public opinion in South Korea. Seoul also has less room to maneuver diplomatically if China and Japan’s conflict intensifies. Japan, with the backing of Washington, and its counterpart China can be expected to use a mixture of “charm offensive” and pressure tactics to sway South Korea. Already, the US is calling for the introduction of a missile defense system in South Korea as part of a trilateral security cooperation framework with Japan against China’s rising power. Beijing, for its part, is also working hard to win Seoul over. “Now that Japan has its collective self-defense authority, it’s in a kind of ‘hostile partnership’ with China,” said one security expert on condition of anonymity. “As a nation divided into North and South, the Korean Peninsula is going to face an uncertain environment, where as the China-Japan conflict deepens, it keeps getting asked ‘Whose side are you on?’,” the expert explained. Besides the growing role for JSDF, another potential source of change is an ongoing shakeup in the security role Washington holds in the region. Mounting deficits and isolationist sentiments in the US could end up having a serious impact. “When [former President Richard] Nixon visited China and established diplomatic ties in 1972, China accepted the US-Japan alliance in the region as a way for Washington to keep Tokyo in line,” explained Lee Hye-jeong, a professor of political science and international relations at Chung-Ang University. “Now that the US is releasing control and Japan is acquiring its own military force, the order in Northeast Asia is poised for some drastic changes,” Lee said. If this does come to pass, one possible outcome is that the South Korea-US alliance could end up a mere subcomponent of the US-Japan alliance, which has positioned Tokyo as Washington’s proxy in Asia. This would push South Korea to the front lines of conflict in the region. South Korea could also be impacted more directly by the JSDF’s new collective self-defense authority. The text of the July 1 decision by the Japanese Cabinet is unclear on how much, if at all, Seoul’s opinion would be considered when sending the JSDF outside of South Korean waters - into international waters near the peninsula, for instance. If Tokyo were to attempt to search North Korean boats in international waters as part of its collective self-defense, the result could be a physical clash with North Korea, a situation that would have an
immediate impact on South Korean security. Seoul has no real practical means of defending against such an outcome. And while some of the scenarios mentioned by Tokyo as examples of collective self-defense - protecting US vessels, intercepting ballistic missiles - also touch upon South Korean interests, there is little Seoul can do if they take place outside the peninsula in nearby international waters. Another situation would be if Japan supports “preemptive defense” by the US against the possibility of a North Korean missile attack. Since Washington has wartime operational control (OPCON) in the event of an emergency on the peninsula, it could request Japanese intervention in such a scenario, citing Japan’s collective self-defense authority. The result would have a direct impact on the South and North. Although Seoul may not have any direct influence with Tokyo now that the latter has already allowed collective self-defense, some are calling for it to take a leading role in establish a “center of gravity” between North and South, with a multilateral regional framework like the six-party talks to serve as a check against the influence of China, Japan, or any other specific countries growing too much. (Kim Oi-hyun, “The Effects of Japan’s New Ability to Wage War on the Korean Peninsula,” Hankyore, July 3, 2014)

South Korea turned down North Korea’s latest peace overture, saying Pyongyang must first demonstrate its commitment to ending its nuclear weapons program. “North Korea’s proposal lacks sincerity and is preposterous as it blames South Korea for growing inter-Korean military tensions and strained bilateral ties,” South Korea’s unification ministry said in a statement. “Pyongyang should demonstrate its sincerity on resolving the nuclear issue -- the fundamental threat to peace on the Korean Peninsula -- if it truly wants peace.” (Yonhap, “S. Korea Spurns N. Korea’s Proposal for Peace,” July 1, 2014)

In a visit certain to be watched carefully in Pyongyang, President Xi Jinping will be holding talks with South Korean President Park Geun-hye for the fifth time in a year, without yet meeting the North’s leader, Kim Jong Un. North Korea’s nuclear and missile program, and its plans to hold a fourth nuclear test, will dominate the agenda, officials in Seoul said. “There will clearly be an expression of the commitment by the two leaders and their governments that North Korea’s nuclear weapons will not be tolerated,” South Korea’s Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se told parliament yesterday. “(The two leaders) are expected to spend considerable time discussing the North Korean nuclear and the Korean peninsula issues in depth, and we believe the atmosphere will be appropriately reflected in a joint document,” Yun said. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin said the nuclear issue would be an “important topic” during Xi’s talks with Park. “Pushing for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and maintaining the peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and solving the issue on the Korean peninsula through peaceful means has been China’s goal for many years,” he told reporters. Despite U.S. and South Korean pressure, China is likely to maintain that it is in no position to ensure that the North give up its nuclear arms. “The main player in this is not China, but the other two countries - North Korea and the United States,” said Li Changhe, a former senior diplomat who now works for the government-backed China Arms Control and Disarmament Association. “China is in there to push talks, getting those two to sit down together. But the problem is neither
side really listens to us. We’re stuck in the middle.” (Jack Kim, “China’s Xi Heads to Seoul with North Korea on His Mind,” Reuters, July 1, 2014)

Japan and North Korea on Tuesday discussed specifics of Pyongyang’s promised establishment of a new special panel that will look into its abductions of Japanese nationals. A senior Japanese diplomat said he explained Tokyo’s plan to ease some sanctions it has imposed unilaterally because of North Korea’s missile and nuclear tests, in exchange for the launch of the new body. But whether the Japanese government actually goes ahead with the plan is to be decided by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe after his government analyzes the information obtained from a North Korean delegation on what has been described as a “special investigation committee,” Japanese officials said. (Karube Takuya, “Japan, N. Korea Discuss Details of New Panel on Abduction Issue,” Kyodo, July 1, 2014)

James Church: “Most outsiders have convinced themselves that restarting Team Spirit led to Pyongyang’s decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). I happen to know through an acquaintance that the NPT withdrawal was in the planning before the Team Spirit decision was announced in the early autumn of 1992. Kim Jong II was looking for ways to withdraw from the treaty and a decision had already been more or less made to proceed. Cheney helped provide the cover, and for that, as well as for several other things he did subsequently, we have always felt a debt of gratitude to him. I have sometimes asked myself, if Team Spirit hadn’t been reinstated, what twists and turns Pyongyang would have used to justify the NPT withdrawal in March 1993? Gregg also describes, with some deserved pride, his contribution to the decision to withdraw US tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea. The book is not meant to provide the details for the decision-making in Washington on this subject. Most of the book is taken up with much earlier history, but there is a bow to more recent events. Gregg explains how in November 2002, after the disastrous meeting between First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok Ju and US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly a month earlier, he delivered to the White House an oral message from Kim Jong Il (he correctly points out that this was not a “letter,” which would have had a much higher profile and, to some extent, carried more weight.) In Gregg’s telling—which matches exactly the version recounted several years earlier by Don Oberdorfer, who accompanied Gregg to Pyongyang—Hadley showed no interest whatsoever in the message or in what the two veteran American observers had to say about their visit. It is incredible that the Americans did not understand how much positive leverage they had at that moment, and they threw it all away without a second thought. Kim Jong II had been working on important new economic policies for well over a year and finally launched them in July 2002. The last thing he needed was a crisis with the US only 90 days into the process. If the Americans had taken seriously the message from Kim that Gregg brought back to Washington, along with the other signals we were sending at the time through other channels, things almost certainly would have turned out differently. But, of course, there was no chance of the Bush Administration doing that, and so we had no choice. The book is the result of a conference held in Seoul early in 2013, at the beginning of Obama’s second term. Gregg, ever the optimist, voiced the hope that US policy in Obama’s last four years would turn to a more constructive path. It has not happened.
Washington seems blind to the real lessons of history, as so well described in *Bound by Destiny.* (James Church, “Donald Gregg: A Plot Twist in Korea’s Story,” *38North*, July 1, 2014)

7/2/14 North Korea fired two short-range projectiles from its east coast on Wednesday, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said, the latest in a series of rocket launches that came on the eve of Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to South Korea. The rockets, presumed to be 300-millimeter multiple-rocket launcher KN-09 shells, were fired from a site near its eastern city of Wonsan at around 6:50 a.m. and 8 a.m. in a northeastern direction, according to the JCS. “They flew some 180 kilometers and seem to have landed in the North’s territorial waters, not in international waters,” a JCS officer said. “It is yet to be confirmed if the North made a pre-announcement for civilian flights or vessels. We’ve just detected them with our military’s surveillance equipment,” he added. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Again Fires Short-Range Rockets into East Sea,” July 2, 2014)

7/3/14 Japan decided to ease some sanctions on North Korea in return for its reopening of a probe into the fate of Japanese citizens abducted by the reclusive state decades ago, as a fresh report emerged that some of them were alive. Japan will lift travel curbs to and from North Korea and end restrictions on the amount of money that can be sent or brought to the impoverished North without notifying Japanese authorities. It will also allow port calls by North Korean ships for humanitarian purposes. The sanctions to be lifted are separate from those imposed by Japan and other U.N. members after Pyongyang’s first nuclear test in 2006 that prohibit U.N. member states from arms trade with Pyongyang and from financial transactions that facilitate such trade. “This is just a start,” Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, who has made the fate of the abductees a focus of his political career, told reporters. “We will make every effort to achieve a complete resolution of this issue.” Abe said the government had determined that North Korea took an unprecedented step in establishing a new entity to investigate all Japanese nationals involved. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide, however, told reporters separately that Abe was not considering a visit to Pyongyang in the autumn, as some media have speculated. The Nikkei business daily said that North Korea had handed Japan the names of at least 10 of its nationals said to be living in that country, including some of those believed to have been abducted. Proof that some of the missing Japanese are alive would almost certainly boost Abe’s popularity. Suga however said the government had not received any report of such a list. Some analysts said cracks were starting to show. “It seems to me that it’s going to become harder and harder for the U.S. to pretend that everything is fine in terms of coordination on DPRK (North Korea) policy as Japan moves down this road,” Joel Wit, a former U.S. State Department official and visiting fellow at the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, told Reuters in an e-mail. (Linda Sieg and Kiyoshi Takenaka, “Japan Lifts Some North Korea Sanctions amid Report of Surviving Abductees,” Reuters, July 3, 2014) On July 10 Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga denied the existence of the list, reported by the Nikkei, Japan’s largest business daily, and said the government plans to file a protest. “All the reported (facts) are erroneous. There were no facts like that at all,” Suga said of the article. (Yoshida Reiji, “Suga Denies Report That Pyongyang Provided List of Japanese Living in North,” *Japan Times*, July 10, 2014) North Korea’s chief negotiator to bilateral talks with Japan
said that Pyongyang will swiftly begin an investigation into the fate of Japanese nationals abducted by the North’s agents decades ago, Song Il-ho, the North Korean chief delegate, also reacted positively to the announcement by Japan earlier in the day that Tokyo will lift some of its own sanctions against North Korea after the two nations held the one-day talks in Beijing this week. "We are willing to carry out the investigation as soon as possible and inform the Japanese side of the outcome of the investigation," Song told journalists at the Beijing airport before returning to Pyongyang. Asked about the announcement by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that Tokyo will lift some sanctions against the North, Song replied, “That was already agreed upon. When I return to our country and report details to our government, it will announce measures that will match (Japan’s announcement).” During yesterday’s talks in Beijing, Song said the two sides discussed details of what is called a special investigation committee that will oversee the investigation into the abducted Japanese citizens. "We informed the Japanese side of the authority, structure and main personnel of the special investigation committee, as well as how the investigation will be conducted," Song said. "In return, the Japanese side informed us of working-level procedures related to the lifting of its sanctions," he said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea to Swiftly Conduct Abduction Investigation: Envoy,” July 3, 2014) The government will lift the following unilateral sanctions: travel restrictions; regulations on remittances to North Korea exceeding ¥3 million, and cash taken to the country in excess of ¥100,000. Both must currently be reported to the Japanese government; the ban on the entry of North Korean-registered ships for humanitarian purposes. If the sanctions are lifted, senior officials of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chonryon), including Chairman Ho Jong Man, will be allowed to travel to North Korea and return to Japan. Meanwhile, the Mangyongbong-92, a North Korean cargo-passenger ship, will still be banned from entering Japanese ports. The special investigative committee will be headed by a councillor of the National Defense Commission. The special investigative committee will have four subpanels to look into each of four issues: Japanese abductees, missing Japanese nationals, remains of Japanese nationals, and Japanese nationals remaining in North Korea and Japanese nationals married to North Koreans. The committee will draw upon about 30 members from the State Security Department, the People’s Security Ministry, the People’s Armed Forces Ministry and other organizations. Investigations into the four issues will be carried out simultaneously. (Yomiuri Shimbun, “Abe Announces Partial Lifting of N. Korea Sanctions,” July 3, 2014) South Korea’s foreign ministry said that Japan’s plan to ease sanctions on North Korea should be carried out in a way that does not hamper international efforts to eliminate Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program. "The Korean government hopes that (the issue of) the Japanese abductions will be resolved at an early date as it is a humanitarian issue," Noh Kwang-il, a spokesman at the foreign ministry, told a regular press briefing. "But the agreement between North Korea and Japan, including the easing of sanctions, should be pursued in a transparent manner. We stress that any measures to be taken by Japan should be made in a way not to hamper international cooperation in curbing North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs.” (Yonhap, “N. Korea-Japan Deal Must Not Hurt Efforts to End Nuke Program: Seoul,” July 3, 2014) Tokyo lists 12 Japanese as having been abducted by North Korea but whose whereabouts remain unknown. So Tae Ha will be named chairman of the special committee, a post equivalent to vice minister. He currently
serves as councilor in charge of security at the National Defense Commission as well as a vice minister in the State Security Ministry. So is a close associate of Kim Jong Un, government sources said. The committee’s vice chairmen will be Kim Myong Chol, a councilor in the State Security Ministry, and Pak Yong Sik, a department director in the Ministry of People’s Security. (Asahi Shimbun, “Japan to Lift 3 Sanctions against N. Korea; Abduction Reinvestigation to Start,” July 3, 2014) Abe said the North’s newly formed “special investigation committee” appears to have “unprecedented power” to examine any organization thanks to the support of potent decision-making bodies such as the National Defense Commission and the State Security Department for the abduction issue. “According to the principle of action to action, we would like to lift some of sanctions that Japan has independently imposed,” Abe told reporters at his office in Tokyo. “This is just a start. … We will make every effort to achieve a complete resolution of this issue.” Four subcommittees are to be set up, each responsible for: examining the status of the Japanese abductees; looking into other missing Japanese; handling the remains of deceased Japanese; and studying the fate of those who were left in North Korea and Japanese spouses of North Korean nationals. “We informed the Japanese side of the authority, structure and main members of the special investigation committee, as well as its operation and probe methods,” Song told reporters at the Beijing airport on his way home. (Shin Hyon-hee, “Japan to Lift Some N.K. Sanctions,” Korea Herald, July 3, 2014)

KCNA: “The DPRK-Japan inter-governmental talks took place in Beijing on July 1. Present there from the DPRK side were the delegation led by Song Il Ho, ambassador of the Foreign Ministry, and from the Japanese side the delegation led by Ihara Junichi, chief of the Asia and Oceania Bureau of the Foreign Ministry. At the talks, both sides referred to the activities so far conducted to implement the points of the DPRK-Japan agreement reached in Stockholm late in May. The Japanese side notified the DPRK side in detail of what sanctions against it will be lifted and the procedures now under way, etc. The DPRK side notified the Japanese side of the authority of the “special investigation committee”, the system of its composition, method of its operation and forms and methods of investigation. Both sides agreed to take necessary measures in the days ahead while keeping in touch through a diplomatic channel.” (KCNA, “Japan-DPRK Inter-Governmental Talks Held,” July 3, 2014)

KPA Strategic Force spokesman to a question raised by the Joson Inmingun “in connection with the fact that the U.S. is saying this or that to find fault with the tactical guided missile test-fire being conducted by the DPRK: A few days ago, researchers in the field of national defense and workers in the munitions industry field of the DPRK developed and successfully test-fired ultra-modern high-precision tactical guided missiles. This was followed by successful launching drill of tactical guided missiles by the Strategic Force of the KPA. The test-fire and launch of tactical guided missiles that took place at a time when the dangerous war provocation moves of the U.S. and its allies have reached an extreme phase are the legitimate exercise of the sovereignty that showed in practice that those who infringe upon the sovereignty and the dignity of the country can never get rid of the striking range of various high-precision firepower strike means whoever and wherever they are and whether they are individual or group targets. Great irony is the U.S. ridiculous response to the test-fire and launch. The U.S.
has become vocal in calling the recent launch problematic and a “threatening act of escalating tension in the region”, while saying it is the U.S. “basic principle” and “basic stand” to “oppose any missile launch by north Korea.” It even urged the DPRK to “immediately refrain from provocative act.” It is understandable that south Korea is crying in distress that the DPRK’s tactical guided missiles become “serious threats” as they can turn to ashes at a stroke even the Kyeryongdae in South Chungchong Province which houses the headquarters of the puppet three services. It is because they always suffer from uneasiness and horror, feeling guilty conscience for the crimes they committed against the DPRK. Problem is that the U.S. which is accustomed to branding all the just measures taken by the DPRK for self-defense as “provocations” and “threats” has become louder in criticizing the tactical guided missile launch as the launch of long-range rockets targeting the U.S. mainland. A saying goes criminals often mistake a power pole for a scaffold. If the tactical guided missile test-fire and drill become “provocations” and “threats,” how can a huge number of missile launches conducted by the U.S. be justified. It was only recently that the U.S. carried out a ballistic missile launch exercise to intercept guided missiles of the DPRK. Does the U.S. have the right to dare find fault with the tactical guided missile test-fire and drill of the DPRK, an act pertaining to the sovereign right of the country? The point is why the U.S. brands the test-fire and drill as “threatening acts.” It is aimed to prevent the DPRK from bolstering the deterrence for self-defence, employ every possible means and method to isolate it and create an opportunity for “overthrowing its social system.” We are clearly aware of the fact that the U.S. is a chief criminal posing the constant danger of a war to the Korean peninsula. The U.S. has been engrossed in nuclear threat and blackmail against the DPRK by frequently bringing the formation of B-52 nuclear strategic bombers and super-large nuclear-powered carrier task force from the U.S. mainland, Guam and the Pacific region. It is also the U.S. which backed south Korea’s efforts to extend the missile range to over 800 km to pit it against the DPRK to the last. It is a height of effrontery for such a country to take issue with the DPRK under such absurd charges of “escalating tension” and “making a threatening and provocative act.” Even a wall has an ear. The U.S. exposed once again its ugly nature as a gangster by itself. All the military measures taken by the DPRK on this land are the righteous exercise of its sovereignty that was caused by the U.S. aggression and war moves. The army and people of the DPRK will put the greatest spurs to bolstering the deterrence for self-defense thousand-fold, bearing in mind the teachings given by the respected supreme commander that the peaceful environment dearest to the Korean people can neither be provided by someone nor be bartered for anything and that durable peace can be protected only when one is so strong that nobody dares provoke one and it can be guaranteed by one’s own strength. No matter how desperately the U.S. may find fault with the DPRK, it will continue to hold drills of launching high-precision tactical guided missiles, targeting the citadel of the gangsters who go mischievous. What remains to be done by the U.S. is to just keep watching the signal measures to be taken by the DPRK to bolster its capability for self-defense which will demonstrate their might to strike the world with admiration.” (KCNA, “DPRK’s Tactical Guided Missiles Will Continue to Be Launched: Spokesman for KPA Strategic Force,” July 3, 2014)

Cross-border trade between North Korea and Russia jumped 37 percent to US$104 million in 2013 from the $76 million recorded in the previous year, according to a
report by Lee Yong-hwa, a researcher at the private think tank Hyundai Research Institute. “The North is believed to have forged deeper relations with Russia in an effort to revitalize its economy and prevent it from becoming excessively dependent on China,” Lee said in the report. (Yonhap, “Russia-N. Korea Economic Ties Expanding: Report,” July 3, 2014)

Einhorn: "U.S. policy toward North Korea is dead in the water. This is not a particular criticism of the Obama administration. U.S. policy toward the DPRK for the last quarter century has essentially failed. Of course, some problems don’t have solutions, at least not at a price we are willing to pay. The North Korea nuclear issue may be one of them. Perhaps the best we can do is manage the problem—limit the damage as much as possible. But this is a problem with enormous stakes for U.S. national security, for our allies, for the stability of Northeast Asia, and for the global nonproliferation regime. And it seems headed in a dangerous direction. Left to continue on that trajectory, things could get a lot worse. Simply managing the problem could become a very risky strategy. So, as frustrating as dealing with the North Koreans has been over the last two decades and as skeptical as we have every right to be about prospects for success, we should now give serious consideration to whether more active engagement with the North could serve U.S. interests. For the last several months, China has energetically sought to build support for a resumption of the Six Party Talks. The North Koreans have asserted their readiness to return to the negotiating table without preconditions, presumably hoping to realize the economic and other benefits of engagement. But they have resisted reaffirming their previous commitments to suspend nuclear activities and pursue denuclearization, especially those contained in the September 2005 six-party joint statement. For their part, the United States, South Korea, and Japan have seen little point in resumption unless Pyongyang is willing not only to recommit to the goal of denuclearization, but also to lend credibility to that commitment by taking concrete steps to restrain its nuclear and missile programs. In its role as intermediary, China has strongly encouraged the North to recommit to denuclearization and adopt measures of nuclear and missile restraint. Beijing has grown increasingly aggravated by the provocative and erratic behavior of the Kim Jong-un regime, especially by the execution of Jang Song Taek (Kim’s uncle and China’s main conduit to the North Korean leadership) and by North Korea’s defiance of its pleas not to carry out nuclear and missile tests. China’s disenchantment with its erstwhile ally has reportedly led to an active internal debate about whether the North has become more of a liability than an asset, but it has not yet led to a decision to exert the kind of powerful pressures that Chinese leaders fear could undermine the Kim regime and destabilize the region. Working closely with the United States—consistent with the Xi-Obama agreement at the 2013 Sunnylands summit to cooperate on North Korea—China pressed North Korea to take steps to demonstrate a genuine commitment to disarm. But the North adamantly refused to adopt constraints in advance of the resumption of the Six Party Talks, instead claiming that it could take steps once the multilateral process reconvened. Stymied by North Korea’s position, China has turned, in frustration, to the United States and South Korea and urged them to lower their requirements for getting the talks underway. The conditions for resuming Six Party Talks are expected to be discussed at the current high-level meetings in Seoul and Beijing. The question of whether and under what conditions to
resume Six Party Talks is a tough one for the Obama administration. There are understandable reasons for resisting engagement, or at least setting a very high bar for resumption. Given the disappointing track record of dealing with the DPRK over the last twenty years, the investment of time and energy may be hard to justify, especially when the likelihood of success is so uncertain. Moreover, the American public and opinion leaders have been content to keep the North Korea problem on the back burner in recent years. Gaining their support for elevating the priority assigned to the DPRK—particularly when so many other difficult issues are crowding the U.S. foreign-policy agenda—may be a challenge. But there are also good reasons for reengagement. Even if prospects for complete denuclearization are remote, engagement could, at least in the near term, reduce the likelihood of dangerous North Korean provocations against the ROK and other U.S. interests. It could produce constraints on DPRK programs that would curb the momentum toward the capability to threaten the United States with nuclear-armed missiles and buy time for strengthening U.S. and allied defenses against such capabilities. Through direct contacts and renewed IAEA access, it could also give us better insights into the regime’s thinking and a better handle on its strategic programs. Given the potential risks as well as the potential benefits, it would make sense—before deciding whether to resume Six Party Talks—to test whether North Korea is prepared to engage seriously, particularly whether it is willing to accept meaningful constraints on its nuclear and missile programs. The most effective way to test Pyongyang is through bilateral U.S.-DPRK exploratory discussions. China has made genuine and persistent efforts to persuade North Korea’s leadership to take the steps necessary to get the multilateral talks underway. But notwithstanding Beijing’s impatience with its neighbor and its increased emphasis on the imperative of denuclearization, Chinese and U.S. interests on the North Korea problem, while converging, are not identical. The United States needs an unfiltered view of DPRK positions that it can only get through direct, face-to-face contacts. And only through such contacts can the U.S. administration ensure that its requirements are set forth as clearly and forcefully as necessary, without trimming or blurring those requirements for the sake of accommodation. This is not to suggest that the administration should turn this into a bilateral U.S.-DPRK matter or relieve China of its major responsibility for helping engineer a solution. The North Korea problem belongs to the region and the international community generally, and progress must be made multilaterally and with China playing a leading role. It is just to suggest that the United States is in the best position to test North Korea, but Washington should do so in close consultation with, and with the support of, its partners in the six-party process. Regarding what the United States should seek in any bilateral exploratory discussions, it is probably unrealistic to expect Pyongyang to agree to implement concrete constraints in advance of the formal commencement of Six Party Talks. Instead, in the course of such bilateral discussions, the United States should seek to nail down the specific steps the North Koreans would be willing to commit to in the first few days of the resumed talks—and the specific timeframes in which it would implement those steps. If the talks commenced and the North failed to follow through with the agreement reached in the exploratory discussions, there would be clear grounds for calling a halt to the process. During the bilateral discussions, what steps should North Korea be urged to take? They should be similar to the measures Pyongyang accepted in the February 2013 “leap-day deal”—a U.S.-DPRK bilateral
arrangement that fell apart when the North launched what it called a civilian space-launch vehicle, an action that U.S. negotiators warned their North Korean counterparts would be regarded as a violation of the arrangement. So North Korea should be required to suspend nuclear activities at its Yongbyon nuclear complex—including at its uranium-enrichment facility, its experimental light water reactor, and its five-megawatt plutonium-production reactor—and to permit the IAEA to return to Yongbyon to monitor the suspension. It should also adopt a moratorium on nuclear tests and on flight testing of long-range missiles. This time around, the moratorium on long-range missile flights tests should explicitly prohibit all launches of rocket systems with a range and payload greater than agreed limits, regardless of whether the rocket systems are labeled as missiles or civilian space-launch vehicles. If it would facilitate North Korean acceptance of such a measure, North Korea could unilaterally assert a right to carry out rocket tests for peaceful purposes, as long as it clearly agreed to refrain from carrying out such tests under the moratorium. A key question in seeking North Korean constraints is what to do about undeclared nuclear activities outside the Yongbyon complex. Ever since the North Koreans brought eminent U.S. scientist Sig Hecker to see their new uranium-enrichment facility at Yongbyon, it has been clear to any knowledgeable observer that the facility could not have been built by that time unless a variety of enrichment-related activities and facilities already existed outside Yongbyon. Indeed, it is widely assumed that there is currently an operating enrichment plant outside Yongbyon that is producing highly-enriched uranium for North Korea’s nuclear-weapons program. While the suspension of all enrichment-related activities outside Yongbyon and the elimination of all enrichment-related facilities would be required at an early stage of denuclearization, it is exceedingly unlikely that Pyongyang would be willing in the initial days of a resumed six-party process to make those concessions. At the same time, it is inconceivable that the United States and some of its partners would agree to resume the multilateral process if North Korea persisted in denying and concealing the existence of a critical component of its nuclear-weapons program. Therefore, it is essential that, in any agreed “choreography” for the opening days of the Six Party Talks, the North Koreans acknowledge that they possess nuclear facilities outside Yongbyon, identify the numbers and kinds of facilities and their operating status, and commit to addressing those facilities in the negotiations within a reasonable period of time. In all negotiations with the North Koreans over the last twenty years, they have insisted that any DPRK concessions be matched by reciprocal steps by the United States and the other six-party players. “Actions for actions, words for words,” they like to say. If we want the North, at the opening of a resumed six-party process, to announce the steps it is willing to take and the timeframe in which it is prepared to take them, we can expect Pyongyang to insist that the United States and its partners indicate, at the same time, what compensation they are prepared to provide. For North Korea’s actions in the leap-day deal, nutritional assistance was the essential quid pro quo. Whether such assistance or some other step or steps would be required would be a subject for the bilateral exploratory discussions. Another subject for those discussions would be the purpose of the resumed six-party process. While it would not be necessary to insist on North Korean implementation of agreed constraints before the commencement of the multilateral talks, it would be necessary to agree in
advance on the purpose of the talks—and to make that purpose public. In particular, it would have to be agreed that the purpose, or goal, of the resumed talks is the denuclearization of North Korea—not, as Pyongyang has suggested, a discussion of limits on nuclear capabilities by states possessing nuclear weapons, including the DPRK. It must be clear that the United States and its partners in the process do not and will not accept the North as a nuclear-armed state and that the outcome of the process, however long it may take, is the complete and verifiable elimination of North Korea’s nuclear-weapons capability. In recommitting to the goal of denuclearization, North Koreans may well be expected to assert unilaterally that their willingness ultimately to fulfill that goal will depend on the abandonment of what they call the U.S. “hostile policy” toward the DPRK regime—or some such qualification. They can say what they will, and the terms for moving forward toward denuclearization will have to be addressed in the negotiations. But from the outset, it must be clear that the process is about disarming North Korea. Whether or not U.S.-DPRK exploratory discussions actually result in the formal return to Six Party Talks would depend on North Korea’s willingness to accept meaningful, initial constraints on its nuclear and missile programs. If the bilateral talks reveal that Pyongyang is not prepared to take reasonable steps at the outset of the multilateral process, the United States will at least have demonstrated its desire to find a diplomatic solution and the true source of the impasse will be apparent. In those circumstances, the United States would be in a stronger position to gain international support for tightening sanctions against North Korea—just as Iranian intransigence in the P5+1 talks in the 2009-2012 period facilitated efforts to toughen economic pressures against Tehran. Indeed, in agreeing to hold exploratory discussions with the DPRK—a development the Chinese would presumably strongly support—the United States should seek an understanding with Beijing that, if Pyongyang does not agree to reasonable steps to get the multilateral talks underway, it would be time to work together to ratchet up pressures against the North. And in parallel with the U.S.-DPRK discussions, the Chinese should weigh in separately with DPRK leaders to encourage them to reach agreement with the Americans on the measures needed to resume the multilateral process. Of course, even if North Korea commits to implementing meaningful constraints at the outset of resumed Six Party Talks—and follows through on that commitment—there is no guarantee that the process will eventually lead to the complete and verifiable elimination of Pyongyang’s nuclear-weapons program, which must remain our firm goal. Indeed, we would have every reason to be highly skeptical—whatever the North may say about recommitting to denuclearization—that it would genuinely intend to get rid of its nuclear weapons and every reason to suspect that any constraint would be tactical, designed to realize near-term benefits, and would be abandoned when judged to be no longer in North Korea’s interest. The uncertainties of such a path forward would hardly be ideal, to say the least. But they should be compared with the unsatisfactory and potentially deteriorating path on which we currently are. Monitored limits on DPRK capabilities at the outset of resumed multilateral talks could blunt the momentum of the North’s nuclear and missile programs, reduce the likelihood of dangerous provocations in the near term, and give us a better window into the behavior of Pyongyang’s mercurial and largely opaque leadership. These are not insignificant gains. And a resumed multilateral process would provide a diplomatic framework, which we could seek to
structure in such a way as to give Pyongyang’s leaders continuing incentives to move step-by-step toward complete denuclearization. Far from a sure thing, but more promising than maintaining the status quo.” (Robert Einhorn, “Should America Reengage with North Korea?” The National Interest, July 3, 2014)

On the day of the summit, South Korean President Park Geun-hye and Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed their clear opposition to nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula and agreed to explore ways to relaunch the long-stalled six-party talks to end Pyongyang’s nuclear programs. Park and Xi also discussed regional security issues, including Japan’s move to strengthen its military role, and agreed on a set of measures to elevate the Seoul-Beijing bilateral partnership to new heights. A joint communique issued after the summit meeting that lasted more than two hours showed both leaders firmly opposed to North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons. The communique comes 11 months after the two leaders released a joint communique on a future vision for South Korea-China bilateral ties when Park made a state visit to the Chinese capital in June 2013. In the communique a year earlier, Park and Xi only agreed to work to restart the six-party talks to realize a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. Hwang Joon-kook, an official with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who is also a top envoy to the six-party talks that deal with Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons, told reporters that the wording against nuclear weapons includes disapproval of a fourth nuclear test that Pyongyang is known to be preparing for. The addition of “firm opposition” to nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula in the joint communique between Seoul and Beijing came for the first time. “Both (South Korea and China) have supported the idea of making efforts to materialize visible progress in the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through various meaningful conversations among chief negotiators to the six-party talks,” said Park in the joint press conference. “I believe President Xi’s visit to South Korea will send a clear message against North Korea’s nuclearization and for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.” Evidently, the united stance by Seoul and Beijing sends a clear message to North Korea, which has repeatedly defied international pressure to give up its nuclear weapons. The North has vowed to develop its economy and nuclear arsenal in tandem, viewing its nuclear program as a deterrent against what it claims is Washington’s policy of hostility. Park and Xi, who met for the fifth time since they both took office early last year, also reached a consensus on coming up with conditions for resuming the long-stalled six-party talks after gathering opinions from the multilateral talks’ other participants, which are North Korea, the United States, Japan and Russia. They agreed that the six nations of the denuclearization talks should establish conditions to jump-start the discussions meant to end North Korea’s nuclear program. Park and Xi also called for a faithful implementation of the 2005 deal reached at the six-party talks and U.N. resolutions punishing North Korea for its missile and nuclear tests. (Yonhap, “Park, Xi Vow Denuclearization of Korean Peninsula, Draw Regional Attention,” North Korea Newsletter, 321, July 10, 2014) President Xi Jinping of China arrived in South Korea for a state visit to a vital American ally, a move that appears to signal his resolve to unsettle America’s alliances in Northeast Asia and fortify his argument for a new security architecture in the region, with China as the dominant player. “Xi can’t afford to miss this opportunity to make bad relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea as bitter as possible,” said Chun Yungwoo, the national security adviser to the
former South Korean president, Lee Myung-bak, in an interview here. He noted that the timing of Xi's visit was coincidental, but that “China is trying to draw the Republic of Korea as far away as possible from Japan and the United States.” Despite her tough stance toward Japan Park will not fall for Xi’s “ferocious courting,” Chun said. She knows that Xi’s goal is to separate the United States, the guarantor of Seoul’s security, from South Korea, and she would be unreceptive to that, he said. Even though North Korea is expected to be a sideshow during the visit, the country and its nuclear weapons program will be high on the agenda, officials in both countries said. “South Korea and China have common goals on denuclearization, but we do have differences,” said Yang Xiyu, a senior fellow at the China Institute for International Studies in Beijing. China, he said, is not aiming for a “pure nonproliferation” outcome in North Korea. Park has urged Xi to use China’s economic leverage as a way to force North Korea to stop its nuclear weapons program. But China, more fearful of instability in North Korea that could spill over to its territory than of it is of a nuclear threat, has refrained, a position that frustrates South Korea and the United States. In the face of Xi’s bold move for a new relationship with South Korea – Park had a successful trip to China a year ago, and the two leaders get along – Park is likely to ask for something significant in return, said Evans J. R. Revere, a former deputy secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific. In Washington, the visit is being watched with some wariness. The assistant secretary for East Asia and the Pacific, Daniel R. Russel, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last month that the visit was “an extraordinary milestone.” The White House remained confident that despite problems between Japan and South Korea, its relationship with Seoul was on solid footing, Revere said. “This is another effort by China to not so subtly send a message to the United States that it is looking to reshape the region and is willing to throw its weight around in ways that demonstrate China is the major player,” Revere said recently in Beijing. The effort to “drive a wedge between South Korea and the United States is not going anywhere.” (Jane Perlez, “Chinese President’s Visit to South Korea Is Seen as Way to Weaken U.S. Alliances,” New York Times, July 3, 2014, p. A-6) “Our two leaders share the view that we must realize North Korea’s denuclearization without fail and resolutely oppose another nuclear test,” Park said in a joint news conference with Xi. Xi’s trip “will serve as a clear message for denuclearization of North Korea.” Park and Xi also agreed that the six nations should establish conditions to jump-start long-stalled nuclear talks meant to end North Korea’s nuclear program. “Relevant nations should steadily pursue the six-party talks process and hold bilateral and multilateral talks and coordination and solve mutual concerns," Xi said in the news conference. The two sides agreed to designate a Seoul branch of a Chinese bank as the clearing house for yuan currency, a move that could reduce Seoul’s dependence on the dollar in trading at a time when South Korea’s trade with China makes up more than 20 percent of its total. (Yonhap, “Park, Xi Voice Firm Opposition to N. Korea’s Nuke Program,” July 3, 2014) On the second day of the summit President Park Geun-hye and Chinese leader Xi Jinping jointly expressed concerns about Japan’s move to expand its military reach and undermine the 1993 Kono Statement on comfort women during a closed-door luncheon, said Ju Chul-ki, a senior secretary for foreign affairs and national security. The announcement came as a surprise because the two leaders refrained from commenting on Japan in a joint statement following their summit. “The two leaders discussed a lot about Japan on Thursday [July 3] and today, but we didn’t include the discussions in the statement
for various reasons,” said the senior secretary. “They agreed that Japan has taken a revisionist approach [to history] and voiced concerns about the expansion of its military forces and its exercising of the right to collective self-defense.” (Park Eun-jee, “Park, Xi Jointly Criticize Japan’s Military Buildup,” JoongAng Ilbo, July 5, 2014) “(Park and Xi) agreed that it is worrying that Japan’s attitude toward revising history continues as it even seeks to expand its right to self-defense,” Ju said. “The two leaders also agreed that it is regrettable that Japan appears to be attempting to damage and play down the Kono Statement in practice even though it has said it will inherit it.” Ju also said that South Korea and China plan to discuss the issue of whether Seoul would join a China-led infrastructure bank. Xi proposed the creation of the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank last year. China has asked a number of countries including Korea to join the bank, while it has excluded the U.S. and Japan. “The two leaders agreed on the need to expand investment in infrastructure for Asia’s economic growth in the joint statement. China has made an offer and Korea rates the proposal highly,” Ju said. “The two sides plan to continue to discuss this issue... As there are many things to consult on such as capital and governance, (Korea) plans to study the major points as far as I know,” he said. (Yonhap, “Park, Xi Voice Concerns over Japan’s Moves to Review History, Collective Defense,” July 4, 2014) On July 4 - just one day after the summit between South Korea and China, and virtually before the ink had dried on the two presidents’ joint statement - various “differences of interpretation” are coming to light in the two countries’ stance on North Korea’s nuclear weapons and inter-Korean relations. This illustrates just how wide the chasm is that separates the positions of South Korea and China on current issues affecting the Korean peninsula. First of all, in connection with plans for Korean reunification, it can be inferred that the expression “independent” was debated during the summit. By way of explaining the Chinese position on this point, the joint statement says, “China respects the Korean people’s desire for peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula, and it supports the eventual peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula.” Driven by concern that American influence could increase during reunification, China has always preferred referring to reunification as “independent,” but that was omitted from this joint statement. Presumably, South Korea’s insistence on this point (conscious of Washington), was reflected in the statement. As if in awareness of this, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued an official statement on July 4, quoting President Xi Jinping as saying that he “supports independent and peaceful reunification.” In addition, President Xi said during a lecture at Seoul National University on Friday that “the Korean peninsula will be reunified peacefully and independently.” By immediately resurrecting the expression “independent,” China informed the outside world that its standard position has not changed. Second, the South Korean government boasted that that it had also “secured China’s support” for the Dresden Declaration, the proposal to North Korea that South Korean President Park Geun-hye unveiled in Germany in March. However, the statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry said China was “enthusiastic” about President Park’s trust-building process for the Korean peninsula. In fact, China had already expressed its support in 2013 for the trust-building process for the Korean peninsula, which regards unification as a process and emphasizes trust between North and South Korea. This also implies that China felt uncomfortable with supporting the Dresden Declaration, which assumes unification by absorption - that is, that North Korea will be absorbed into the South. In regard to approaches to resolving the issue
of North Korea’s nuclear program, the Chinese Foreign Ministry related that Xi had emphasized “the principles of simultaneity and equality,” but this is not to be found in the South Korean press release. This suggests that China suggested the methodology of “word for word, action for action,” instead of demanding that North Korea be the only party to yield, but South Korea was unable to accept this. (Yi Yong-in, “A Wide Chasm of Positions Emerge from S. Korea-China Summit Statement,” Hankyore, July 5, 2014)

7/4/12

KCNA: “The DPRK organized the "Special Investigation Committee" which will start an all-inclusive and comprehensive investigation into all Japanese residing in the DPRK from July 4, 2014 under an agreement reached between the governments of the DPRK and Japan. The authority of the committee is that it will be invested with special mandate from the National Defense Commission of the DPRK to investigate all institutions and mobilize relevant institutions and persons concerned for the investigation any time when necessary. The committee will be staffed with about 30 officials of relevant institutions including the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of People's Security, the Ministry of the People's Armed Forces and people's power bodies of the DPRK and has the following four panels in Pyongyang and branches in relevant cities and counties in all provinces. Panels include a panel for remains of Japanese, a panel for remaining Japanese and Japanese spouses, a panel for abducted Japanese and a panel for missing Japanese. Branches will be formed with officials of relevant institutions including the Ministry of Security and people’s power bodies. Key members of the special investigation committee are as follows: Chairman: So Tae Ha, counselor for security of the National Defense Commission of the DPRK and vice-minister of State Security; Vice-Chairman: Kim Myong Chol, counselor of the Ministry of State Security; Vice-Chairman: Pak Yong Sik, department director of the Ministry of People’s Security; Chief of the panel for remains of Japanese: Kim Hyon Chol, department director of the Ministry of Land and Environment Protection; Chief of the panel for remaining Japanese and Japanese spouses: Ri Ho Rim, secretary general of the Central Committee of the Red Cross Society of the DPRK; Chief of the panel for abducted Japanese: Kang Song Nam, department director of the Ministry of State Security; Chief of the panel for missing Japanese: Pak Yong Sik, department director of People’s Security (He also holds the post of vice-chairman of the committee); Chiefs of branches: vice-directors of provincial, city and county departments of the Ministry of Security. The committee shall operate under a well-regulated command system of the Center. Not just one field concerned should be prioritized but all fields should be investigated in a simultaneous and parallel manner and the investigation will be conducted by way of holding interview, hearing testimony and touring the relevant field. To ensure objectivity and transparency of the investigation, personnel concerned of the Japanese side will be allowed to visit the DPRK at a time deemed necessary. The orientation of activities of panels is as follows:

Panel for remains of Japanese -- It will take measures concerning various places where remains of Japanese are buried across the territory of the DPRK and conduct field survey and trial excavation on the basis of the existing information, testimonies, etc. and consult and take steps for handling remains.

Panel for remaining Japanese and Japanese spouses -- Confirmation will be made through register books of citizens kept by people’s security institutions and relevant
people’s committees and through information provided by those concerned and hearing testimonies made by witnesses, and measures will be taken.

Panel for abducted Japanese -- It will reinvestigate the abductees recognized by the Japanese government and confirm all records of each person from his or her entry.

Panel for missing Japanese -- The entry into the DPRK of those who were reported missing and their identities will be confirmed by use of register books of citizens kept by the institutions of people’s security while taking the information provided by the Japanese side for reference.

Rodong Sinmun: “The special proposal made by the National Defense Commission of the DPRK is a patriotic one which can be accepted by anyone who is concerned about the destiny and future of the nation. The improvement of the north-south relations desired by the whole nation cannot be achieved by one side’s unilateral efforts only.

… The improvement can only be realized by easing the political and military confrontation and promoting the reconciliation, unity and cooperation, while giving priority to the requirements and interests of the nation on the three principles of national reunification which the authorities of the north and the south jointly agreed and solemnly declared at home and abroad, and in the spirit of By Our Nation Itself. If one pays lip-service to “dialogue” but slanders the other side and seeks the confrontational rackets behind the scene, the distrust and confrontation between the north and the south can never be dispelled and no progress can be expected in the movement for national reunification. So, the NDC of the DPRK sent the special proposal to the south Korean authorities as they had sought only the confrontation and mocked at the reunification issue with the wicked "assertions" and "declarations". The special proposal was out of the desire that they would handle all problems between the north and the south on the principle of independence, not imitating others and listening to others.” (KCNA, “Special Proposal of DPRK NDC Is Patriotic One: Rodong Sinmun,” July 5, 2014)

7/7/14 DPRK government statement [today], 20 years since President Kim Il Sung left his last signature on a historic document related to Korea’s reunification. The Korean nation’s cause for national reunification is undergoing big difficulties and trials due to the vicious challenge and obstructive moves of the anti-reunification forces at home and abroad, the statement said. The DPRK government clarifies as follows out of its patriotic desire to tide over the difficulties lying before the nation, improve the north-south relations and open up a fresh turning phase for independent reunification at present:

The north and the south should end reckless hostility and confrontation and open up the road for reconciliation and unity. The grave situation in which even a single remark and act and tiny friction may lead to a dangerous conflict and destruction of the nation is prevailing on the Korean peninsula as hostility and confrontation have reached the extremes. We should no longer remain a passive on-looker to this tragic situation in
which exhaustive political strife among compatriots may cause tremendous
catastrophe of the nation at a crucial time when all the Koreans should pool their
strength and wisdom for the cause common to the nation. The north and the south
should open up the road for improvement of relations from fresh viewpoint and stand
for the destiny of the nation. The south Korean authorities should discard the
anachronistic concept of hostility and make a bold decision to change its policy for
confrontation with fellow countrymen into that for alliance and reconciliation with the
north. They should stop all kinds of the north-targeted war exercises which they
conduct with outsiders, a direct product of their hostile policy toward the fellow
countrymen in the north. If they have true willingness to improve the relations with the
north, they should opt for respecting and implementing the north-south agreements
including the June 15 joint declaration and the October 4 declaration which were
provided thanks to the top leaders of the north and the south.

2. The north and the south should reject dependence on outsiders and settle all
issues by the efforts of Koreans. The north and the south should never fall a victim to
outsiders keen on catching fish in troubled waters through the division of Korea. They
should solve all issues by their own efforts in the common interests of the nation from
the stand of putting the nation above all, attaching importance to the nation and
achieving national unity. The north and the south should never tolerate the
unreasonable act of outsiders to interfere in the internal issue of the nation but counter
it with joint efforts. We will join hands with all those including the south Korean
authorities if they take the stand of settling the issue of the north-south relations and
the reunification issue of the country in line with the desire and wish of the nation. The
north and the south should seek reasonable reunification proposals supported by all
Koreans and that guarantee the prosperity common to the nation. There is increasing
demand and requirement of fellow countrymen to achieve reunification through
federal formula in Korea where differing ideologies and social systems exist. In the
June 15 joint declaration the north and the south recognized that there are common
points in the north-proposed low-level federation and the south-proposed
confederation, and agreed to work for reunification in this direction in the future. The
north and the south should specify the reunification proposals by way of federation
and confederation and make efforts to realize them and thus actively promote co-
existence, co-prosperity and common interests. The north and the south should create
the atmosphere favorable for the improvement of the north-south relations. To actively
create the atmosphere favorable for reconciliation and unity at present is a
prerequisite for improving the extremely deteriorated north-south relations. It is
necessary to put an end to all kinds of calumnies and vituperations that foster
misunderstanding and distrust among the fellow countrymen, to begin with. Legal and
institutional measures that block kindred bonds and compatriotic feelings between the
north and the south should be lifted and a broad avenue for contacts, visits,
cooperation and dialogue should be opened. An end should be put at an early date to
such an abnormal situation in south Korea in which the desire of the people from all
walks of life for reunification is dampened and the hostility against the DPRK is incited
through the racket for "eliminating forces following the north." If the above-mentioned
principled stand of the DPRK and measures taken by it in good faith are implemented,
an epochal occasion will be provided in normalizing the deteriorated north-south ties,
easing the situation on the Korean peninsula and achieving the national reconciliation
and unity. We express the expectation that all Koreans would actively support the principled stand of the DPRK government that was prompted by its noble sense of responsibility to improve the north-south ties and open up a wide avenue for independent reunification and that the south Korean authorities would positively respond to it.” (KCNA, “DPRK Government Statement Calls for Ending Confrontation and Improving North-South Ties,” July 7, 2014)

The US is openly moving to check Japanese contact with North Korea. Indicating that it does not look favorably on Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo visiting North Korea, the US even said that, if Abe wants to visit the North, prior notification is not sufficient, it also wants to discuss the visit in due format with Japan. In short, the US appears to have said that it will not permit Abe to visit the North. During a telephone conversation with Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio on the evening of July 7, US Secretary of State John Kerry strongly discouraged Japan’s overtures to North Korea, Mainichi Shim bun and other Japanese newspapers reported on July 16. During the conversation with Kishida, which lasted for about 40 minutes, Kerry observed that the US and Japan are allies and asked Japan to maintain transparency in its negotiations with North Korea and to talk about the issue thoroughly in advance, news reports said. Kerry also said that the US wants sufficient deliberations to take place before any decisions are made about Abe visiting North Korea, and that prior notification is not sufficient, newspapers reported. Quoting multiple diplomatic sources in the US and Japan on July 16, Tokyo Shimbun reported that Kerry asked Abe to refrain from visiting the North, since there were concerns that this could undermine solidarity between the US, South Korea, and Japan. “What is the most effective way to get results on the kidnapping issue? One option is visiting North Korea, and we are also going to consider that,” Kishida told the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense at the Japanese House of Councilors on June 3, showing the Abe government’s positive outlook on a visit to the North. But Kishida backpedaled after hearing Kerry’s cautionary remarks. “The newspapers are just reporting their interpretation of my answers, and the government is not considering having the Prime Minister visit North Korea,” Mainichi Shim bun reported Kishida as saying. “We are currently trying to arrange an opportunity to visit the US to explain the situation directly to Secretary Kerry and request his understanding about Japanese efforts to resolve the abductee issue,” Kishida said, as reported on NHK. In related news, Nihon Keizai Shim bun reported on July 17 that Japan will propose talks with the foreign ministers of both North and South Korea during the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which will be taking place in Myanmar in early August. Before former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited North Korea in September 2002, the two sides held Red Cross talks, department head-level talks, and talks between their Foreign Ministers, in that order. As a result, some experts are speculating that, if a meeting between the Japanese and North Korean Foreign Ministers takes place during the ARF, Prime Minister Abe could visit North Korea around September. However, with the US taking steps to check Japan’s contact with North Korea, it appears that a fierce tug of war will continue between Abe, who hopes to extend his hold on power by finding a solution to the kidnapping issue, and the US, which seeks to maintain trilateral cooperation between South Korea, the US, and Japan on the issue of North Korea. (Gil Yun-hyung, “Reports: U.S. Wants to Limit Japan’s Contact with North Korea,” Hankyore, July 17, 2014)
The Abe administration sees no problem with the possibility of Upper House lawmaker Antonio Inoki making another visit to North Korea, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide said Monday after sanctions were partially lifted last week in return for progress on Pyongyang’s second investigation into the abduction issue. “We do not intend to take specific steps against travel from Japan to North Korea,” Suga, the government’s top spokesman, said at a regular news conference. “We understand that Mr. Inoki and other lawmakers are visiting North Korea for their own reasons. For our part, the government will closely watch how North Korea will conduct the probe by its special investigation committee, based on our bilateral accord,” he said. Inoki, 71, a former professional wrestler who was elected to the Upper House as a member of Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party), has expressed a willingness to visit North Korea together with other opposition lawmakers from July 9. Inoki told a news conference in Tokyo that during the visit he will make preparations to co-host an international wrestling exhibition in North Korea next month. He said some 20 grapplers from around the world, including the United States and France, will take part in the two-day event in Pyongyang. (Kyodo, AFP, Jiji, “Government OKs Inoki’s First Visit to Pyongyang since Easing of Sanctions, Japan Times, July 7, 2014)

North Korea proposed to send a squad of cheerleaders to accompany its national team players participating in the Incheon Asian Games held in South Korea in September, which Seoul officially approved. The official Korean Central News Agency released a statement saying, “We decided to send a squad of cheerleaders to the Asian Games along with our athletes in order to create an atmosphere of harmony of people [in the two Koreas]. We will show our will for the unification of the entire Joseon people and to melt the frozen inter-Korean relations with the heat of reconciliation.” The statement was issued in the name of the “Republic,” which refers to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). Seoul officials said it was the first time the regime issued a statement regarding inter-Korean issues in that name. North Korea also sent cheerleaders to the Incheon Asian Athletics Championships in 2005. South Korea’s Ministry of Unification, which is in charge of all inter-Korean interactions, officially said it would accept the visit of North Korea’s cheerleaders. “We are planning to prepare for the participation of the cheerleaders and athletes from North Korea based on international customs, through negotiations with the steering committee of the Incheon Asian Games,” said ministry spokesman Kim Eui-do at a daily briefing yesterday. Kim added there could possibly be low-level talks between officials of the two Koreas to discuss issues involving the North Korean cheerleaders, such as accommodations or their uniforms. Asked about the possibility of a joint cheerleading group or an inter-Korean national team, Kim said it would be difficult to achieve either. “Forming a joint team of athletes between the two Koreas is logically difficult as the Games are just a few months away,” he said. “The matter of a joint cheerleading group is also being mulled, in terms of considering current inter-Korean relations.” (Kim Hee-jin, “Cheerleaders to Come to Inceon,” JoongAng Ilbo, July 8, 2104)

President Barack Obama appointed James Zumwalt, the State Department official handling Korean and other East Asian affairs, as new ambassador to Senegal and Guinea Bissau. The move opened the way for Ambassador Sung Kim to replace
Senior U.S. and Chinese officials are preparing to hold yearly bilateral talks that will include a focus on the North Korea nuclear impasse. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry will co-lead the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, which is to begin today in Beijing. An unidentified high-ranking Obama administration official told journalists that “a steady convergence of views” was discernible between China and the United States “on both the importance and the urgency of moving North Korea to take irreversible steps to denuclearize,” Reuters reported. “Particularly in the week of [Chinese President Xi Jinping’s] visit to Seoul, we see value in building out U.S.-China cooperation, strengthening our consensus on the importance of denuclearization and refining further our strategy,” the official said. Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Zheng Zeguang in a July 7 press conference in Beijing said his government was working “closely on the nuclear issues of the Korean Peninsula” with Washington, Yonhap reported. (Global Security Newswire, “U.S. China Begin Strategic Talks on North Korea Nukes,” July 8, 2014)

China called for restraint after North Korea fired two more projectiles, apparently short-range missiles, into the East Sea, the latest in a serious of launches in recent weeks. South Korea's defense ministry said it suspects the projectiles, test-launched earlier in the day, as short-range ballistic missiles with a range of about 500 kilometers. Japan has also lodged a protest with North Korea against today’s launch. “Under the current circumstances, we hope that all parties can exercise restraint and do more to ease the current tension so as to jointly maintain regional peace and stability,” China’s foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei told reporters, when asked about the North’s latest missile launch. (Yonhap, “China Urges Restraint as N. Korea Fires Two More Missiles into Sea,” July 9, 2014)

"The United States and China agreed on an important urgency of achieving a denuclearized, stable and prosperous Korean Peninsula, and we discussed specific ways in which we think can advance that goal," Kerry told reporters as the two nations ended a two-day U.S.-China dialogue in Beijing. "China shares the same strategic goal, and we discussed the importance of enforcing U.N. Security Council resolutions that impose sanctions on North Korea’s weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile program," Kerry said. (Yonhap, “Kerry: U.S., China Agree on ‘Important Urgency’ of Denuclearized N. Korea,” July 10, 2014)

North Korea once again fired two short-range ballistic projectiles toward international waters, Seoul officials said yesterday, though this time it launched the missiles from the western region, instead of the east coast. The projectiles, assumed to be Scud-C type missiles with a 500-kilometer (310-mile) range, were launched at 4 a.m. and 4:20 a.m., respectively, from an unidentified site near an air base field in Singye County, North Hwanghae Province, an official with South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff told reporters.
This is the 13th time this year that Pyongyang has test-fired various projectiles, about 90 in total. “Usually, a ballistic missile is launched from [an eastern] coastal site, in case it drops to the ground,” a Seoul military official told reporters. “The regime did not even issue a warning on vessels sailing nearby. “They usually launch projectiles near Wonsan, but starting last month, they moved to the west and fired them near Hungnam or Singye,” the official said. “It is apparently saber-rattling to show off its capacity, launching them at various sites.” The military said the latest launches near Wonsan were apparently related to a business trip taken by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. Based on reports by KCNA, Kim has been in Wonsan for the past two weeks conducting “field guidance trips” to military facilities and surveying artillery exercises by soldiers. (Kim Hee-jin, “North Fires Two Missiles from Its Interior,” JoongAng Ilbo, July 10, 2014)

North Korea proposed holding working-level talks with South Korea in Panmunjom July 15 to discuss issues related to its dispatch of athletes and a cheering squad for the upcoming Asian Games in South Korea, according to KCNA. The proposal came four days after the North said it will send a cheering squad to the Asiad, slated for September 19-October 4, to be held in Incheon, South Korea’s second-largest port city. It added that the move is aimed at improving cross-border relations and showing Pyongyang’s commitment to unification. "The North proposed the talks via contact channels at the truce village earlier in the day," said an official at the Seoul government. "The government plans to unveil its stance as soon as it is set." (Yonhap, “N. Korea Proposes Talks over Its Participation in Asian Games,” July 10, 2014)

South Korea has turned down a local rescue group’s request to visit North Korea to help the communist country manage a deadly collapse of a 23-story apartment building on May 23, a unification ministry official said. Last month, the Seoul-based Korea Rescue Association sought the government’s approval to visit the North after receiving a request from Pyongyang’s “Red Star General Bureau of Construction” for help. "Nearly two months have passed since the accident, and there are some signs that the North has already begun a new construction project at the site. So we think it is not appropriate for the group to visit there for rescue operations," the official at the unification ministry said, explaining the reason for its disapproval. The official also noted that the North’s agency that filed for help does not appear to be "a substantial and reliable organization." (Yonhap, “S. Korea Bans Rescue Group’s visit to N. Korea,” July 10, 2014)

North Korea denounced the entry of a U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carrier into a South Korean port, calling its participation in a planned joint naval drill between Seoul and Washington a “grave unpardonable provocation.” The 97,000-ton supercarrier USS George Washington, powered by two nuclear reactors, arrived in the port of Busan earlier in the day for joint military exercises with Seoul and Tokyo planned for late July. Uriminzokkiri claimed that the international community is backing the country’s recent reconciliatory gestures aimed at mending inter-Korean relations. Still, the U.S. responded to the gestures by deploying the nuclear aircraft carrier and planning joint war exercises with the South and Japan, the website said, calling the moves a “grave unpardonable provocation” as well as an “ill-willed challenge” to the

7/12/14

NDC Policy Department spokesman’s statement: “The U.S. is always preoccupied with aggression and interference. [Today] the U.S. suddenly hurled the flotilla of the nuclear carrier George Washington into the Pusan Port of south Korea again. That day the group of Aegis Destroyer Kid under the Third Fleet of the U.S. imperialist aggression forces entered the Tonghae Port of south Korea. What is surprising is that these pirate warship groups entered the south Korean ports at the earnest request of the south Korean puppet authorities and amid their noisy welcome though they should have thought twice before doing so. It was reported that those groups would stage a ‘drill to intercept planes’ accompanied by naval maneuvers targeted against the DPRK together with the south Korean naval force in the South and East seas of Korea from July 16. From July 22 they mull staging a large naval joint drill in waters off Jeju Island with warships of the Japanese aggression forces involved. **What should not be overlooked is that these grave maneuvers are slated to take place in defiance of the special proposal sent by the NDC of the DPRK to the south Korean authorities for improving the north-south relations and ensuring peace on the Korean peninsula and a meaningful statement issued by the DPRK government.** The planned reckless military actions of the U.S. and south Korea are another open challenge to the sincere efforts of the army and people of the DPRK to defuse the tension on the peninsula and create peaceful atmosphere. They are, at the same time, a blatant effrontery to chill the desire and wishes of all Koreans to mend the north-south relations and achieve national reconciliation and cooperation. In February, too, the U.S. sent a formation of nuclear-capable strategic bombers to south Korea, deliberately creating a phase of confrontation when there was a sign of reconciliation between the north and the south. Whenever there was a sign of improving the north-south relations and detente on the peninsula, the U.S. resorted to sinister interference and obstructions. **These actions on the part of the U.S. were prompted by its scenario to retain a grip on south Korea and Japan and lay a siege to the continent in a bid to keep an unchallenged edge in the Asia-Pacific region.** What matters is that the south Korean puppet forces steeped in sycophancy and submission are pursuing this sinister scenario of the U.S. and persistently introducing nuclear strike means of the U.S. imperialist aggression forces, making constant nuclear blackmail and posing serious threat to compatriots. However, the army and people of the DPRK are not afraid of the U.S. nuclear blackmail and threat little short of its ‘gunboat diplomacy’ in the last century. **The U.S. should properly understand that the more persistently it resorts to reckless nuclear blackmail and threat, the further the DPRK will bolster up its cutting edge nuclear force for self-defense always ready to go into action.** The south Korean puppet forces would be well advised not to miscalculate that their act of depending on the U.S. and toeing its line is the only way out for them. They should come to their senses and seek a way out from the standpoint of attaching importance to the nation and giving priority to it. They should bear in mind that now is the time to make a proper option at the present when various issues between the north and the south are high on agenda. The U.S. and south Korean authorities should always remember that the army and people of the DPRK together with the world people are watching with high vigilance their anachronistic reckless military moves.”
North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles believed to be of Scud variations into the East Sea, the South Korean military said. "North Korea fired short-range ballistic missiles on two occasions, first at around 1:20 a.m. and then around 1:30 a.m. on Sunday," an official with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in Seoul said. "The missiles were fired from the northern part of the southern border city of Kaesong, about just 20 kilometers from the military demarcation line (MDL)," he said. "We estimate their ranges to be about 500 kilometers." The official said it was "highly unusual" for the North to fire missiles from a place so close to the MDL and that the South Korean military has stepped up its vigilance against additional launches and is in a state of full readiness. This marked the 14th time the North has launched rockets in 2014, the sixth ballistic missile launch this year and second missile firing in five days. Another military official here said the North, by choosing a location near the MDL, appears to have "flaunted its abilities to fire ballistic missiles at any time from anywhere." (Yonhap, "N. Korea Fires Two Ballistic Missiles: Seoul," July 13, 2014)

North Korea on Monday fired about 100 artillery shells into the East Sea from a place close to the inter-Korean border, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said, the latest in a series of military provocations. "North Korea fired off around 100 artillery shells in a northeast direction into the East Sea for about 30 minutes from 11:43 a.m. from a place hundreds of meters away from the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in Kosong, Kangwon Province," JCS spokesman Um Hyo-sik said. "They landed in the sea, some 1 to 8 kilometers north of the Northern Limit Line (NLL)," he said, citing the de facto inter-Korean maritime border. While it is not known exactly which artillery pieces the North used, the South Korean military said they were most likely 122-, 240- or 76.2-millimeter guns. "Some of the shells travelled some 3 kilometers, and others the maximum of 50 kilometers," a JCS officer said. "It is not unusual for Pyongyang to carry out such a shelling from its east coast, but it is rare that the North has done so near the military demarcation line," he noted. It brought the number of the bellicose communist country's rocket launches to 16 so far this year. "North Korea appears to show off its capabilities to launch attacks at any time," the officer said. "North Korea is expected to continue its military provocations for some time, with the joint Seoul-Washington military exercise later this week and their rescue drills with Japan due later this month," he said. The exercises will involve the 97,000-ton supercarrier USS George Washington, according to Seoul's military. Denouncing the drill as "a clear violation of United Nations sanctions," Seoul vowed a "merciless counterattack" should shells land in South Korean territory. "The North's provocative actions are nothing but a denial of its earlier pledge to stop slander and military provocations. They cause us to suspect its sincerity," the defense ministry said in a statement. "Our military has maintained high-level readiness to respond strongly to any type of provocation by North Korea, and we will react mercilessly if the North fires to the south of the NLL," it stressed. (Yonhap, "N. Korea Fires Some 100 Artillery Shells into East Sea," July 14, 2014)

Rodong Sinmun: “The U.S. remains unchanged in its hostile policy towards the DPRK and it is now being amended and supplemented with harsher substance with each
passing day. ... The present U.S. ruling quarters would be well advised to recollect what a bitter cup of setback the former Bush administration drank while taking a wrong approach towards the DPRK with a twisted way of thinking. The Bush administration openly revealed its intention to antagonize the DPRK and isolate and stifle it. ... The DPRK had legal and legitimate access to nuclear weapons to protect the sovereignty of the country and the national security from the U.S. nuclear threat getting evermore undisguised. The U.S. should have drawn a due lesson from the baneful consequences of its hostile policy towards the DPRK, though belatedly. However, the U.S. made the same mistake, failing to draw a proper lesson from its failed hostile policy towards the DPRK after its chief executive was replaced by the other. The Obama administration has made desperate efforts to stifle the DPRK by floating the ‘rumor of collapse’ of its social system, something that will never happen. The U.S. knew nothing about the spirit and mettle of the army and people who were dashing ahead like the wind towards a thriving nation by dint of single-minded unity. **There are only two options for the U.S. The first is to make a bold switchover in the Cold War mentality and roll back its anachronistic hostile policy towards the DPRK to contribute to the peace and security on the Korean peninsula and ensure the security of the U.S., too. The second is to persist in its hostile policy as now. In this case it will compel the DPRK to reinforce its nuclear arsenal.**” (KCNA: “U.S. Urged to Roll Back Its Hostile Policy toward DPRK,” July 14, 2014)

7/15/14 South Korea said it will provide North Korea with humanitarian aid worth 3 billion won (US$2.9 million), apparently a conciliatory gesture amid confusing signals from the unpredictable communist neighbor. Seoul will use government funds to finance civilian groups’ projects to offer assistance to North Korea in the agricultural, livestock and health-care sectors, said the unification ministry. It would mark the first time that the South spends money from state coffers to support such nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) since imposing tough sanctions on the North shortly after its deadly attack on a South Korean warship in 2010. "In accordance with the policy of providing humanitarian aid that is substantially helpful to North Korean people, the government has decided to use the South-North Cooperation Fund to finance North Korea aid projects by civilian organizations," a ministry official told reporters. Under the plan, 1 billion won will be allocated for building plastic greenhouses, one billion won for constructing pediatric clinics, and the rest for the dairy industry, added the official. (Lee Chi-dong, “S. Korea to Deliver 3 Bln Won in Aid to N. Korea,” Yonhap, July 15, 2014)

7/16/14 South Korea launched its five-day joint naval exercise with the United States in the country’s southwestern sea on Wednesday amid North Korea’s continued calls to withdraw from what it calls provocative action. The five-day exercise will involve two South Korean Navy Aegis ships as well as the aircraft carrier USS George Washington, two American cruisers and one U.S. Aegis ship, a Seoul military official said, adding that the areas of the training are north of Jeju Island as well as waters southwest of Mokpo. During the exercise, South Korean and U.S. Marines will also be conducting joint drills in the East Sea, the official said. Following the five-day exercise, the U.S. ship will be deployed in a trilateral South Korea-U.S.-Japan search and rescue exercise in waters south of Jeju Island for two days starting on July 21, according to the military.
Three more U.S. ships, as well as two South Korean ships and one Japanese ship, will be deployed to the triilateral drill, along with three airplanes from each of the three nations. (Yonhap, “S. Korea, U.S. Kick off Joint Naval Exercise,” July 16, 2014)

South and North Korea ended their first round of talks on the forthcoming Incheon Asian Games without being able to narrow their differences on key issues. The working-level talks in the border village of Panmunjom came after the North said in May it will participate in the upcoming 2014 Asian Games in South Korea. Despite their talks, the two parties failed to settle core issues including the size of the delegation and their respective contributions to the cost of hosting the North. They also failed to agree on the date of the next meeting. Among key remaining issues are transportation from the North, the cost of its delegation's stay here and the size of the cheerleading group. The South had traditionally chosen to foot the bill for the North Korean delegation to travel to the athletic event on its soil. Officials here, however, say the situation has changed. "Our basic principle is to follow international practices," a unification ministry official said. Participating nations in international sports events usually pay for the cost of their delegations on their own. The official also hinted at the possibility of some flexibility, citing the unique characteristics of inter-Korean ties. He said Seoul could allow a North Korean ferry called Mangyeongbong to sail here as transportation for its delegation to the Asian Games, slated for September 19-October 4. Under tough sanctions on the North, known as the “May 24th Measures," imposed after the 2010 sinking of the warship Cheonan that was blamed on the North, all North Korean ships are prohibited from entering the South. Some observers say the North may suggest the formation of a joint entry at the opening ceremony and the creation of united teams for selected events. South Korea remains cautious about accepting those suggestions, apparently out of concern that it could send the wrong signal amid the North's continued provocative acts. (Yonhap, “Talks between Koreas on Asian Games See No Results,” July 17, 2014) South Korea is unlikely to agree to field a joint athletic delegation with North Korea at the upcoming Asian Games to be held south of the border, even if Pyongyang were to make such an offer, Seoul’s top sports official said July 18. North Korean representatives walked out of the meeting and blamed their South Korean counterparts for "insincere" attitude at the table for its refusal to foot the bill for the North Koreans during the Asiad. Pyongyang the next day threatened to reconsider its decision to compete in Incheon, throwing into doubt the North’s availability. Against this backdrop, Kim Jung-haeng, president of the Korean Olympic Committee (KOC), said the Asian Games may be too close to consider overhauling South Korea’s delegation. "If our government wants to use the Asian Games to help conciliatory mood on the peninsula, then the KOC is all for it," Kim said. "In terms of protecting our athletes, we’re negative (about the idea of a joint Korean team)." Park said the South Korean athletes had worked hard for the past four years to prepare for their moment, and South Korea may be forced to drop some of them off the team if the two Koreas were to field unified squads at different sports. "We don’t think the timing is right to discuss the possibility (of the one Korean delegation)," Park said. "Our athletes have been training hard, and we had to take that into account." The two officials said they had met with executives of national governing bodies of the 38 Asian Games sports on July 18 to discuss the possibility of a joint Korean squad. Kim said while North Korea has not yet made such an offer, the KOC wanted to make sure it
would be prepared for it. Kim, however, declined to specify why he felt the North was likely to ask to field a unified Korean squad at the Asiad. "Representatives from our sports federations said we had to think about our athletes," the KOC head added. "Their teamwork will be an issue. If the idea is to have the joint delegation for the Rio de Janeiro Summer Olympics (in 2016), then maybe we can talk about it. But it’d be difficult to discuss the issue at this juncture." (Yoo Jee-ho, “Seoul Lukewarm to Possibility of Joint Korean Squad for Asiad: Official,” Yonhap, July 18, 2014)

The U.N. Security Council condemned a recent series of ballistic missile launches by North Korea and urged the communist nation to abide by U.N. resolutions banning such tests. “The members of the Security Council held consultations and exchanged views regarding the DPRK (North Korea)’s recent series of ballistic missile launches,” the Council said in a press statement. The members noted the North launched three rounds of Scud short-range ballistic missiles in late June and early July. “The members of the Security Council condemned these launches as violations of Security Council resolutions … and urged the DPRK to fully comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions,” it said. The statement, which came after the Security Council members held a closed-door meeting, was seen as unusual because short-range missile launches by the North have usually been handled by a Security Council subcommittee on North Korea sanctions. (Yonhap, “U.N. Security Council Condemns N. Korea’s Missile Launches,” July 18, 2014) South Korea and seven other countries recently called on the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to take action against North Korea’s failure to announce its recent missile launches in advance. The ICAO reportedly expressed concerns to North Korean authorities about the safety of private airlines, saying the country should fulfill its obligation to inform relevant countries of such exercises. Citing a Canadian foreign ministry spokesman, the Voice of America reported that the U.N. agency has sent a joint protest letter from the countries to a minister-level North Korean official. "It seems that North Korea is taking advantage of the fact that the Security Council does not take short-distance missiles seriously," a high-ranking government official also said. "(In 2014, North Korea) fired 12 missiles, and it cannot go on like this. "If South Korea and other countries bring up the graveness of the issue, (the Security Council) will be able to come up with stronger countermeasures against future provocations by the North." (Yonhap, “U.N. Security Council to Discuss N. Korea’s Missile Launches,” July 17, 2014)

KCNA: “Working-level talks between the DPRK Olympic Committee and the organizing committee of the south side for the 17th Asian Games were held at Panmunjom Thursday as regards the issue of participation of players group and cheerleading squad of the DPRK in the games. At the talks the DPRK side clarified once again its decision to send its players group and cheerleading squad to the games slated to take place in Inchon and advanced reasonable proposals concerning the scope of the players group and the cheerleading squad, their travel by air and overland and necessary transport means, sports matches and cheering activities, issue of their safety, communications and news coverage by DPRK media persons, etc. It warned that the south side’s act of politicizing the dispatch of the cheerleading group, spreading wild rumor that it is ‘a squad for political operation against the south’ and it would create ‘conflict in the south,’ may seriously affect their participation in the games. The south
side said it welcomed the DPRK’s participation in the games, expressing the expectation that the current talks would be successfully held to settle all issues satisfactorily and smoothly. It noted that the issues raised by the north side could be successfully solved in a positive manner through consultation at the talks as there were precedents of the 14th Pusan Asian Games and the 22nd Taegu Universiad. The south side which had responded to the proposal of the DPRK side at the morning talks as seen above made an abrupt U turn in the afternoon at the instruction of Chongwadae and took a challenging approach towards it. The south side delayed 2 hours and 15 minutes the afternoon talks under the pretext of getting an instruction though they had been scheduled to resume at 2:00 p.m. After coming to the negotiating table so late, it made absurd assertions that “it is necessary to follow international practice” and “the scope of the delegation is too big,” overturning all what it said at the morning talks. It took issue with the scope of the cheerleading squad and the size of the flag of the DPRK, talking about ‘feelings in the south side’ and claiming ‘it is hard to ensure personal safety.’ It went the lengths of disallowing even the big size not only of the flag of the DPRK but also of the Korean peninsula flag. Afterwards, it went so mean as to talk about paying one’s own expenses, after raising the issue of expenses for the players group and the cheerleading squad which the DPRK side has never mentioned. When the DPRK side strongly accused the south side of behaving so ridiculously over the above-said issues, the south side remained tongue-tied and only repeated its unreasonable assertions, behaving more recklessly. The DPRK side branded such attitude of the south side as a deliberate act to bring the working-level talks to a rupture and prevent the DPRK from taking part in the games. It clarified that if the south side insists on such defiant attitude, it will fundamentally reexamine its participation in the games and that the issue of its participation in the games entirely depends on the attitude of the south side. Consequently, the hard-won north-south working-level talks failed to reach any agreement and broke down without setting the date for the next round of the talks due to the south side’s unreasonable attitude and provocations.” (KCNA, “Inter-Korean Working-Level Talks Held,” July 17, 2014)

A U.S. official brushed aside North Korea’s protest against an American comedy film about a plot to assassinate its leader, Kim Jong-un. “We are of course aware of press reports about North Korean concerns about this movie,” a U.S. official said in response to a question from Yonhap. “While it may be difficult for the DPRK (North Korea) to understand the concept, in the United States, entertainers are free to make movies of their choosing.” The official declined to confirm a news report the North sent a protest letter to the White House. North Korea has angrily reacted after Columbia Pictures’ recent release of a trailer for “The Interview,” a comedy about two Americans recruited to assassinate leader Kim, calling it “the most undisguised terrorism.” A foreign ministry spokesman denounced the movie as “a war action to deprive the service personnel and people of the DPRK of their mental mainstay and bring down its social system" while warning of “a strong and merciless countermeasure" if the "U.S. administration connives at and patronizes the screening of the film." (Chang Jae-soon, “U.S. Brushes aside N. Korean Protest over Movie about Leader,” Yonhap, July 19, 2014)
North Korea has been accepted as an observer to the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), an international body combating money laundering and terrorism-related financing, a Seoul official said. Yesterday, the APG approved North Korea’s application to become an observer at its plenary meeting held in Macao, according to the official. As member states of the APG have doubts about North Korea’s intention to join it, they have decided to discuss whether Pyongyang is eligible to become a full member after the three-year probation, he added. North Korea will be under scrutiny for its commitment during the process. “It remains to be seen whether North Korea could become a full member as it would be not easy for it to fully comply with international standards,” said the official. (Yonhap, “North Korea Becomes Observer to Asian Anti-Money Laundering Body,” Korea Times, July 18, 2014)

Nick Hansen: "Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that North Korea continues to experience difficulties in operating its 5 MWe reactor, which was restarted in summer 2013. A new sand dam constructed across the Kuryong River in early March 2014 to help ensure a steady, adequate supply of water for the 5 MWe reactor’s secondary cooling system and the experimental light water reactor’s (ELWR) primary cooling system, failed in two places between April 7 and May 16. A sudden dam failure could cause major safety issues at the operational 5MWe reactor since a reliable supply of water for the secondary cooling system is essential to prevent a dangerous heat buildup in the reactor core. Imagery from early April to mid-May indicates that the 5 MWe reactor was probably shutdown or operated at reduced power levels for an undetermined amount of time. This assessment is based on the absence of white foam discharge—caused by hot steam from the turbines after powering the reactor’s electric generators—from the drainpipe of the turbine building in the May 16 image. The foam reappears on imagery from May 18 and 22, as repair work on the dam started. Imagery from June 22 indicates work at the breaches again, perhaps to repair new problems caused by rain the previous three days. Nevertheless, the foam was present then as well. Exactly why this shutdown or operation at reduced power occurred remains unclear. One possible explanation could be that when it became apparent the dam was failing during the earlier period, the reactor operators worried its loss could cause the river channels to shift further to the east away from their cistern and shut down or reduced the power of the reactor for safety reasons. When that didn’t happen, because the dam did not completely fail and the river water was higher than normal, the decision was made to restart it. In February 2014, North Korea experienced problems in ensuring the steady supply of water for the secondary cooling system of its operating 5 MWe reactor that resulted in either operating the facility at low power levels or shutting it down. To correct this problem, the North Koreans constructed a sand dam and a system of channels to raise the water level of the river in order to ensure a consistent supply of cooling water for the reactor. By the beginning of March 2014, the gate to regulate the water level was being installed in the middle of the dam. Water was flowing through the gate a week later and it appeared to be functional. However, imagery from May 16 indicates that the dam failed in two locations. The gate is gone and a 14 meter wide channel below it is present. To the north, nearly 40 meters of the dam has been washed away. (The wet sand above the dam indicates the previous water level was significantly higher.) Those failures may have occurred recently since the sand was still wet where river water flowed out of the channel.
Moreover, there appears to be a significant amount of water still pouring through the two breaches. While the problem may have been caused by the raised water level—perhaps from rain showers a few days prior that eroded the sand banks until they gave way—an important contributing factor appears to have been poor dam construction. Imagery from May 18 and 22 indicates the reconstruction had already begun and by June 22, shows the reconstruction process well underway, dumping sand to rebuild the dam back to its previous level. The two breaches were still spilling water, however, at a lower rate than on May 16. At the dam’s center, the gate and footbridge had not yet been repaired. At the north end, about 20 meters of the dam, or approximately half of the damaged area, had been rebuilt. Since there was a one-month gap in the available satellite imagery coverage, it is not possible to know if the repairs were completed and another high water surge washed it out again, or if the repairs were never completed. Rainfall the three previous days may have caused high water and the sand erosion on the dam’s north end seen in the June 22 image. New sand excavations, dug from the riverbed on the west side of the river, occurred between May 16 and June 22. Based on the scale of these excavations it is apparent a large amount of sand has been used in an attempt to repair the dam. Since the restart of the 5 MWe reactor in late August 2013, an important indicator that the facility is operating has been the presence of a white foam discharge, produced by waste steam from the reactor’s turbine building. This foam has been present on the bank of the river in all but one photo of the site since it was restarted last year. In the May 16 image, however, there is no white foam discharge present. Since the absence of foam indicates the reactor is not producing high-pressure steam to run the turbines and generate electricity, the reactor was probably either shutdown or operating at reduced power levels at that time. However, on May 18 and June 22, white foam was seen again, indicating that the reactor was producing high-pressure steam to generate electricity. Unfortunately, due to this one-month gap in available imagery, it is impossible to determine if other shutdowns occurred during this period. Exactly why this shutdown or reduced power occurred in May for such a short period remains unclear, especially since there appears to be adequate water for the 5 MWe cooling system to function in the May 16 image. One possible explanation could be that when it became apparent the dam was failing, the reactor operators worried its loss could cause the river channels to shift further to the east away from their cistern and shut down or reduced the power of the reactor for safety reasons. When that didn’t happen, because the dam did not completely fail and the river water was higher than normal, the decision was made to restart it.” (Nick Hansen, “North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Facility: Problems Continue with Reactor Operations,” 38North, July 18, 2014)
combined aerial drill in the wake of the large-scale joint landing exercises since 1993. The UNSC persistently overlooked the U.S. madcap war maneuvers for aggression and nuclear threat and took issue with the inevitable option taken by the DPRK to cope with them and censured it. This is absolutely intolerable. If the UNSC is to perform its mission for ensuring global peace and security, it should call into question the offensive, threatening and provocative joint military exercises of the U.S. and the south Korean puppet forces. How the UNSC approaches the said exercises will be a yardstick to assess its impartiality and judge whether it can contribute to global peace and security both in name and in reality or not. Now that the UNSC serves the purpose of the U.S. hostile moves against the DPRK, bereft of its impartiality, the DPRK is left with no option but to bolster up its muscle to protect itself by its own efforts. No matter how fair-minded and just one may be, one is bound to fall victim to big powers if one is weak, and it is possible to protect genuine peace only when one builds its muscle strong enough to deter any force from provoking one. This is the lesson and truth taught by history. **The further the U.S. escalates its nuclear threat and blackmail, the greater efforts the DPRK will channel into bolstering up its nuclear deterrence for self-defense.** As long as the U.S. and the south Korean puppet forces persist in their joint military exercises for aggression, the DPRK’s counter-actions will be put on an annual and regular basis. Any conflict which may take place in the course of the Korean People’s Army’s tactical rocket firing and other intensified retaliatory drills to cope with the U.S ceaseless war maneuvers in south Korea and its vicinity may spill over to a war. In case an unpredictable situation is created on the Korean peninsula, the U.S. and the UNSC which instigated and patronized it will be wholly responsible for the development as it compelled the DPRK to take such inevitable option.” (KCNA, “DPRK Foreign Ministry Blasts UNSC’s Press Statement Critical of Its Launch of Short-Range Missiles,” July 19, 2014)

KCNA: “A solid foundation has been provided to comprehensively develop the friendly and cooperative relations between the DPRK and Russia thanks to the DPRK-Russia summit and the adoption of the DPRK-Russia joint declaration in Pyongyang in July, Juche 89 (2000), say papers. It is the common desire and will of the peoples of the two countries to boost the traditional DPRK-Russia relations of friendship and cooperation, Rodong Sinmun says, and goes on: The DPRK-Russia joint declaration is a historic milestone to newly develop the traditional DPRK-Russia relations of friendship and cooperation and the driving force for the sound development of the international relations and global peace. The friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries have been developed on a high stage since the adoption of the DPRK-Russia joint declaration. … Minju Joson notes that the DPRK-Russia friendly relations will steadily develop thanks to the aspiration, requirement and efforts of the peoples of the two countries.” (KCNA, “Papers Call for Boosting DPRK-Russia Friendly and Cooperative Relations,” July 19, 2014)

7/20/14  
U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said Sunday that North Korea is "quieter" than before thanks to U.S.-led efforts to rein in the communist nation, claiming that the U.S. is moving forward with efforts to end Pyongyang's nuclear program. Kerry made the remark in an interview with NBC's "Meet the Press," rejecting criticism that the foreign policy of President Barack Obama lacks a clear course. He insisted the U.S. "has never
“I just came back from China where we are engaged with the Chinese in dealing with North Korea,” Kerry said, referring to his trip to Beijing earlier this month for the annual Strategic and Economic Dialogue between the two countries. “And you will notice, since the visit last year, North Korea has been quieter. We haven’t done what we want to do yet with respect to the denuclearization, but we are working on that and moving forward,” he said. It was unclear what he meant by the "visit last year." But a State Department official later said Kerry was referring to a trip to Beijing in April last year. (Korea Times, “Kerry: North Korea Is ‘Quieter’ Than Before,” July 21, 2014)

South Korea and China have reached a consensus on establishing a military hotline between their defense chiefs this year to further boost cooperation, a Seoul government source said. After agreeing on “the necessity for the hotline, the two countries began discussing the issue in earnest from the end of last year and have reached a consensus to set it up within this year,” the source said. “The two are likely to reach a final decision during their fourth round of the strategic defense dialogue due next week,” he added. The Seoul-Beijing dialogue is set to take place July 22 in China, with South Korea to be represented by Vice Defense Minister Baek Seung-joo and China by Wang Guanzhong, deputy chief of general staff of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army. During the summit meeting earlier this month, the two sides agreed to quickly set up such a hotline, but did not give a specific time frame. In 2008, South Korea’s Second Fleet Headquarters established a hotline with China’s North Sea Fleet Headquarters in Qingdao, and the Air Force’s master control and reporting center with the air defense center in China’s Jinan Military Region. The U.S. is currently the only country with which South Korea maintains a hotline between defense chiefs. “The issue was put on the table in an official fashion during the last session of the talks in November, and the two sides have since exchanged opinions,” the source said. China has reportedly been reluctant about the move over the past several years in apparent consideration of its relations with traditional ally North Korea. “The military hotline between the defense ministers will further boost their swift and close communications in such key issues as nuclear development in the North and other regional security issues,” the source said. During the strategic talks next week, Seoul and Beijing will “explore ways on how to deepen friendship and cooperation and to discuss the security situation of the Korean Peninsula and the region,” Seoul’s defense ministry said, without elaboration. (Yonhap, “S. Korea, China Expected to Set up Military Hotline This Year: Source,” July 20, 2014)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, first secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea, first chairman of the National Defense Commission of the DPRK and supreme commander of the Korean People’s Army, guided a match for examining the men’s football of the National Sports Team which will take part in the 17th Asian Games. … Great are expectations and interest of our people in the games, he said, adding: ‘Sports persons should take part in the games and give full play to the noble spirit of sports, the stamina of the nation and the spirit of fair play and thus positively contribute to promoting reconciliation and unity of fellow countrymen, friendship and peace with various countries of the world.’ ‘The participation of the DPRK’s players in the 17th Asian Games offers an important occasion in improving the relations between the north and the south and removing
distrust between them”, he said, adding “it is our principled stand that the inviolable sports should not be a political bargaining chip of the undesirable forces.” (KCNA, “Kim Jong-un Guides Match for Examining Men’s Football of National Sports Team,” July 20, 2014)

NDC Policy Department spokesman’s statement: “Strategic force units and other units of the ground, naval and air and anti-air forces of the Korean People’s Army have recently conducted a series of drills with various missions under the simulated conditions of an actual war to bolster up the capability for self-defense such as the ones for ultra-precision tactical rocket firing and firing drills of diverse artillery pieces. The service personnel and the people of the DPRK are greatly encouraged by the signal successes made in these drills of KPA units. The peace- and justice-loving people in the world are expressing admiration at the shining successes of the service personnel and the people of the DPRK. It is against this backdrop that only the U.S. and its ally the Park Geun Hye group and some other undesirable forces are behaving mischievously, revealing their sinister intentions. The U.S. grumbled as if tactical rockets of the KPA had gone into actions to strike its mainland, claiming “north Korea is posing an unusual and special threat to the U.S.” It is terming the routine drills of the KPA a politically-motivated low-profile provocation and successive military threats to the allies in the region. The south Korean authorities are echoing the U.S. claim by asserting the tactical rocket firing and firing drills of artillery pieces by the KPA are a retaliation against their refusal of the DPRK’s special proposal and its government’s statement, a dangerous provocation to escalate the military tensions and a deliberate threat to them. They went the lengths of letting the UN Security Council, a mechanism which has lost its impartiality long ago, kick up much fuss in a bid to mislead public opinion. Some weak-willed countries [China] are blindly joining in such odd charade. Clinging to the malodorous coattails of the U.S., they are going so reckless as to vie with each other to hug poor-looking Park Geun Hye. In view of all these ridiculous ruckuses being staged by making profound confusion of right and wrong, the Policy Department of the NDC of the DPRK once again serves a strong warning to the U.S. and the south Korean authorities, their prime movers, reflecting the voices of the service personnel and the people of the DPRK. The U.S. and the south Korean authorities should properly know what words "provocation" and "threat" mean before wagging their tongues. If the tactical rocket firing of the KPA is a “provocation” to the U.S. and a threat to regional stability and peace, then what should be said of the countless number of strategic missiles launched by the U.S. and the DPRK-targeted war drills frequently staged by it together with the south Korean military gangsters after bringing its forces to other country? The real provocations and threats made to the Korean peninsula are the whole gamut of political and military moves being pushed forward by the U.S., pursuant to its hostile policy toward the DPRK and its belligerent military strategy. In other words, the reckless intrusions into the waters of the DPRK side perpetrated by the warmongers of the south Korean military almost every day at the instigation of the U.S. are typical provocations. The U.S. and the south Korean authorities should not resort to brazen-faced brigandish acts reminiscent of a thief brandishing a club. The U.S., an arch criminal making provocations and threats, is kicking up high-intensity war drills for aggression every day in the land, waters and sky of other country. The U.S. and the
south Korean authorities who are hell-bent on confrontation with the compatriots in
the north at the former’s beck and call are terming the military drills for self-defense
conducted by the DPRK in its own land, waters and sky a “provocation” and a “threat.”
What are suitable words to accuse such impudent and brigandish behavior? This is
nothing but a shameless act of a burglar rudely behaving in face of the master of a
house trying to protect his house by himself. Such hooliganism may work somewhere
else but can never work in this land being safeguarded by the service personnel and
people of the DPRK. The more desperately the U.S. and the south Korean
authorities resort to gangster-like hostile acts, the more deadly retaliatory actions
of Korean style they will face. This will be like a bolt from the blue. The DPRK has
already done everything it could to mend the north-south relations and achieve the
reunification, peace and prosperity of the country through its crucial proposal and
open letter in January, special proposal in June and government statement in
July. What remains to be done at present is to make a final choice. The U.S. and the
south Korean authorities should no longer behave recklessly, daring talk about
“provocation” and “threat” from someone. If they persist in doing so, all the self-
defensive deterrent forces of the DPRK will keep themselves fully ready to punish all
undesirable forces in the world, strikingly demonstrate its invincible might and strongly
counter their moves through its practical retaliatory actions of justice.” (KCNA, “U.S.

North Korea is preparing for a large-scale landing exercise ahead of joint annual South
Korea-U.S. military drills next month. “We’ve detected signs that the North is preparing
for a massive landing drill in Nampo on the west coast since two to three weeks ago,” a
government source here said. Recently, the North has been transporting arms and
equipment to Nampo and carrying out a preliminary exercise by firing rockets from
122 mm rocket launchers and howitzer shells into the West Sea. Early this month, the
North staged a landing exercise involving the Army, Navy and Air Force near Wonsan,
Kangwon Province, mobilizing submarines, artillery guns, fighter jets, and bombers
under the watchful eyes of leader Kim Jong-un himself. It apparently aimed at
practicing to hit the South Korean Spike missile bases on Baeknyeong and
Yeongyeong islands. The Israeli-made Spikes with a range of 25 km are deployed to
hit the North’s coastal artillery pieces in an emergency. “The upcoming landing
exercise on the west coast could be smaller in scale than the earlier landing drill,” a
military source speculated. (Chosun Ilbo, “N. Korea ‘Preparing for Another Invasion
Drill,” July 22, 2014)

South and North Korea resumed a joint historical project Tuesday despite simmering
military tensions on the peninsula. A group of 13 South Korean historians headed to
the North’s border town of Kaesong as part of the program to excavate the site of
Manwoldae, a Goryeo Dynasty (918-1392) palace, Seoul’s unification ministry said.
“Eleven of them will stay in the Kaesong Industrial Complex for commuting to the site,
while the rest will return to South Korea later today,” a ministry official told reporters.
Under the program, a total of 45 South Korean experts plan to visit Kaesong through
August 16, he added. Seoul has decided to provide 276 million won (US$268,000) in
assistance for the project in line with efforts to promote social and cultural exchanges
with Pyongyang. The inter-Korean project began in 2007, but it was suspended shortly
after the death of the North’s leader Kim Jong-il in late 2011. (Yonhap, “Koreas Restart Joint Project on Ancient Palace in Kaesong,” July 22, 2014)

Rodong Sinmun: “The U.S. desire to see the DPRK dismantling its nukes first remains a daydream as long as there are imperialism and nuclear threats on the earth. ... It was a tragedy that those countries which dismantled the hard-won war deterrent, pinning foolish hope on the U.S., fell victim to its aggression in the end. The DPRK’s nuclear deterrence is an inevitable option for self-defense to protect its right to existence in the international area where high-handed practices based on the U.S.-style ‘theory of force’ prevail. As far as the policy of ‘strategic patience’ which Obama shaped and is working hard to realize it is concerned, it is the DPRK’s stand and pluck to wait for with a high degree of patience till the White House has its boss with normal realistic judgment and thinking power. The DPRK’s nuclear strike means, the powerful war deterrent, will be diversified and have stronger capability with the passage of time. It declared that the U.S. is its major target. The more desperately the U.S. pursues its wild ambition for pressurizing the DPRK to dismantle its nuclear deterrent with brigandish assertions, the noisier conspiratorial ‘human rights’ racket it kicks up to impair the prestige of the dignified DPRK and escalates the smear campaign against its social system and the more ridiculous fictions about ‘provocation’ and ‘threat’ it is spreading in a bid to push the situation on the Korean peninsula to the brink of a war, the deeper abyss of self-contradiction it will fall into and the more miserable its position of downhill turn will become. Obama should make a political decision at an early date as required by the trend of the times by making a cool judgment of the U.S. harsh hostile policy toward the DPRK, though belatedly. Chance is not always given to the U.S.” (KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Urges U.S. to Coolly Judge Its Hostile Policy towards DPRK,” July 23, 2014)

Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK) spokesman’s statement: “The news that Marshal Kim Jong Un personally guided a match for examining the men’s football of the National Sports Team to take part in the 17th Asian Games sparked off a big splash at home and abroad. He said that the participation of the DPRK’s sportspersons in the games would serve as an important occasion in improving the relations between the north and the south and defusing distrust and that they should positively contribute to promoting reconciliation and unity of fellow countrymen through the games. All Koreans keenly realize his firm will for reunification and noble patriotism through these meaningful words. The decision made to send a players group and cheerleading squad to the games reflects the noble intention to rev up the atmosphere of the event to be hosted by fellow countrymen and make the games serve as an important occasion in improving the north-south relations and defusing distrust even though the situation remains tense and confrontation grows acute. The DPRK is speeding up the preparations, expecting that the games would be more enlivened with the participation of the DPRK’s players group and cheerleading squad and that they would greatly contribute to mending the stalled north-south ties and promoting national reconciliation and unity. At the recent working-level talks the DPRK advanced the most realistic and reasonable proposals with due consideration into the present situation of the north-south relations while complying with the international practice over such technical matters as the scope of
players group and cheerleading squad, travel course, means of transport, accommodation and cheering. **As for the expenses for stay, we even envisaged using our own ship and letting it anchor in Inchon Port for lodging and boarding to lessen the burden of the south side.** Only to find fault with the participation of the DPRK players group and cheerleading squad in the games and argue each other, wasting time without elementary understanding of the good faith of the DPRK and its efforts cannot but be viewed as a shameless act of inviting criticism and disgrace from public at home and abroad. If the north and the south continue finding fault each other over trifling issues at a time when the relations between the two sides are at the lowest ebb, it will never be possible for them to unravel even one of the so many tangled knots. If there happens such an abnormal situation where the DPRK’s players group and the cheerleading squad are unable to take part in the games to be held in Inchon, an area close to the Military Demarcation Line, this will leave an indelible disgrace to the Koreans and all generations to come. No one should make such dishonest attempt to misuse the pure sports activities for meeting political purposes. Growing stronger in the country are expectation and interest of the people in the players group and cheerleading squad which are to take part in the games amid the sports enthusiasm that sweeps across the country. The south Korean authorities should neither miss the golden opportunity for mending the north-south relations nor cast doubt as to the sincere will of the DPRK to take part in the games to contribute to national reconciliation and unity. They should not try to judge it with a hostile conception. We will patiently approach the issue of sending the players group and cheerleading squad to the games from the viewpoint of actively contributing to achieving reconciliation and unity of the fellow countrymen and promoting friendship and peace among various countries in Asia and the rest of the world.” (KCNA, “CPRK Spokesman Urges S. Korea Authorities Not to Miss Opportunity for Improving North-South Relations,” July 23, 2014)

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui has told a group of South Korean lawmakers that the United States must lower the bar for resuming long-stalled multilateral talks on ending North Korea’s nuclear weapons program, a South Korean delegate who attended the meeting said. Zhang made the comments during a meeting with a group of South Korean lawmakers, led by Rep. Lee Seok-hyun of the main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy. Lee serves as a vice speaker of the National Assembly. "The United States is demanding North Korea show its willingness to give up its nuclear (weapons program), while maintaining a high threshold," Zhang was quoted as telling the lawmakers, according to the South Korean delegate. Zhang also criticized the U.S. policy of trying to "achieve its target even before the talks resume," the delegate said. The vice foreign minister reiterated China’s stated goal of “resuming the six-party talks at an early date.” Zhang was quoted as saying, "Unless dialogue resumes, North Korea will have a chance to advance its nuclear capabilities. And we don’t want this to happen." (Yonhap, “China Calls for U.S. to Lower Bar for Nuclear Talks with N. Korea,” July 24, 2014)

KCNA: “It was decided in the DPRK to establish economic development zones in some areas of Pyongyang, South Hwanghae Province, Nampho City, South and North Phyongan provinces. Unjong cutting-edge technological development zone will be
set up in some areas of … Unjong District, Pyongyang. Kangryong international green model zone will be set up in some areas of … Kangryong County, South Hwanghae Province. Jindo export processing zone will appear in some areas of … Nampho City. Chongnam industrial development zone will be set up in some areas of … South Phyongan Province. Sukchon agricultural development zone … and Chongsu tourist development zone in … North Phyongan Province. The sovereignty of the DPRK would be exercised in the economic development zones in provinces. The relevant decree of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly was promulgated [today]. (KCNA, “Economic Development Zones to Be Set up in Provinces of DPRK,” July 23, 2014)

Crisis Group: “Although some Chinese analysts have suggested Beijing meant to use the ADIZ to boost its Diaoyu/Senkaku claim, there is no evidence it is enforcing its rules above the islands; Japanese aircraft continue to patrol unchallenged. However, it cannot be ruled out that China will eventually use the ADIZ to assert aerial control in the future. Beijing likely was motivated to seek parity with Japan, which has had an ADIZ since 1969, scrambles fighters to intercept Chinese planes that enter it and publishes statistics on scrambles. By establishing its own ADIZ and publishing records of enforcement, Beijing could demonstrate to its public stepped-up efforts to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity. It could also seek to eliminate the public relations windfall Chinese analysts believe Tokyo reaps by announcing Chinese “intrusions” into Japan’s ADIZ. … A watershed event in China’s evolving policy toward maritime disputes took place in spring 2012. After a two-month standoff with the Philippines at the disputed Scarborough Shoal, Beijing established regular law enforcement patrols and excluded the Philippines from an area where neither had previously maintained a permanent presence. Chinese strategists hailed this as an example of advancing maritime claims without upsetting stability and balancing diplomacy with the need to “enhance the means and capability to safeguard peace, sovereignty and rights in accordance with China’s economic prowess.” It was said to mark a new era in which Beijing began “proactively” defending its maritime rights and interests. … Beijing sees its actions over the Diaoyu/Senkaku group as a successful application and further perfection of the Scarborough Shoal Model. Utilising Japan’s purchase of the islands, China demarcated territorial baselines around them; established regular law enforcement patrols in disputed waters; began broadcasting weather forecasts; and sent a law enforcement aircraft into the airspace. In each instance, Beijing deployed a tactic that can be termed “reactive assertiveness”: using an action by a rival claimant as justification to push back hard and change facts on the ground in its favor. As China modified the status quo incrementally, Japan and its ally the U.S. have found it difficult to respond meaningfully without provoking escalation. “China is using the combination of stating its peaceful intention and keeping up the potential for crisis very skillfully. It is very difficult for us to respond”, said a Japanese security strategist. “Maintaining peace means no actions. Safeguarding rights means actively asserting rights that China claims. The two can be contradictory sometimes,” a Chinese analyst acknowledged. To seek balance, according to Xi in his July 2013 speech, “safeguarding maritime rights and interests should go hand in hand with the enhancement of the country’s comprehensive national power.” That is to say, Beijing intends to pursue a dynamic balance and revise its goals in asserting maritime claims to match the growth of its strength. With its considerable and growing diplomatic,
economic and military might, it gradually crafts new facts by skilfully deploying administrative and law enforcement resources but stopping short of directly involving the military – and bets on its opponents taking the risk-averse approach and so keeping tensions below the threshold of conflict. Corresponding to the assessment that China’s comprehensive national power is not yet sufficient to gain full control of the Diaoyu/Senkaku group but that time is on its side, Chinese strategists in mid-2013 began to caution against “excess” in advancing a claim to the islands and advocate a strategy to preserve the gains already obtained. Although the “eventual solution to the Diaoyu Island problem includes expelling Japanese presence, establishing exclusive [Chinese] control, and stationing troops and developing the islands”, an analyst said, those goals should be realized in the long term and “should absolutely not be included in the near-to-medium term (five to ten years) strategic agenda”. Instead, he argued, China for now should focus on maintaining “overlapping control” and gradually obtaining acceptance by Japan, the U.S. and the international community of this reality, using diplomatic means to force Tokyo to admit the dispute and negotiate. Another analyst said Beijing intends not to push for further gains on the islands but to pressure Japan “to keep it nervous and wear it down.” Beijing applies pressure diplomatically by denying Tokyo bilateral contact and “stepping up the international PR campaign.” The apparent goal is to isolate Japan and alienate it from its allies. 

Partly due to China’s probing of its alliance with the U.S., Japan’s uncertainty about the U.S. commitment to defense of the Diaoyu/Senkaku group has grown. Although U.S. officials have repeatedly reaffirmed that the 1960 security treaty covers the islands, the U.S. does not take a position on the sovereignty issue. A Japanese official suggested that Washington’s refusal to do so “may have contributed to Chinese opportunism.” Tokyo, from the onset of the crisis, also wanted Washington to criticize China’s behavior more forcefully as provocative. U.S. policymakers, however, sought to communicate commitment to its ally, so as to deter China from testing the alliance, while simultaneously avoiding the appearance of giving Tokyo a blank check to take risks. The gap between the allies surfaced in March 2014, when the two countries’ military officials met in Hawaii to review bilateral defense guidelines. The Japanese reportedly wanted to prioritize discussions on China and draft scenarios for responding to “grey zone” incidents, while U.S. officials preferred not to single out China in talks. Japanese analysts also took note that U.S. Vice President Joe Biden, departing from Abe’s position, did not demand that China revoke its ADIZ when he visited Beijing in December 2013, instead urging his hosts to “avoid enforcement actions that could lead to crisis,” a request seen in Tokyo as a retreat. Any sign of improved relations between the U.S. and China could raise fear of abandonment in Tokyo. “People in Tokyo are too sensitive and insecure about the U.S. They are allergic to any sign of positive development in U.S.-China relations,” said a Japanese analyst specializing on the alliance. In November 2013, U.S. National Security Advisor Susan Rice stated: “When it comes to China, we seek to operationalize a new model of major power relations.” It was the first time a high-level U.S. official publicly used that phrase, a signature foreign policy formulation of President Xi. It triggered concern in Tokyo that Washington had consented to a “Group of Two” arrangement, in which “China and the U.S. can have direct coordination without consultation with Japan.” Abe’s visit to the Yasukuni Shrine complicated U.S. strategic interests in the region. These include keeping down Japan-China tensions; encouraging and facilitating a bigger Japanese
role in regional and global security; and promoting cooperation between Japan and South Korea, two allies that anchor U.S. power projection in the Asia-Pacific. The U.S. embassy in Tokyo released a statement that said Washington was “disappointed that Japan’s leadership has taken an action that will exacerbate tensions with Japan’s neighbors.” Some Japanese analysts expressed understanding of that disappointment and took it as a warning that “it is not worthwhile to shed American blood for an irresponsible ally.” Others took offense, saying Washington sent “the wrong message”, both angering the Japanese public and encouraging Beijing. Overall, however, China’s apparent testing of the alliance has pushed Washington to give more assurance to its ally. U.S. Ambassador to Tokyo Caroline Kennedy called Japan “our most valued partner” and said “the U.S.-Japan relationship is not defined or dictated by China’s actions.” During an April 2014 visit to Tokyo, Barack Obama became the first U.S. president to state that Article 5 of the security treaty “covers all territories under Japan’s administration, including the Senkaku Islands.” A joint statement following that visit said the U.S. and Japan “share strong concern over recent actions that have raised tensions in the East China Sea and South China Sea, such as the uncoordinated declaration of an Air Defense Identification Zone in the East China Sea.” It added that the two countries “are strengthening and modernizing our security alliance” in response to “the common security challenges our two countries face.” The U.S. and Japan have begun taking steps to upgrade the alliance. In October 2013, their diplomatic and military chiefs met together for the first time in Tokyo and agreed to undertake a year-long initiative to rewrite their guidelines for bilateral defense cooperation, a process that had taken place only twice before in over half a century. As a result of their agreement, the U.S. has deployed two Global Hawk drones – its most advanced long-distance surveillance aircraft – to Japan. Other military assets to be sent to Japan include F-35 joint strike fighters, new ballistic missile radars and two naval destroyers equipped with missile defense systems. Said in part to “strengthen mutual cooperation with the United States” and “[elevate] the effectiveness ... and deterrence” of the U.S.-Japan alliance, the Japanese Cabinet in July 2014 reinterpreted the country’s constitution and lifted its ban on collective self-defense, allowing the SDF to aid a foreign country “in a close relationship” with Japan. Washington strongly supports this move, as Japan’s self-imposed ban on exercising the right to collective self-defense “has for decades been seen as a major obstacle to expanded and more effective alliance cooperation.” …Chinese law enforcement vessels patrolled around the disputed islands 50 times in 2013, on average about once a week. The newly created China Coast Guard (CCG) sent patrol boats into the territorial waters for the first time on 26 July 2013. Typically, three or four such vessels circle the outer rim of the territorial sea. The Japan Coast Guard (JCG) patrols the waters continuously. The two sides mostly maintain a safe distance but radio each other to assert sovereignty and demand that the other leave. “There is a tacit understanding to avoid any collision or conflict, but that’s not a result of discussions or negotiations”, a Chinese maritime strategist said. The situation becomes more complicated and riskier when fishing boats enter. Both sides largely leave regular fishing boats alone, though the JCG uses “speakers, horns and other sound devices” to try to warn off Chinese fishermen who come into the territorial sea. When fishing boats carrying Japanese nationalist activists appeared in the disputed waters, however, Chinese patrols chased them, prompting the JCG to cut in between; at times the two sides were within ten meters of each other.
On 23 April 2013, ten Chinese patrol boats chased ten Japanese fishing vessels, and in August, Chinese vessels tailed Japanese fishermen for more than 28 hours until the latter exited the area. Both sides recognize that situations like these are highly risky, but accuse the other of behaving irresponsibly. “In violation of international navigation rules, Japan has used dangerous and prohibited maneuvers such [as] cutting across [the paths of Chinese vessels] and pincer moves in close distances multiple times … together with provocative actions such as illuminating [Chinese vessels] with bright lights,” according to the Chinese account. “We are doing a game of chicken, and it’s always the Japan side averting first. China never does it”, said a Japanese official. Risky behavior by law enforcement vessels largely ceased in the second half of 2013. Since October of that year, China has also reduced the frequency of patrols in the territorial sea of the disputed islands, instead increasing its law enforcement presence in the contiguous zone, twelve to 24 nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline, potentially signalling a desire to lower risk of collision. The change in behavior coincided with the emergence of a domestic consensus to modify China’s principal objective from pushing for more gains to focusing on preserving those already made. Participants at a conference of leading Chinese analysts in September 2013 agreed that China had succeeded in ending Japan’s exclusive control of the islands and establishing regular Chinese patrols. They argued that the more urgent task had become “managing the risk of collision by the two countries’ law enforcement vessels.” Such thinking likely reflects a calculation that keeping the dispute out of the spotlight might desensitize global opinion and create de facto international acceptance of a new status quo in China’s favor, but a collision would undermine those goals. If Beijing continues using its comprehensive national strength to calibrate the intensity with which it asserts maritime claims, it cannot be ruled out that it will eventually push for more control over the disputed islands and ultimately to exclude Japan. The “blowout style” expansion and upgrading of China’s maritime law enforcement capabilities, said to be justified by “a dire situation in safeguarding China’s maritime rights”, could be part of the preparation for such an eventuality. Created in March 2013 by combining four maritime law enforcement agencies, the CCG has been configured as an armed police force, or paramilitary. Its more than 16,000 personnel have been reclassified from public servants to active-duty service members, which means the CCG can arm them and their vessels, likely with “expelling weaponry such as small arms and large water cannons.” In 2014, in addition to an unknown number of decommissioned naval vessels, the CCG has twenty new vessels of 3,000-tonnes or above under construction, including two in the 10,000-tonne class. By 2015, it is likely to have more than 50 vessels of 1,000 tons or above. With this rapidly growing capability, the agency aims to do “all weather” patrols in “sensitive areas,” likely a reference to disputed waters in both the East and South China Seas. The CCG is also rapidly ramping up its aerial law enforcement capability. Chinese maritime law enforcement commissioned its first plane in 2005 and had ten by mid-2013. The capability is expected to have “grown multifold” by 2015, including by addition of aircraft capable of flying at least 4,500 km and more advanced ship-borne aerial patrol equipment. “By 2020, aircraft of different types, different ranges and different applications will become an irreplaceable maritime law enforcement force.” Except for one entry by a Chinese plane in December 2013, the air space above the Diaoyu/Senkaku group is patrolled regularly only by the SDF. It cannot be ruled out, however, that China will begin to contend for
aerial control over the islands. If Beijing does send patrol aircraft or “treat[s] the air
space as its sovereign space and implements ADIZ rules, it will be a nightmare,” a
Japanese security analyst said. Both sides would take enforcement measures,
including interception and forced landing, potentially leading to a clash in the air
where response times, unlike at sea, are measured in split seconds. The JCG, likewise,
has been building up its capability for the long-term defense of the islands. It received
a budget of 183.4 billion Yen ($1.79 billion) for fiscal 2014, a 5.5 per cent increase,
owing to a government consensus that improvement was needed due to the Chinese
challenge. The JCG plans to create a special unit with 626 personnel to guard the
islands. Ten large patrol vessels will be built, and two capable of carrying helicopters
will be renovated by the end of fiscal 2015. Four of the new vessels are scheduled to
enter service in 2014. To respond to “more urgent situations”, such as unusual
numbers of Chinese vessels, the JCG also plans to build an additional six large and
four medium-sized patrol boats and upgrade two existing vessels capable of carrying
helicopters to back up the special unit.” (Crisis Group, Old Scores and New Grudges:

South Korea proposed immediate talks with North Korea on ways to facilitate the
operation of an inter-Korean economic zone north of the border. Seoul’s unification
ministry said it sent a fax message to Pyongyang through the joint office of the
Kaesong Industrial Complex in the North Korean border town of the same name. The
ministry called for sub-panel discussions on cross-border travel, communication and
customs at the park, a rare symbol of inter-Korean cooperation. The South is hoping to
secure around-the-clock entry and exit of the complex for its citizens and the
establishment of an Internet connection. The North, in contrast, tightened regulations
to limit the entry of South Koreans last week. “We expressed regret over the unilateral
step without any justification under the South-North agreement and (related)
regulations,” the ministry said in a press release. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Offers Talks on
Kaesong Industrial Park,” July 25, 2014)

AmeriCares, a U.S. humanitarian organization based in Connecticut, A group has sent
US$800,000 worth of medicine, sanitary goods and other medical aid in June to North
Korea as part of its continued effort to help the impoverished communist nation, the
Voice of America (VOA) reported. The shipment will arrive at the end of this month, the
aid group’s communication director, Donna Porstner, told the VOA. The supplies will
be distributed to six hospitals and clinics in Pyongyang, Pyongan Province, and North
Hwanghae Province, it added. AmeriCares said it delivered $1.8 million in medical
assistance to North Korea earlier this year. (Yonhap, “U.S. NGO Ships $800,000 Worth
of Medical Aid to N. Korea,” July 25, 2104)

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un guided a rocket firing drill pointed at U.S. forces
based in South Korea on Saturday, a day before the 61st anniversary of the signing of
the Armistice Agreement that ended the 1950-53 Korean War. KCNA said Kim guided
a drill staged by the strategic force, without elaborating on the exact time and place.
“He examined a firing plan mapped out in consideration of the present location of the
U.S. imperialist aggressor forces’ bases in South Korea and under the simulated
conditions of the battle to strike and destroy them before guiding the drill,” KCNA
said. The South Korean military said the North fired a Scud-type missile with an estimated range of 500 kilometers from Jangsan Cape on its western coastal region, located just north of the tensely guarded western maritime border, into the East Sea, the 15th rocket launch, and the sixth ballistic missile launch, by the North this year. The communist regime claimed it has fired several rocket firing drills recently to develop its "rocket science and technology and firing methods." During the drill inspection, Kim said the U.S.' harsh hostile policy toward Pyongyang has not changed at all, warning "whoever dares challenge" is bound to meet "a final ruin," KCNA said. (Yonhap, "N.K. Leader Inspects Rocket Drill Targeting U.S. Base in South," July 27, 2014)

Hamas militants are attempting to negotiate a new arms deal with North Korea for missiles and communications equipment that will allow them to maintain their offensive against Israel, according to Western security sources. Security officials say the deal between Hamas and North Korea is worth hundreds of thousands of dollars and is being handled by a Lebanese-based trading company with close ties to the militant Palestinian organisation based in east Beirut. Hamas officials are believed to have already made an initial cash down payment to secure the deal, and are now hoping that North Korea will soon begin shipping extra supplies of weapons to Gaza. "Hamas is looking for ways to replenish its stocks of missiles because of the large numbers it has fired at Israel in recent weeks," explained a security official. "North Korea is an obvious place to seek supplies because Pyongyang already has close ties with a number of militant Islamist groups in the Middle East." Using intermediaries based in Lebanon, Hamas officials are said to be intensifying their efforts to sign a new agreement with Pyongyang to provide hundreds of missiles together with communications equipment that will improve the ability of Hamas fighters to coordinate operations against Israeli forces. The relationship between Hamas and North Korea first became public in 2009 when 35 tons of arms, including surface-to-surface rockets and rocket-propelled grenades, were seized after a cargo plane carrying the equipment was forced to make an emergency landing at Bangkok airport. Later, investigators confirmed that the arms cache was destined for Iran, which then planned to smuggle the weapons to Hizbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. (Con Coughlin, "Hamas and North Korea in Secret Arms Deal," Daily Telegraph, July 26, 2014)

A new financial sanctions bill for North Korea, which just passed the U.S. House of Representatives, will be as painful to Pyongyang as the banking restrictions that hit the communist regime hard in 2005, the House Foreign Affairs Committee chairman said. Rep. Ed Royce (R-California), who initiated the North Korea Sanctions Enforcement Act, made the remark in an interview with Yonhap, stressing that the only time Pyongyang paid serious attention to what the U.S. said was when the regime was under the 2005 financial sanctions. "We have tried every approach to engage North Korea and the only time that we’ve ever really had their attention was when we’ve used some leverage on the regime itself," Royce said in the interview in his office shortly after the bill’s passage, referring to the BDA sanctions. The new legislation will have such powerful effects as it will also target “institutions controlled by Kim Jong-un,” Royce said, referring to the North Korean leader. “Illicit activities is actually half the economy of money that comes into the regime,” Royce said. “So once you freeze that up with
sanctions, he couldn’t pay his generals.” That is why the North Korean leader Kim Jong-il pressed hard on the State Department to override the Treasury Department and to lift those sanctions, he said. Joshua Stanton, a former congressional staffer involved in writing the legislation, also said that the bill would be “very powerful” in pressuring the North, compared with existing U.S. sanctions on North Korea that “are trade sanctions, which historically haven’t been very effective.” The new legislation “is based on financial sanctions, which have been devastating when enforced aggressively against Iran, Burma, Sudan, and yes, against North Korea,” Stanton said. The bill will also help U.N. sanctions work, he said. “Some member states, specifically China, are not enforcing the U.N. sanctions. The U.N. is not an enforcement body. It relies on member states to help enforce its resolutions,” he said. “The U.S. Treasury Department’s cooperation is essential to making U.N. sanctions work, because Treasury alone has the power to cut off a bad actor’s access to the global financial system.” (Yonhap, “U.S. Lawmaker: New Bill Will Be as Painful to N. Korea as Banking Sanctions,” July 31, 2014)

7/28/14

DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman “as regards the fact that the U.S. and its followers are working hard to create anti-DPRK atmosphere by deliberately linking the DPRK to disputes in the Mideast: A local court of the U.S. recently made a ruling that the DPRK was also to blame for the killing of Israelis by Hezbollah in Lebanon as it allegedly provided the organization with missiles and military assistance. Meanwhile, Western media are floating a report that a contract on the purchase of missiles and communication equipment worth hundreds of thousands of U.S. dollars is being pushed forward between the DPRK and Hamas of Palestine. This is utterly baseless sophism and sheer fiction let loose by the U.S. to isolate the DPRK internationally. Lurking behind this propaganda is a sinister intention of the U.S. to justify its criminal acts of backing Israel driven into a tight corner by its recent unethical killings in the Gaza Strip of Palestine. At the 21st extraordinary meeting of the UN Human Rights Council the U.S. was the only country that voted against a resolution on the situation in the Gaza Strip in favor of Israel when it was put on voting, becoming a target of international accusation. Much upset by this, the U.S. is working hard to deliberately link the DPRK to the so-called ‘terrorist organizations’ defined by it in a bid to divert the focus of international criticism to Pyongyang. The U.S. is pulling up others under the pretexts of ‘terrorism,’ ‘killing of civilians’ and the like, a gangster-like logic reminiscent of a thief crying ‘Stop the thief!’ The U.S. is a wrecker of global peace and security, kingdom of terrorism and chief culprit of international terrorism as it has supplied war hardware of various types to the south Korean puppet forces and is prodding them to ignite a war against the DPRK. With neither lies nor fabrications can the U.S. cover up or falsify truth.” (KCNA, “Foreign Ministry Spokesman Accuses U.S. of Deliberately Linking DPRK to Mideast Disputes,” July 28, 2014)

7/29/14

The United States imposed sanctions on two North Korean shipping firms after a cargo ship from the communist nation was caught transporting missiles and other items from Cuba last year in violation of U.N. resolutions. The Department of the Treasury announced the sanctions, saying Chongchongang Shipping Co. is the operator of the once-seized freighter Chong Chon Gang and Ocean Maritime Management Co. played a key role in having the ship’s crew lie about the cargo and providing false
documents to Panamanian authorities. "North Korea uses companies like Chongchongang Shipping and Ocean Maritime Management to engage in arms trading in violation of U.S and international sanctions," Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen said in a statement. "The Chong Chon Gang episode, in which the DPRK (North Korea) tried to hide an arms shipment under tons of sugar, is a perfect example of North Korea’s deceptive activity, and precisely the sort of conduct that we are committed to disrupting," he said. Under the new sanctions, any property or interests in property of the designated entities that are within U.S. jurisdiction must be frozen, the department said. In addition, transactions by U.S. persons or within the United States involving the designated entities or identified vessels are generally prohibited, it said. The move came two days after a U.N. Security Council committee blacklisted Ocean Maritime Management Co., saying it played a key role in arranging the shipment of the concealed cargo of arms and related material, and the move demonstrates intent to evade U.N. sanctions. The North Korean freighter was seized by Panama in July 2013 while carrying Soviet-era MiG-21 fighter aircraft, surface-to-air missiles and other arms-related material hidden under sacks of sugar. (Yonhap, “U.S. Slaps Sanctions on Two North Korean Shipping Firms,” Korea Times, July 31, 2014)

Nick Hansen: “Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that North Korea is nearing completion of construction and test activities at the Sohae Satellite Launching Station to support long-range missile and satellite launches in the future. These activities include: A major construction program underway since mid-2013 to upgrade Sohae’s gantry and launch pad—site of Pyongyang’s last two Unha-3 space-launch vehicle (SLV) tests—to handle larger rockets with greater ranges and payloads. As of July 2014, North Korea had increased the gantry height to over 50 meters, completed construction of a new wider road onto the pad to carry larger rockets, and was building a rail spur from the existing siding that would also carry larger rockets directly to the launch pad. These modifications could be completed by 2015. The fourth series of tests of the KN-08 road-mobile intercontinental ballistic missile’s (ICBM) first stage rocket motor in 2014. Imagery of the rocket test stand beginning in late May 2014 through July 6 shows evidence of a new test series, including the presence of first stage rocket motors, distressed vegetation along the edges of the flame path past the flame trench and different stain patterns and colors inside the flame trench. The rocket engine test program may wind down by the end of this year although a key consideration will be how successful the tests have been. If the engine tests are concluded, the next stage in development of the KN-08 road-mobile ICBM may be full-scale flight tests of the missile. (Nick Hansen, “North Korea’s Sohae Facility: Preparations for Future Large Rocket Launches Progresses; New Unidentified Buildings,” 38North, July 29, 2014)

Reps. Ahn Cheol-soo and Kim Han-gil, cochairmen of the New Politics Alliance for Democracy, said they would step down from the top posts after the ruling Saenuri party staged a landslide victory by snatching 11 seats in the 15 constituencies up for grabs. Saenuri now holds 158 seats in the 300-seat National Assembly to NPAD’s 130. The impact of the defeat was amplified by the loss of South Jeolla Province’s Suncheon-Gokseong constituency to the Saenuri Party’s Lee Jung-hyun. Lee, a key ally
of President Park Geun-hye, is the first conservative to win a parliamentary constituency in South Jeolla Province since 1988. In addition to the loss of a constituency in its key stronghold, the by-elections saw the defeat of two potential presidential candidates, whom the NPAD was betting on to take conservative electorates. Former opposition leader Sohn Hak-kyu lost the race for Gyeonggi Province’s Suwon-C to a conservative newcomer, while former South Gyeongsang Province Gov. Kim Du-kwan was knocked out by Hong Cheol-ho in Gimpo. Such strategic nominations, however, are thought to have been one of the main causes for the defeat. "(Failing to) conduct the candidate nominations smoothly and to receive public support were factors in the defeat," Rep. Kim Jae-yun, the NPAD’s public relations chief, said in a radio interview. “Another is that as an opposition party, (the NPAD) should have chosen either to fight or to focus on policies to win the people’s trust.” The NPAD has been plagued by the issue of nominating candidates for elections since it was launched. After the former cochairmen promised to abolish the system for local elections, they backtracked.

Glyn Davies: “We have refused to respond to DPRK provocations with concessions. North Korean has obtained no benefits from its bad behavior. Instead, we have tightened sanctions and consistently underscored to the DPRK that neither its occasional and tentative “charm” offensives nor its more frequent periods of aggressive behavior will lead us or the international community to accept a nuclear-armed North Korea. As we seek the negotiated complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea, we know we must keep pressure on Pyongyang or it will not give up the weapons it claims it needs. That is why our policy mix includes sanctions and traditional deterrence measures. In short, ours is a comprehensive approach that seeks to denuclearize North Korea through diplomacy while ensuring deterrence of the North Korean threat. We seek a solution to the North Korea nuclear challenge through peaceful, persistent, multilateral diplomacy. The United States has offered — and continues to offer — Pyongyang an improved bilateral relationship provided it takes action to demonstrate a willingness to fulfill its denuclearization commitments and address other important concerns which are also, we believe, shared by the international community. We have consistently signaled to the DPRK that the door for meaningful engagement is open while applying unilateral and multilateral pressure to steer it toward that door. Our policy has followed this dual-track approach: we are open to engagement when possible, but will continue to apply pressure as needed. Both elements are critical to sharpening Pyongyang’s choices, demonstrating to the international community the seriousness of our commitment to a negotiated settlement of this issue, and building multilateral support for the various pressure and deterrence actions we take. Regrettably, the DPRK has consistently rebuffed offers for authentic and credible negotiations and instead responded with a series of provocations that have drawn widespread international condemnation and increased its isolation. In just the past few weeks alone, the DPRK has conducted seven Scud-class ballistic missiles launches in direct violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions. These followed short- and medium-range ballistic missile launches earlier this spring, which Pyongyang punctuated on March 30 with threats to conduct additional longer-range launches and possibly a “new type” of nuclear test. The DPRK says it is ready for “talks without preconditions.” No codebook is needed to decipher
North Korea’s intention: seek open-ended discussion that diverts attention away from its nuclear program and to avoid committing to denuclearization. Pyongyang has been explicit on this point: it seeks acceptance as a nuclear weapons state. It wants to use Six-Party talks, as it has in the past, as cover to continue its clandestine weapons development. We are not interested in Six-Party talks that do not focus directly on steps to implement, as a first and primary order of business, North Korea’s September 2005 promise to denuclearize. None of the Five Parties insists North Korea denuclearize before returning to the negotiating table. But we have underscored we need to see an early and demonstrable commitment by the DPRK to denuclearize. This means the onus is on North Korea to take meaningful actions toward denuclearization and refrain from provocations. Talks makes sense if, and only if, there is plausible reason to believe that North Korea is prepared to negotiate seriously. North Korea knows this, but we have not yet seen signs that Pyongyang is prepared to meet its commitments and obligations to achieve the core goal of the September 2005 Joint Statement: the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. The Republic of Korea is firmly at the center of our diplomatic efforts. There is no daylight between Washington and Seoul on the issue of what we expect from North Korea. As President Obama emphasized during his public remarks in Seoul in April, the United States supports President Park’s vision and desire for peaceful, progressive unification, as outlined in her March speech in Dresden, Germany. We hope to see Pyongyang take up President Park on her offer of an improved inter-Korean relationship. The DPRK – and the region – only stand to gain from embracing her principled vision. Although we believe that there is more China can do in terms of bringing necessary pressure to bear on North Korea so that it concludes it has no choice but to denuclearize, Beijing has done a great deal. As North Korea’s last remaining patron, the PRC has a critical, indeed unique, role to play in addressing the North Korean nuclear challenge. That is why North Korea remains at the top of our bilateral agenda with China, and why it figured prominently in Secretary Kerry’s discussions in Beijing in early July at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue. We welcome the steps the PRC has taken to signal its opposition to the DPRK’s nuclear weapons program, including through its stated commitment to fully implement UN Security Council sanctions concerning North Korea. China voted in favor of two new rounds of UNSC sanctions and in September last year published a 900-item control list banning the export of many dual-use items to North Korea. The United States and China share an interest in the peaceful denuclearization of North Korea. Beijing agrees with us on what North Korea needs to do – we have had the “what” of denuclearization nailed down since we negotiated the September 2005 Joint Statement. We are therefore now focused on coming to agreement on the “how” and the “when” of denuclearization. Can China do more to exercise its unique levers of influence over Pyongyang? Of course. And we remain in close touch with Beijing about ways we can work together to bring the DPRK to the realization that it has no other viable choice but to denuclearize. We have no misconceptions about North Korea’s willingness to give up its arsenal voluntarily. All of North Korea’s actions over the past few years, from its nuclear tests to the amendment of its constitution to declare itself a nuclear state, signal that it has no interest in denuclearizing. We take this threat seriously, and remain ironclad in our commitment to the defense of our allies, the Republic of Korea and Japan. Together with our allies and partners, we are working to shift Pyongyang’s
calculus from believing that a nuclear program is necessary for regime survival to understanding that such a program is incompatible with its national interests. To do that, we continue to use the multilateral and other tools at our disposal to increase the cost of North Korea’s illicit activities, to reduce resources earned through weapons exports that are subsequently reinvested in the WMD program, and to sharpen Pyongyang’s choices. ... The United States will continue to take steps to strengthen and bolster the existing sanctions regime, both through work in the UN context and through our own national measures. ... Three U.S. citizens are, today, being held by the DPRK regime. We have no higher priority than the health and well-being of American citizens. We are doing all we can to seek their release so they may reunite with their families. Their continued detention also constitutes a serious impediment to improved U.S.-DPRK relations; it frankly renders disingenuous Pyongyang’s assertion it wants a better relationship with the United States.” (Glyn Davies, Special Representative for North Korea Policy, “U.S. Policy toward North Korea,” Statement before the Subcommittee on Asia of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, July 30, 2014)

North Korea fired off four short-range rockets in an eastern direction on Wednesday, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said, in the second such provocation in less than a week. The projectiles, presumed to have come from a 300-millimeter multiple rocket launcher, “were fired from a site near Mount Myohyang in Pyongan Province at 7:30 a.m., 7:40 a.m., 5:50 p.m. and around 6 p.m. today,” the JCS said in a statement. “The two projectiles launched in the morning flew for just a few seconds. It appears that the North’s firing failed,” it noted. The third rocket flew 210 kilometers and was presumed to have landed in the East Sea, while the last one flew 130 kilometers and may have fallen in an inland area, according to the JCS. It was the first time for Pyongyang to fire a 300 mm rocket from inland and for such a projectile to travel more than 200 kilometers. Military sources here have said the communist country seems to be test-firing the rockets in an effort to increase their range. Although the launcher, called the KN-09, was thought to have a range of 160 kilometers, rockets fired last month traveled 190 kilometers. The firing marked the 16th time that the North has launched rockets this year, and the fifth firing of 300 mm rockets in 2014. It also came just four days after the North fired a short-range missile presumed to be a Scud into the East Sea. The latest launch brought the total number of rockets and missiles fired by the North to 102. “North Korea has been trying to show off that it can launch short-range projectiles anytime and from anywhere. We are analyzing if its leader Kim Jong-un again inspected today’s firing,” a JCS officer said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Fires 4 Short-Range Missiles,” July 30, 2014)

Three North Korean MiG-19 fighters have crashed this year, leading to the suspension of flight drills involving the aircraft, South Korea’s military sources said. The supersonic MiG-19 aircraft is a Soviet second-generation fighter developed in 1953. Some 400 MiG variants are still in service in the communist North, accounting for about half of its fighters. “At least three of the MiG-19s crashed during training missions -- one earlier this year, the others last month and earlier this month -- apparently due to their aged fuselages,” a source said, declining to be identified. “In the latest case, the plane crashed right after taking off at the North’s air base in Goksan, Pyongan Province, which led Pyongyang to stop drills involving the model,” he added. It is “far from
unusual for North Korea's fighters as well as military choppers to crash," another source said, noting frequent accidents "are partly behind its leader Kim Jong-un's inspection tours to the air force units this year." In May, the young leader of the communist country visited the Korean People's Army's Air and Anti-Air Force Unit 447, presumed to be located in South Pyongan Province. "The series of visits to the air force units or events seems to be aimed at not only countering the annual joint Max Thunder air drills between South Korea and the United States in April, but to encourage airmen demoralized by crash accidents," the source added. (Yonhap, "N. Korea Halts Operations of Soviet Fighters after Series of Crashes," July 30, 2014)

North Korea has started issuing new bank notes in an apparent effort to flush out privately hoarded cash reserves, according to South Korea's National Intelligence Service. In a briefing to a parliamentary committee, the NIS said the new notes were issued from July 30, Yonhap reported. Old bank notes can be exchanged or used for an unspecified grace period after which they will cease to become legal tender, the NIS said. "This is apparently aimed at compelling people to cough up their cash hoards," Lee Cheol-Woo, a lawmaker with the ruling Saenuri Party, told Yonhap after yesterday's briefing. (Korea Herald, "N. Korea Issues New Banknotes to Flush out Cash," August 1, 2014)

7/31/14

Kenneth Bae, the American missionary imprisoned in North Korea for almost two years, said in an interview released today by Choson Sinbo that he felt abandoned by his own government and had developed new lung and liver ailments, in what appeared to be part of a new effort by the North Korean authorities to use him as leverage with the United States. It came as a shock to his relatives in the United States, who have been repeatedly inquiring about his condition. Bae has been hospitalized at least twice so far during his penal servitude in a labor camp for chronic conditions that include diabetes and an enlarged heart. (Rick Gladstone, “American Held in North Korea Says Health Is Failing,” New York Times, August 1, 2014, p. A-3) Korean-American missionary Kenneth Bae has been transferred to a North Korean labor camp from a hospital, despite U.S. concerns that his health is worsening. In an email sent to VOA’s Korean Service, a U.S. State Department official said Bae was transferred to a labor camp immediately after being discharged from his hospital on July 30. "We remain gravely concerned about Bae’s health, and we continue to urge [North Korean] authorities to grant Bae special amnesty and immediate release on humanitarian grounds," the email said. The State Department official also asked for Bae to be moved back to the hospital in the interim. The statement comes after Bae received a visit at the labor camp this week by officials from the Swedish embassy, which represents U.S. interests in North Korea in the absence of diplomatic relations between Washington and Pyongyang. The consular visit to Bae is the 12th such meeting since his arrest in November 2012 and the first in almost four months. (VOA News, “Kenneth Bae Transferred to N. Korean Labor Camp,” Chosun Ilbo, August 14, 2014)

8/1/14

North Korea’s reclusive government signaled new anger toward the United States, equating it to a “mentally retarded patient” over an annual military exercise with South Korea, and offering hints that two American tourists arrested in North Korea four months ago would soon be put on trial and face long imprisonments. In a rare, nearly
hourlong news conference at the United Nations, the North’s deputy permanent representative, Ri Tong-il, recited a litany of grievances with the United States and South Korea, accusing them of conspiring for regime change in the North, repeatedly ignoring the North’s entreaties for diminished tensions and moving ahead with the war games, known as the Ulchi-Freedom Guardian exercises, scheduled to begin August 18. While North Korea has always made such accusations ahead of the drills, Ri coupled them this year with the announcement that he had requested an emergency United Nations Security Council meeting for the purpose of condemning them as a threat to peace and security. Ri said he had received no response to the request, sent July 21, to the 15-member Council, which includes the United States as a permanent member and South Korea as a rotating member. “If the Security Council turns away from this emergency meeting, it will only expose itself as a U.N. body which has lost its principles, impartiality and responsibility,” Ri said. Security Council diplomats later confirmed that the North Korean letter had been received but no further action had been taken. “There are no plans for a meeting at this stage,” one said privately. Ri rejected suggestions that North Korea’s own nuclear and long-range missile activities, for which it has been sanctioned by the United Nations, were provocative. “No country in the world has been living like the D.P.R.K., under serious threats to its existence, sovereignty, survival,” he said. “That’s why the D.P.R.K. went with the option to go with a nuclear deterrent, to protect our people.” He accused the United States of using its military power to deliberately subvert any dialogue between North and South Korea – which is also a standard North Korean assertion. But in a variant of that theme, he said the American behavior “is reminding us of the historical lasting symptom of a mentally retarded patient.” Asked later to explain the analogy, Mr. Ri said, “The U.S. has been doing it for over six decades on our doorstep.” (Rick Gladstone, “North Korea’s Antipathy for the U.S. Is Seen at a New High,” New York Times, August 2, 2014, p. A10)

Two American citizens facing trial in North Korea called for help from the US government to secure their release from what they feared could be lengthy prison terms, a news report said. Matthew Todd Miller and Jeffrey Edward Fowle told a local AP Television news crew Friday that they were in good health and were being treated well, being allowed daily walks. North Korea said in June it would put the two on trial on charges including “perpetrating hostile acts.” Fowle, 56, said he feared his situation would get much worse once he went on trial, according to Associated Press. “The horizon for me is pretty dark,” he said. “I don’t know what the worst-case scenario would be, but I need help to extricate myself from this situation. I ask the government for help in that regards.” “The window is closing on that process. It will be coming relatively soon, maybe within a month,” Fowle said of his trial. “I’m anxious to get home, I’m sure all of us are.” Miller, 24, was arrested in April after he apparently ripped up his visa at immigration and demanded asylum in the communist state. Miller also said he expected to be put on trial soon and sent to prison. “I have been requesting help from the American government, but have received no reply”, he said. (AFP, “Two U.S. Tourists Held in N. Korea Seek U.S. Help: Report,” August 2, 2014)

Two new parties were officially launched as the opposition Japan Restoration Party headed by former Tokyo Gov. Ishihara Shintaro and Osaka Mayor Hashimoto Toru dissolved over a proposed merger with the smaller opposition Yui no To party. A
A group of 22 lawmakers in both houses of the Diet formed the Party for Future Generations, and filed the report of the establishment of the new party with Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Shindo Yoshitaka. Hiranuma Takeo, a former trade minister, heads the new party, while House of Representatives member Hiroshi Yamada is the new party’s secretary-general. Ishihara, a lower house member, is expected to serve as the top adviser of the new party headquartered in Tokyo. Another group of 38 Diet members also set up a new party which inherited the name of the Japan Restoration Party and filed the report of the party’s establishment with Shindo. The Japan Restoration Party based in Osaka and led by Hashimoto is expected to merge with the 14-member Yui no To party led by lower house member Eda Kenji, in early September. Eda, former secretary-general of Your Party, launched the Yui no To party last December following internal strife with Your Party founder and then leader Watanabe Yoshimi. (Kyodo, “Two New Parties Formed after Split of Japan Restoration Party,” Japan Times, August 1, 2014)

In an apparent bid to end the diplomatic deadlock between Japan and China, Fukuda Yasuo, a former prime minister, used his own contacts to set up a secret meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, sources said. Fukuda visited Beijing between July 27 and 29. According to several sources knowledgeable about Japan-China relations, the meeting was arranged by Fukuda through his personal contacts in China, and there was no involvement by the Foreign Ministry. It has been extremely rare for Xi to meet with any influential individual from Japan since September 2012, when Japan took ownership of the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. The secret meeting between Fukuda and Xi may have been an attempt to seek ways to improve the relationship ahead of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum summit meeting scheduled for Beijing in November. Meanwhile, Abe said that he hoped to meet with Xi on the sidelines of the APEC summit meeting. Abe held a news conference today in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the last stop of a five-nation tour of Latin America. Abe touched upon the concept of a “mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests” with China that he proposed in 2006 during his first stint as prime minister. "We must return to that starting point," Abe said at the news conference. "If issues of concern exist, then dialogue should be held. It will also be important for both sides to continue with quiet efforts." (Kurashige Nanae and Funakoshi Takashi, “Ex-Prime Minister Fukuda Meets Secretly with Chinese President Xi,” Asahi Shimbun, August 3, 2014)

North Korea’s trade with its economic lifeline China fell 2.1 percent on year to $2.89 billion in the first six months of this year, data compiled by South Korea’s government trade agency showed, in another sign that strained political ties between the two nations have affected their economic relations. During the six-month period, North Korea’s exports to China declined 3.9 percent to $1.31 billion and imports slipped 0.6 percent to $1.58 billion, according to the data provided by the Beijing unit of South’s Korea Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA). There were no shipments of crude oil from China to North Korea from January to June, the data showed. But a diplomatic source with knowledge of the matter cautioned against reading too much into the official trade figures because China has provided crude oil to North Korea in the form of grant aid and such shipments were not recorded on paper. “Despite the six-month absence of oil shipments, the scale of North Korea’s decline in imports is
minimal,” the source said on condition of anonymity. Meanwhile, North Korea’s exports of rare earth to China jumped 153.7 percent on year during the January-June period, the data showed, without providing the value of the exports. (Yonhap, “N. Korea’s Trade with China Falls 2.1 Pct in H1,” Korea Herald, August 4, 2014) The Ministry of Unification and other government ministries connected with North Korea are paying quite a deal of attention to the fact that China was reporting “zero” exports of crude oil to the North. If China were to actually cut off the crude oil it exports to North Korea, the North Korean economy and society would effectively shut down - considering that the North depends on China for nearly all of its oil - and North Korean relations with China would be shaken to the core. But while the supply of crude oil was suspended for half a year, through June, North Korea remained mostly quiet. This is what experts are calling the “zero mystery” in relation to oil exports to North Korea. In figures provided by the Chinese customs service on Aug. 3, exports of crude oil to North Korea from January to June this year were recorded as zero. Over the same period in 2013, China exported 251,000 tons to the North, and its yearly exports average 500,000 tons. This year, though, it is not exporting any oil to North Korea at all. Experts are arguing about the meaning of the unprecedented duration of the suspension of oil exports. For some experts who believe that a severe rift has appeared in relations between China and the North, this situation is a key piece of evidence. In contrast, those who think that fraying relations between the two countries are temporary or illusory argue that the phenomenon needs to be interpreted carefully. But with the Chinese government keeping its lips sealed on the matter, both of these theories are mere conjecture. Those who argue that there are substantial cracks in relations between North Korea and China believe that China has played the trump card of cutting off the supply of crude oil as a way of putting pressure on North Korea to get back into line. They point out that North Korea has continued to irritate China, which wants stability on the Korean peninsula, by carrying out a third nuclear test at the beginning of 2013 and threatening to move a head with a fourth test just one year later. The argument is that, though China had formerly hesitated to put pressure on North Korea, it has been compelled to take serious measures to prevent a fourth nuclear test or a military provocation. However, there are also other experts who counter that suspending the supply of crude oil ought not to be read as a sign of deteriorating relations between North Korea and China. They say that, while the statistics read zero, the supply of crude oil is actually continuing. In fact, the price of gasoline and other petroleum products in North Korea remains stable, reports have indicated. Radio Free Asia reported that gasoline was selling recently for around 10 to 11 won per kilogram at North Korea’s markets, around the same as the 11 won price from 2012. The price of diesel also remained steady at 6 to 7 won, the broadcaster said. The South Korean government believes that while China may have reduced its crude oil exports, it is continuing to supply North Korea with oil as a form of aid. “China has been supplying North Korea with 500,000 tons in trade, along with a similar amount of free oil. It appears to be providing North Korea with enough crude oil to prevent problems from occurring in North Korean society,” said a senior Ministry of Unification official. After North Korea carried out its first nuclear test in 2006 and second test in 2009, China reportedly suspended exports of crude oil for one month and four months, respectively. But even then, since there were no reports of a severe shortage of crude oil in the North, many observers argued that China was simply pretending to cut off the supply of crude and
was actually still sending oil to the North. But many experts believe that relations between North Korea and China are not in such a bad state that China would shut off the supply of crude oil. “Relations between North Korea and China are not normal, but they should not be seen as especially bad, either. From the viewpoint of a superpower, China appears to be steadily observing North Korea’s behavior, without grief or joy,” said Lee Hui-ok, professor at Sungkyunkwan University. Indeed, aside from interaction between senior officials, other sectors appear to be operating normally without any major disturbances. Trade between North Korea and China in the first half of the year remained at levels similar to 2013. In the area of tourism, China also appeared to be taking a more aggressive attitude in the first half of the year than in 2013, running new tourism programs using bicycles and trains, reports said. In the area of personnel exchange, working-level contact is continuing, despite the lack of meetings between senior officials. “There are virtually no senior political officials from North Korea visiting China. However, technical and economic officials continue to visit China for inspections and training,” said an official at the South Korean embassy in China. “It is dangerous to read too much into the temporary fluctuations and the sluggish mood recently affecting relations between North Korea and China. That would be a false diagnosis of their relationship,” said Lee Nam-ju, professor at Sungkonghoe University. “Since North Korea and China understand each other, it does not appear likely that their relations will be suddenly damaged,” Lee said. (Choi Hyun-june, “The Mystery of China’s ‘Zero’ Oil Exports to N. Korea,” Hankyore, August 4, 2014)

Rodong Sinmun: “The U.S. and south Korean war-like forces are going to stage Ulji Freedom Guardian joint war exercises despite the repeated warnings of the DPRK and domestic and foreign public protest. A tit for tat is an invariable mode of counterc-action of the DPRK. It is the DPRK’s legitimate exercise of its inviolable right to protect the fate of the country and nation with its annual and regular military exercises for self-defense. The U.S. and south Korean puppet warmongers are making desperate efforts to block the regular military exercises of the Korean People’s Army while doing whatever they like including making a nuclear threat and blackmail and slapping sanctions against the DPRK and pursuing ceaseless arms build-up and saber rattling for invasion of it. No one can deter the DPRK from putting its military exercises for self-defence on an annual and regular basis to steadily bolster up its war deterrence and defence capabilities in every way now that provocative military exercises of the warmongers at home and abroad are getting evermore serious. The U.S. and south Korean bellicose forces’ projected Ulji Freedom Guardian in disregard of the repeated warnings of the DPRK is a blatant challenge to its sincere efforts to protect peace and improve the inter-Korean relations. The DPRK will counter nukes and missiles in kind and resolutely cope with annual and regular military exercises for invading it through annual and regular military drills for waging a great just war for national reunification. This declaration of the DPRK is by no means an empty talk. If a nuclear war breaks out on the Korean peninsula, the U.S. mainland which was never exposed even to a shell will not go safe.” (KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Terms DPRK’s Annual and Regular Drills for Self-Defense Exercise of Its Legitimate Right,” August 4, 2014)
The PLA has been increasing the number of both nuclear and conventional warheads in its strategic missile command, according to an official military document. The document, official teaching materials for the strategic missile command as well as the air, ground and naval branches of the People’s Liberation Army, corroborates suspicions among military experts that China has been beefing up its nuclear arsenal amid a global trend toward a reduction of nuclear arms. China’s strategic missile command, officially known as the Second Artillery Command, serves as the nation’s core nuclear deterrent and underscores Beijing’s status as one of the world’s major nuclear powers. To enhance China’s nuclear deterrent, the strategic missile command will “appropriately increase the number of nuclear warheads,” a military source quoted the document as saying. The document also says the strategic missile command will strengthen its conventional missile force by increasing the number of conventional warheads and developing more powerful non-nuclear warheads. The PLA document also says the military will increase its capability to attack enemy satellites and destroy enemy missiles. The document suggests that the PLA is independently bolstering its strategic missile force, while saying China will not be part of an arms race with other nuclear powers. (Kyodo, “China ‘Increasing Number of Missile Warheads,’” Kyodo, August 4, 2014)

China’s recent saber-rattling moves in the East China Sea are seen as a major cause for alarm in this year’s Defense White Paper. The white paper called on Beijing to retract its unilateral designation last November of an air defense identification zone in the East China Sea, where the Senkaku Islands are located. “It was an extremely dangerous move that could lead to an unexpected incident because it unilaterally altered the status quo in the East China Sea and escalated the situation,” the document stated. It also called for the retraction of “all measures that interfere in the freedom of flying in airspace over the high seas.” Two incidents in May and June in which Chinese fighter jets made dangerously close approaches to SDF aircraft in airspace over the East China Sea are also referred to in the white paper. Concerned about such repeated incidents, it said, “One objective of China’s maritime activities is to strengthen its arguments regarding its own territorial claims through the show of force and by weakening the control exercised by other nations.” For the first time, the white paper also defined so-called gray zone situations that cannot be adequately handled by the Japan Coast Guard and police, even though such situations fall short of an all-out war. The reference to gray zone situations was made due to the increased tensions in the East China Sea over the territorial dispute with China over the Senkakus. According to the white paper, gray zone situations cover a wide range of situations that are neither normal nor a military emergency. Such gray zone situations are likely to increase in the future, the document said. The document also raised concerns about moves being made by North Korea. The white paper said if Pyongyang should succeed in developing ballistic missiles with a range that could reach the United States, as well as in creating nuclear weapons small enough to be carried on such missiles, “it might become overconfident or have the false sense that it had secured a strategic deterrent in relation to the United States. “That could lead to the possibility of an increase in military provocations.” (Asahi Shimbun, “Defense White Paper Takes Aim at China’s Maritime Provocations,” August 5, 2014)
8/7/14 A Korean-American who runs a Christian NGO in a Chinese city on the border with North Korea is being investigated by Chinese authorities and has had his bank accounts frozen, a source with direct knowledge of the case told Reuters on Thursday. Peter Hahn, a naturalized U.S. citizen, has been under interrogation by Chinese authorities for the last three weeks and is not permitted to leave the country, said the source, who requested anonymity, citing the sensitive nature of the case. The source did not know what had prompted the probe, which coincides with an investigation into a Canadian Christian couple who ran a coffee shop in the nearby city of Dandong on suspicion they stole military and intelligence secrets. (Reuters, “Chibna Investigating American Peter Hahn near North Korean Border,” August 7, 2014)

8/9/14 It is no secret that North Korea suffers chronic shortages of fuel. Now the scarcity, apparently made even worse by a drop in oil imports from China, has claimed a new class of victims: motorbike riders. Over the last week, two websites in Seoul that carry reports from sources in North Korea said the authorities there had cracked down on private motorbike use in order to conserve fuel for military and government officials. The new restrictions come just as motorbikes have been emerging as the next stage in the evolution of vehicular transport in North Korea, much as they had in other parts of Asia decades ago – another reflection of North Korea’s stunted economy. Motorbike ownership is widely considered a status symbol in North Korea, where most people still travel on foot. Many motorbike owners supplement their income by using them as taxis. Free North Korea Radio, a website run by North Korean defectors, said the restrictions had already created a workaround among some motorbike owners, especially those who rely on them to make a living. “Some people hire state security officials and military police to ride with them on their motorcycle to do their business,” the website quoted a resident in Pyongyang, the capital. “In the end, the crackdown is only fattening the pockets of those who enforce it.” Daily NK said the restrictions had banned private motorbike use except in the morning commute and at night, and that violators risked confiscation of their vehicles. The restrictions could not be independently verified and have not been reported in North Korea’s own state-run press. But if confirmed, they appear to be another consequence of the North Korean government’s chilled friendship with China. According to South Korea news reports this year quoting official Chinese customs data, China did not export any crude oil to North Korea for at least the first three months of 2014. Diplomats have cautioned against reading too much into those statistics, because China sometimes keeps oil exports to North Korea out of its official trade data. Still, competition for North Korea’s limited supply of fuel for private use is known to have intensified in recent years. (Choe Sang-hun, “Motorbikers in North Korea Are Told to Park to Save Fuel,” New York Times, August 9/ 2014, p. A-7)

Rodong Sinmun: “The south Korean puppet forces are now resorting to extremely deliberate moves to escalate the tension in a bid to realize their daydream to stifle the DPRK through cooperation with outside forces. … Defusing the tension on the Korean peninsula and turning the inter-Korean relations into reconciliation and unity are an essential task raised by the prevailing grave situation. The U.S. has directed the spearhead of pivot to Asia-Pacific strategy to the peninsula and intentionally strained the situation. Some days ago, when the hard-won atmosphere of
reconciliation was created in the inter-Korean relations due to the DPRK’s positive proposal, the nuclear carrier flotilla of the U.S. imperialist aggressor forces was introduced to south Korea and the U.S. and the puppet forces’ madcap joint naval maneuvers were staged. All this was in pursuance of the scenario of the U.S. displeased with the process for mending the inter-Korean relations. This notwithstanding, the puppet military gangsters kicked off war hysteria, zealously toeing the U.S. policy of aggression to carry out its strategy to dominate Asia at the sacrifice of Koreans. Consequently, this pushed the inter-Korean relations to an uncontrollable phase. The DPRK has consistently attached importance to the national reconciliation and unity in the arduous and historic course of the struggle to achieve the country’s reunification. The DPRK decided to dispatch its players group and cheering-leading squad to the 17th Asian Games. This was prompted by the noble intention to revive the enthusiasm for reconciliation between the north and the south in the June 15 era of reunification and weather the present difficulties through the concerted efforts of the Korean nation. Nevertheless, the puppet authorities are groundlessly slandering the DPRK’s sincere proposals for improving the inter-Korean relations as “the reconciliation-war double-dealing tactics” and "selection of alternative of pressure" in a bid to besmirch the pure intention of compatriots and justify their anti-reunification moves at any cost. The DPRK will never tolerate any move to block the process for improving the inter-Korean relations and dampen the atmosphere of the national reconciliation and unity. The south Korean authorities should be held responsible for the deteriorated inter-Korean relations and halt the criminal action aimed at escalating the confrontation with the DPRK in collusion with outside forces.” (KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Holds S. Korean Authorities Chiefly Responsible for Bedeviled Inter-Korean Relations,” August 9, 2014)

The United States should open dialogue with North Korea because ignoring the communist regime would only make the already bad situation worse, a former top American nuclear negotiator with Pyongyang said. Robert Gallucci, who defused the first North Korean nuclear crisis by negotiating the 1994 Agreed Framework deal with Pyongyang, also said in an exclusive interview with Yonhap that he is willing to play a role in helping resolve the standoff if asked by the U.S. government. “The North Korean issue, shorthanded, doesn’t get better like fine wine, (with) the passage of time,” Gallucci said. “It gets worse. With each passing year the North accumulated more highly enriched uranium, we presume, more plutonium, develops more sophisticated delivery vehicles, probably more sophisticated nuclear weapons." Critics of negotiations with the North say Pyongyang has no intention to give up its nuclear program and holding dialogue with the regime would amount to rewarding the North’s bad behavior. Still, Gallucci said there should be negotiations. “The North Koreans ... do not want to be ignored and when they think they’re ignored, they will do something to get your attention in the South or our attention. We shouldn’t try to deal with the North Korean case by ignoring it," he said. "Doing nothing about North Korea (is untenable), not only because while you’re doing nothing they will be building stuff, but also it’s not a responsible way to deal with a situation like the North Korean state,” he added. Gallucci also said sanctions are not a good idea to deal with North Korea because China, which has an interest in not seeing the North Korean regime collapse, will intervene. “The regime in the North has very high tolerance for pain suffered by its
people. These are not very nice people,” he said. Last September, Gallucci and Stephen Bosworth, a former special U.S. representative for North Korea policy, held a meeting with North Korean officials in Berlin. The North Koreans repeated their calls for talks without any conditions, he said. Before coming to the meeting, Gallucci said, he met with Ambassador Glyn Davies, special representative for North Korea policy, and Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel, and relayed the American position to the North Koreans that Pyongyang should take steps demonstrating its seriousness. The North Koreans insisted they can’t make concessions before negotiations begin, he said. Gallucci said, however, he believes the two sides can bridge the gap. “The U.S. could say they’ll have pre-talks, but not the real talks, pre-talks. They don’t require proof of sincerity. We could say that. The North could say, OK, here’s Kenneth Bae,” he said, suggesting the North could release a Korean-American citizen being held in the communist nation in return. He said he has received invitations from the North through nongovernmental organizations to come and visit the country, but didn’t accept the invitations because he did not “want to get in the way.” Still, Gallucci said he is willing to play a role if his government asks for it. “If the U.S. government ever said we would like you to do something, I would do it, probably,” he said. (Chang Jae-soon, “Ex-U.S. Nuclear Negotiator Calls for Dialogue with N. Korea,” Yonhap, August 11, 2014)

South Korea offered to hold high-level talks with North Korea next week on the reunion of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War and other issues of “mutual concern.” In a fax message to Pyongyang, the South proposed that a fresh round of high-level, inter-Korean talks take place at the truce village of Panmunjom on August 19, Seoul’s unification ministry said. The South asked the North to propose another date if it wants, said the ministry. “We want to discuss family reunions and other pending inter-Korean issues in a comprehensive manner,” Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae told reporters. He stressed that any issue related to South-North relations could be raised when a meeting occurs, adding that Seoul fully agrees on the need to improve ties with Pyongyang. Should the North’s delegates raise such sensitive issues as the economic sanctions known as the May 24th Measures and the suspended joint tour program to Mount Kumgang, the South will listen to their views and explain its position, said the minister. (Lee Chi-dong, “S. Korea Offers to Hold High-Level Talks with N. Korea,” Yonhap, August 11, 2014) “A message was sent to North Korea in the name of chief South Korean representative Kim Kyu-hyun proposing that a second round of meetings take place between high-ranking officials from both sides,” a senior government official said. Taking into account the time needed for preparations, the South Korean government proposed August 19 as the day of the meeting and suggested holding it in the Unification Pavilion on the north side of Panmunjeom Peace Village. This would be a follow-up to the first round of meetings between high-ranking officials from North and South, which took place on February 12 and 14. “We told North Korea that we hope to discuss various topics of interest to both sides, including the idea of holding reunions for divided families around Chuseok,” the government also said. “Our position is that there are no limitations on the topics for discussion,” said a Ministry of Unification official. “In addition to rolling back the May 24 measures and resuming tourism to Mt. Keumgang, we can also talk about the issue of the cheering squad for the Incheon Asian Games, which is what was being discussed when the recent working-level talks reached an impasse.” The South’s sudden proposal to hold a
second round of high-level talks is unexpected, many observers say, considering the passive attitude the government had adopted toward improving inter-Korean relations. “Since President Park Geun-hye started talking about unification as jackpot at the beginning of the year, absolutely no progress has been made in inter-Korean relations. This proposal appears to be aimed at using relations with North Korea to seize the initiative in bringing about a shift in domestic politics,” said one North Korea expert on condition of anonymity. (Choi Hyun-june, “Seoul Makes Unexpected Offer for High-Level Inter-Korean Talks,” Hankyore, August 12, 2014)

South Korea said it can discuss with North Korea how to create a “peace regime” on the divided Korean Peninsula amid lingering tensions over North Korea’s missile and nuclear programs. Still, South Korea said certain conditions must be put in place before holding discussions on the issue, an apparent reference to military confidence-building of the two rival Koreas that are still technically at war. “South Korea can discuss the establishment of a peace regime in case conditions mature,” the presidential office said in a book that outlined President Park’s Geun-hye’s national security policies. The presidential office did not elaborate on what it meant by a peace regime, though it is widely seen as a peace treaty that could replace the armistice accord that ended the 1950-53 Korean War. The commentary also said that North Korea’s strategic rockets tipped with nuclear warheads are powerful enough to strike the U.S. mainland, a claim that cannot be independently verified. Outside experts doubt Pyongyang has mastered the miniaturization technology needed to mount a nuclear warhead on a ballistic missile. In the book, South Korea said it will “take more powerful and effective bilateral or multilateral sanctions on North Korea in cooperation with the international community” in case of an additional provocation, an apparent reference to a nuclear test. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Says Open to Building ‘Peace Regime’ on Peninsula,” North Korea Newsletter 326, Aug. 14, 2014)

A South Korean presidential advisory panel on North Korea shares the view that Seoul’s four-year-old sanctions on Pyongyang stand in the way of easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, a top member of the panel said. Chung Chong-wook, named to be deputy head of the South’s new presidential committee on reunification, emphasized the need for a fundamental shift in policy on inter-Korean relations. “I think there is common ground (inside the committee) that South-North relations should be changed,” he said, adding that some members could have a different opinion, however. (Yonhap, “N.K. Sanctions Hurting Inter-Korean Ties,” August 13, 2014)

Korean People’s Army (KPA) southwestern front command report: “The south Korean military hooligans committed such a serious military provocation as indiscriminately shelling peaceable fishing boats of the DPRK engaged in their routine fishing operations in the waters off the southwestern coast [yesterday]. This reckless provocation has pushed the already tense situation in the waters to an unpredictable phase of explosion. The gravity of the situation lies in that this military provocation was perpetrated under a carefully worked out premeditated plan. The units of the three services of the puppet forces were put on alert and F-16 fighter bombers hovered in the sky above the waters while five speed boats intruded deep into the
The U.S. regime of targeted financial sanctions against North Korea may be having undesired side effects, according to U.S. expert John Park. Targeted sanctions do achieve some of their non-proliferation aims, Park, a research associate at MIT and adjunct lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School, predicted. However, these successes could come at the cost of incentivizing state trading companies to enhance the sophistication of their commercial activities. Speaking at an event hosted by The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, he pointed out that the only tools available to address proliferation concerns are physical force, cyber warfare, and sanctions. Thus, “Since our counterproliferation toolkit is so limited, the U.S. and others adopt sanctions.” Drawing parallels with the rapid development of bacteria that show resistance to historically effective pharmaceuticals, he went on to say that as a result, “We’re seeing overuse of sanctions, and so regimes are developing immunity.” Employing interviews with a small cohort of defectors based in South Korea who have direct experience of working in state-run trading firms, he is looking at both the reception of sanctions by the targeted entities and those ways in which those entities respond by amending their working practices. Park agreed that China sees “the stabilization of the North Korean...
regime as their least worst choice.” However, while that choice disincentivizes Pyongyang from returning to multilateral denuclearization dialogue, it does not mean that Beijing has adopted an unprincipled stance. Rather, he pointed out that the sanctions regime does not prohibit the pursuit of economic development and humanitarian goals, and therefore the Chinese government does not perceive itself as busting sanctions by facilitating Chinese firms doing business across the Yalu and Tumen rivers. The result is that Sino-North Korean trade volumes are now in the vicinity of $5-6bn USD per annum. The outcomes of this rapid trade growth in the period to 2011 are, Park said, “A boom in consumption among the 1%,” the demographic that benefits most prominently from that growth, and the decentralization and “seguyehwa,” or globalization, of the North Korean elite, including the rising mobility of elites within North Korea’s near abroad. (Chris Green, “Financial Sanctions Spurring N. Korean Sophistication,” Daily NK, August 13, 2014)

8/14/14 North Korea fired five short-range rockets into the East Sea on Thursday, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said, as Pope Francis landed here with a message of peace for the Korean Peninsula. Three projectiles, presumed to have come from a 300-millimeter multiple rocket launcher, “were fired from its eastern border town of Wonsan in a northeastern direction for about 25 minutes from 9:30 a.m. in succession,” JCS spokesman Um Hyo-sik told reporters. They were presumed to have landed in the East Sea after flying some 220 kilometers, he said, noting that Pyongyang did not impose a no-fly, no-sail zone ahead of the launch. At around noon, the communist country launched two additional rockets from the same place into the East Sea, which flew some 200 kilometers, according to the JCS. Military sources here have said the communist country seems to be test-firing the rockets in an effort to increase their range. Though the launcher, called the KN-09, was thought to have a range of 160 kilometers, rockets fired last month traveled 210 km. “The North also appears to have been trying to show off its rocket-launch capabilities by continuing such saber-rattling moves,” another JCS officer said, asking not to be named. “We are analyzing if its leader Kim Jong-un inspected today’s firing as he has often done.” Today’s firing marked the 17th time that the communist country has launched rockets this year, and the sixth firing of 300 mm projectiles in 2014. The last such launch of the large-caliber rockets was some two weeks ago when it fired four from a site near Mount Myohyang in Pyongan Province. The latest launch brought the total number of rockets and missiles fired by the North to 107. The large-caliber rockets pose a threat to South Korea, as they are capable of striking major military facilities, such as the headquarters of the three military branches that are located some 130 kilometers south of Seoul. In a move to boost the accuracy of its projectiles, the North has been trying to equip launchers with strong guidance systems, but further analysis is needed to determine whether it has now successfully added the function, military sources here said. North Korea is known to possess about 5,000 launchers, ranging from 107 mm to 300 mm. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Fires Five Short-Range Rockets into East Sea,” August 14, 2014) North Korea has introduced and test-fired new tactical rockets that can pose a threat to South Korea’s major military facilities, a military source here said. “The five short-range projectiles that North Korea fired off were found to be novel tactical missiles, according to our analysis jointly with the United States of the North’s photo of the rockets,” said the source, asking not to be named. The latest model appears “different
from its existing 300-millimeter multiple rocket launcher and KN-02 missiles,” the source said, noting that it is expected to be dubbed the “KN-10.” (Yonhap, “N.K. Tests New Tactical Rockets,” Korea Herald, August 18, 2014)

The United States intends to increase pressure on North Korea to improve its human rights situation, the State Department said after Secretary John Kerry called strongly for an immediate shutdown of all gulags in the communist nation. Kerry made the demand in an unusually strong tone in an Asia policy address yesterday, saying such deprivation of human dignity “just has no place in the 21st century.” He stressed that gulags must be shut down “not tomorrow, not next week, but now.” The top American diplomat also said the U.S. will continue to speak out on the issue. (Yonhap, “U.S. to Increase Pressure on N. Korea to Improve Human Rights Record,” August 14, 2014)

8/15/14 KCNA: “On the occasion of the 69th anniversary of the liberation of Korea, the DPRK test-fired an ultra-precision high-performance tactical rocket of Korean style which was developed on the initiative of supreme leader Kim Jong Un and under his guidance. Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army Kim Jong Un, first secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea and first chairman of the National Defence Commission of the DPRK, guided the test-fire. He learned about the engineering data of the tactical rocket on the observation post and issued an order to test-fire it. The test-fire proved and confirmed that the maneuverability of the tactical rocket in different trajectories fully meets the requirements of latest military science and technology. He expressed great satisfaction over the fact that the test-fire was successfully carried out as intended by the Central Committee of the WPK. He highly appreciated the feats of officials, scientists and technicians in the field of national defense science and munitions factories. He expressed expectation and belief that they would propose more advanced national defense science and technology tasks on the basis of the successes already achieved and positively contribute to qualitatively bolstering up the revolutionary armed forces of the country. He was accompanied by Hwang Pyong So, Ri Yong Gil, Pyon In Son, Pak Jong Chon and Hong Yong Chil. (KCNA, “Kim Jong-un Guides Tactical Rocket Test-Fire,” August 15, 2014)

In celebration of Liberation Day, President Park Geun-hye issued a proposal to North Korea requesting that its delegates join the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, slated for October in Pyeongchang, Gangwon, as an initial step toward conserving the peninsula’s ecosystem. For peace on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia’s joint prosperity, North Korea should become a “responsible member” of the international community by stepping away from its self-imposed isolation, the president noted in a national speech at the 69th Liberation Day event yesterday at Sejong Center in Gwanghwamun, central Seoul. “South and North Koreas carrying out plausible businesses, thereby blending their own strengths and weaknesses, is an urgent task,” she said. “For this, both Koreas should open the smallest channels for meeting and communicating, through which they will understand each other and amalgamate their ways of thinking and living.” Ecological cooperation is one action that should be taken in the early stages, according to the president, whose top policy agenda is unification. Jointly managing the rivers and mountains that traverse the Korean Peninsula will be part of that cooperation. Park also encouraged more frequent
meetings of the families from both sides separated during the 1950-53 Korean War and promised to boost humanitarian aid to improve the livelihoods of North Koreans. In the longer term, Seoul is willing to share its knowledge concerning rapid economic progress and wants to mobilize the North’s ample underground resources and labor as a growth driver, she said. To better understand each other, both Koreas are encouraged to work on a cultural business linked to the excavation and preservation of cultural relics in celebration of the 70th anniversary of Liberation Day next year, the president added. In light of the hazards posed by nuclear plants, Park also proposed for the first time the formation of a Northeast Asian nuclear safety group, under the leadership of Korea, China and Japan, that would be modeled after the European Atomic Energy Community. The Blue House explained later in the day that Korea wants to take the lead in developing the annual Top Regulators’ Meeting (TRM) on Nuclear Security with the three countries into a bigger international organization involving Russia and the United States, among other nuclear-armed nations. However, the president did not fail to mention the strained relationship between Korea and Japan. Given that next year marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries, efforts to “heal the wounds from history still remaining” is necessary, she stressed. Apparently taking aim at nationalist Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, Park said, “Politics is about reading the minds of the people and choosing the right direction, but some Japanese politicians divide the minds of both countries and hurt them both.” She said the Korean government has consistently urged Japanese leaders to acknowledge accurate historical perceptions. The president also demanded that Tokyo adopt a forward-looking policy that the women forcibly recruited into military brothels during World War II by the Imperial Japanese Army could understand. “I wish that next year will mark the beginning of a new future for both countries based on friendship and hope for Japanese political leaders’ wisdom and determination,” Park said. (Seo Ji-eun, “Park Reaches out a Hand to North,” Joong-Ang Ilbo, August 16, 2014)

North Korean agents are searching for and detaining defectors from the reclusive country hiding on the Chinese side of their shared border, all with the blessing of Beijing, Asahi Shimbun has learned. Under its previous policy, Chinese authorities captured and repatriated North Korean defectors themselves. But, according to sources familiar with the inner workings of China’s security structure, local officials in the country’s northeastern region that shares a border with North Korea are allowing the North Korean Ministry of State Security and other authorities to conduct the searches. North Korean officials still need to seek permission before entering the country. But once in China, Chinese authorities are even providing vehicles for the North Korean agents to be used in the searches, the sources said. “The international community has criticized Beijing, saying deported North Korean defectors are being executed in their country,” said a governmental source in northeastern China. “Several years ago, Chinese security authorities stopped taking actions on their own to capture the defectors.” The agents representing Pyongyang are allowed to conduct their searches over several days, according to the sources. After detaining their targets, they quickly return the defectors back across the border. According to North Koreans who have fled to China, some defectors who were hiding at an inn near the border in late March abruptly disappeared. The number of North Korean nationals who have fled to
China has been rising since the start of this year, said a border security insider in the Chinese military. Beijing and Pyongyang have a treaty that allows cooperation on criminal matters, but it does not allow either side to conduct investigations and arrests in each other’s territory. A South Korean government source pointed out the possibility the two nations have signed a special agreement concerning defectors from the North. “Security sections in Beijing and Pyongyang may have reached some type of deal (on defectors),” the source in Seoul said. The South Korean Consulate General in Shenyang, Liaoning province, in late March, issued a warning to its nationals that said, “Abduction cases by the North’s agents have recently been reported in the border zone between China and North Korea.” (Ishida Koichiro, “Beijing Allowing N. Korean Officials to Capture Defectors on Chinese Side of Border,” Asahi Shimbun, August 15, 2014)

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo apparently decided not to visit Yasukuni Shrine to mark the end of World War II out of consideration for China and South Korea, in the hope the gesture would help bring about meetings with the two nations’ leaders. Ties seem unlikely to improve, however, as China and South Korea have criticized the visits paid to the shrine by three Cabinet members and numerous lawmakers. Liberal Democratic Party member Hagiuda Koichi, a special adviser to Abe, visited the Prime Minister’s Residence this morning to report on his delivery of a monetary offering to the shrine on Abe’s behalf. Abe thanked him for his efforts. A person close to Abe said the prime minister wanted to make it clear he has no intention of making Yasukuni into a diplomatic issue. Speaking to reporters in Tokyo, New Komeito President Yamaguchi Natsuo said, “I think the prime minister elected not to visit [Yasukuni] because he is fully aware that shrine visits are linked to diplomatic problems.” (Yomiuri Shimbun, “Abe skips Yasukuni over China, South Korea Ties,” August 16, 2014) Some 80 Japanese politicians, including three members of Abe’s cabinet, did visit Yasukuni. (Martin Fackler, “With Eye on China, Abe Skips Visit to War Shrine,” New York Times, August 15, 2014, p. A-4)

KPA General Staff spokesman’s statement “denouncing the United States and the south Korean puppet forces for setting about the Ulji Freedom Guardian joint military exercises again: The UFG is dangerous nuclear war drills aimed to mount a surprise preemptive strike at the DPRK under the deceptive signboard of “tailored deterrence” and adventurous ones to be staged under the simulated conditions of an actual war designed to ignite a “local and total war” any time under the pretext of non-existent “provocation” of someone. The General Staff of the Korean People's Army clarified the principled retaliatory stand of the revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK to cope with the war maniacs’ reckless war moves against it. ... Now that the U.S. imperialists and the south Korean puppet forces declared a war against the DPRK by announcing their plan to apply the "tailored deterrence strategy" to an actual war, we re-clarify that the Korean-style most powerful and advanced merciless preemptive strike will start any time chosen by us. If we strike the U.S. imperialists and the south Korean puppet forces, they should be hit hard without any excuse and if we are determined, large and small bases for aggression will be reduced to a sea in flames and ashes. The projected war maneuvers for aggression made the U.S. imperialists' scenario for their
permanent presence in South Korea clear and brought the puppet authorities’ sycophancy towards the U.S. and acts of treachery into bolder relief. Under this situation, we unhesitatingly make public that our revolutionary armed forces will launch successive powerful physical offensives to resolutely terminate all this. What we cannot overlook any longer is the U.S. imperialists’ invariable attempt at their permanent presence in South Korea and the heinous acts of treachery of the puppet forces, modern-day five traitors of 1905. Now that they more openly revealed their attempt never to give up their sinister ambition for “bringing down the social system in the north and occupying it” and “achieving unification through absorption” by putting the war maneuvers “on a regular and annual basis”, our revolutionary armed forces will intensify their military counteraction for foiling them on a regular and annual basis. Absolutely unpardonable are all crimes adding to the pent-up grudges of all Koreans under the pretext of “regular and annual drills.” The U.S. imperialists and the South Korean puppet forces will have to pay a dear price for their acts of going against the nation, reunification and peace as they reacted to all the peace initiatives and proposals made by the DPRK with good faith and magnanimity with extremely dangerous war maneuvers. They bitterly regretted that they fought a wrong war with a wrong rival and in the wrong time and place. They should never regard this as what happened in the Korean war. They should bear in mind that our revolutionary armed forces are sure to emerge an eternal victor and the enemies are fated to meet a miserable doom.” (KCNA, “U.S., S. Korean Warmongers Will Have to Pay High Price for Their Reckless War Drills: Spokesman for KPA General Staff,” August 17, 2014)

KCNA: “The south Korean chief executive made an "address for celebrating August 15" Friday. Letting loose a string of remarks about "preparations for unification", she talked about “formation of life community” through “channel of environment cooperation”, “channel of people’s life” and “channel of culture”. She underlined the need to "overcome the history of contradiction and pain." Meanwhile, she claimed that the tragedy of division persists and the inter-Korean relations are being bedeviled due to the "nuclear threat" of someone, adding that it is unpardonable that the north "threatens" the south with "nuclear development and missile launches." Commenting on this, Rodong Sinmun Sunday says her address is a window-dressing filled with hackneyed words as she repeated the preceding stand, having no solution to the inter-Korean relations. We cannot but take a serious note of the fact that she talked about "threat" once again, pulling up the DPRK over its nuclear weapons and missiles. The military threat on the Korean peninsula comes from the south, not from the north. Is it not a threat to peace that Ulji Freedom Guardian joint military exercises are soon to be staged with the approach of the Asian Games in Incheon? The south Korean authorities should stop improper acts of groundlessly taking issue with the DPRK’s deterrence for self-defense. In order to open an epochal phase of improving the inter-Korean relations, it is necessary to settle without fail the basic issues set forth in the statement of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea. Any act of denying this will be denounced by all fellow countrymen as it is an unreasonable act of going against national reconciliation, unity and independent reunification.” (KCNA, “S. Korea Chief Executive Censured for Pulling up DPRK for Deterrence for Its Self-Defense,” August 17, 2014)
A South Korean delegation traveled to the North Korean border city of Kaesong as part of commemorations of the fifth anniversary of death of former President Kim Dae-jung. The delegates were Kim's second son, Hong-eop, and four former aides including Rep. Park Jie-won of the New Politics Alliance for Democracy and former Unification Minister Lim Dong-won. They crossed the inter-Korean border at 4:30 p.m. and received a wreath from the North Korean government at the Kaesong Industrial Complex to mark Kim's death. On August 14, the North sent a message to the Kim Dae-jung Peace Center that a high-ranking official would cordially hand over a wreath in the border city at around 8 a.m. August 18 in commemoration of the fifth anniversary of late President Kim's death, but the Kim's side counter-offered for today. (Kang Seung-woo, “N.K. Sends Wreath to Mark Ex-President’s Death,” Korea Times, August 17, 2014) “We were contacted indirectly [by North Korea] on August 14, and after coordinating our schedule with the Ministry of Unification, we're set to visit Kaesong at 5 p.m. on August 17,” said Park in a telephone interview with the Hankyore. “We're traveling with former Unification Minister Lim Dong-won, the former lawmaker Kim Hong-up, who's Kim Dae-jung's second son, and staff from the Kim Dae-jung Peace Center,” he added. The Ministry of Unification sent a notice in the name of the Peace Center to North Korea's Asia-Pacific Peace Committee on the morning of August 15 via its communication channels in Panmunjom. The person coming to the complex to present the flowers is reportedly Kim Yang-gon, head of the Workers’ Party of Korea Unified Front Department and secretary for South Korea-related affairs. “After the South Korean government proposed high-level talks and began preparations for the Asian Games and various other events, the North Koreans contacted us first to respectfully express plans to send condolence flowers,” Park said. “That was how Lim Dong-won and I ended up going,” he added. “Hopefully, the fifth-anniversary condolence flowers can speak for themselves.” (Ha Eo-young, “S Korean Politicians to Receive Condolence Flowers in North Korea,” Hankyore, August 16, 2014)

South Korea submitted to the parliamentary committee for foreign affairs and unification its 2014 action plan to develop infrastructure in the DPRK, indicating the lifting of the so-called May 24 sanctions if conditions are ripe, according to local media. If ties between Seoul and Pyongyang improve and "conditions are ripe," South Korea plans to review “even within this year” the repair and renovation project for the expressway between Kaesong and Pyongyang and the railway linking from Kaesong to Sinuiju. Also included in the plan were the flood prevention business at the Yalu River, support for the DPRK's fishing industry and the business to invigorate shipping between the two Koreas. It was the first time the South Korean government announced a detailed investment plan for the infrastructure development in the DPRK, though Seoul attached the condition of improved inter-Korean relations. The action plan mentioned resuming the inter-Korean trade and the existing inter-Korean economic cooperation projects as well as launching new economic cooperation projects in accordance with how relations between Seoul and Pyongyang make progress. (Xinhua, “S. Korea Unveils Action Plan for Infrastructure Development in DPRK,” August 18, 2014)

South Korea and the United States launched an annual military drill, Seoul's defense ministry said, despite condemnation by North Korea which has threatened a
“merciless” retaliatory strike. The beginning of the “Ulchi Freedom Guardian” exercise, which will last until August 29, came as Pope Francis led a mass for inter-reconciliation in Seoul at the end of the five-day trip to South Korea. Although largely played out on computers, the drill involves tens of thousands of South Korean and US soldiers and is aimed at testing combat readiness for a North Korean invasion. According to the South Korean Defense Ministry, this year’s drill will, for the first time, simulate the response to a nuclear attack threat, using a strategy of “tailored” deterrence developed last year at annual South Korea-US defense talks. (AFP, “U.S., S. Korea Start Military Drill despite North Threats,” August 18, 2014)

DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman’s statement “assailing the U.S. and the south Korean puppet forces for kicking off Ulji Freedom Guardian joint military exercises against the DPRK: The U.S. is becoming all the more undisguised in its criminal moves to disturb peace and ignite a nuclear war through a vicious cycle of tensions on the Korean peninsula and in the region. The U.S. kicked off together with the south Korean puppet forces the Ulji Freedom Guardian against the DPRK despite its repeated warnings and serious concern of the international community. The U.S. is staging ceaseless ever-larger scale joint military exercises on the Korean peninsula and in its vicinity several times in a year. They are grave military provocations against the DPRK and unpardonable criminal acts of disturbing peace and security. In order to prevent world public from focusing its criticism on the aggressive nature and danger of the joint military exercises, the U.S. is letting loose such sophism as describing them as "annual" and "defensive" ones. They are, at the same time, terming countermeasures of the DPRK "threat" and "provocation" like a thief crying "Stop the thief!" When the DPRK’s principled stand and efforts to defuse tensions on the Korean peninsula and create a peaceful environment drew support and sympathy from those countries in the region at the recent ministerial meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum held in Myanmar, U.S. Secretary of State Kerry at the talks between the diplomatic and defense chiefs of the U.S. and Australia held two days later impudently blustered that the just self-defensive steps of the DPRK are "wrecking stability in the whole region" and sparking off "serious concern." On Friday a deputy spokesperson of the U.S. State Department and a spokesperson of the U.S. Defense Department vied with each other to make such belligerent remarks that it would continue joint military exercises while terming the tactical rocket test-fire of the DPRK a “threat.” Despicable, indeed, is the attitude of the U.S. authorities resorting to foolish deceptive artifice and intrigues to justify their acts to perpetrate aggression and disturb peace. It is an inveterate method of aggression of the U.S. to ignite a war while making profound confusing of right and wrong. The U.S. has staged a total of more than 18 000 war maneuvers of various forms for aggression in south Korea for more than six decades since the 1950s, but it claims they have never posed any threat to the north. But it contends that even a single test-fire and drill of tactical guided-missiles for self-defense conducted by the Korean People’s Army to cope with them should be called into question. This is the American-style standard and brigandish logic. Joint military exercises staged in south Korea after the U.S. announced its new defense strategy are assuming more aggressive nature and their scale and frequency are steadily increasing, ranging from the largest-ever joint landing drill aimed to "occupy Pyongyang" to a drill for "breaking through the Military Demarcation Line" all of a sudden, a drill for "restoring administrative units after
occupying the north” and a special operation drill for destroying the headquarters of the DPRK. The U.S. announced that it would apply for the first time during the exercises “tailored deterrence strategy” which calls for mounting a preemptive strike by mobilizing all forms of armed forces including nuclear weapons if a sign of “the use of nuclear weapons and missiles” of someone is detected. This is another undisguised nuclear threat and blackmail. The danger of the tensions on the Korean peninsula at present, together with the U.S. threat to mount a preemptive nuclear strike being rapidly put into practice, lies in that it is disturbing global peace and security going beyond the regional scale. The joint military exercises being staged under the pretext of the “threat” from the DPRK are strictly pursuant to the U.S. strategy for world domination to bring down the social system in the DPRK and eye the Asian continent with the Korean peninsula as a bridgehead. This is a stark reality which no one can deny. The U.S. armed buildup in Northeast Asia including the Korean peninsula and the world’s largest war maneuvers will spark off a new arms race and Cold War. The threat of one party is bound to trigger off retaliation from the other party and a war is bound to break out in this course. This is a lesson taught by history. If one is weak though one is very honest-minded and just, one is bound to fall victim to the strong and a genuine peace is protected only when one is strong. This is the immutable logic reflected in the DPRK’s line of simultaneously developing the two fronts. If the international community wants peace and stability in the region and the rest of the world, it should recognize the validity and inevitability of the self-defensive steps of the DPRK to protect the security of the country and nation, and take issue with the U.S. and the south Korean puppet forces’ provocative nuclear war drills and hold them in check. As long as the nuclear war maneuvers go on to stifle the DPRK by force, it will put its self-defensive counteraction on an annual and regular basis and take steps at a higher stage in the future which no one can predict.” (KCNA, “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman Blasts U.S., S. Korean Puppet Forces’ UFG,” August 18, 2014)

DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman’s answer to a question put by KCNA “blasting the U.S. secretary of State for openly revealing its attempt to stifle the DPRK under the pretext of ‘human rights issue’: U.S. Secretary of State Kerry let loose a spate of invectives against the DPRK over its “human rights issue” in a speech on the U.S. "Asia policy" held in Hawaii recently. Unfit for his position, Kerry pulled up the DPRK, telling sheer lies and citing groundless data. This is the most undisguised expression of the U.S. inveterate repugnancy and hostile policy toward the DPRK. He vociferated about the “human rights issue" of the DPRK before the kick-off of the Ulji Freedom Guardian joint military exercises together with the south Korean puppet forces, now being censured worldwide. Lurking behind this is a sinister political aim to tarnish the DPRK's image at any cost and stir up the international understanding that its social system is the object to be removed by force of arms in a bid to justify the U.S. and south Korean warmongers' military threat. In recent years the U.S. has become noisy in its anti-DPRK "human rights" racket not because of any sincere interest in improving "human rights" but in pursuance of its design to bring down the social system of the DPRK under the pretext of “human rights issue." As it has become clear that the U.S. cannot bring down the DPRK with such lever of pressure as the nuclear issue, the former pursues a strategic aim to isolate and stifle the DPRK by using such lever of pressure as "human rights issue." In the DPRK the popular masses enjoy genuine rights as true masters of
the country and human rights are strictly guaranteed by the state law. We are ready to cooperate with other countries to further promote the human rights of the popular masses. But we can never tolerate any attempt to abuse the human rights issue for a pressure means to bring down our social system. We will shatter the U.S. anti-DPRK "human rights" racket with our principle and counteraction of our style in the future as we have successfully foiled every U.S. move to isolate and stifle the DPRK under the pretext of the nuclear issue." (KCNA, “DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesman Assails U.S. State Secretary’s Anti-DPRK Reckless Remarks,” August 18, 2014)

South Korea will not lift its sanctions against North Korea unilaterally, Seoul's unification minister said, urging the North to come to the negotiating table if it wants them to be removed. "It's difficult to imagine the (South Korean) government unilaterally lifting the sanctions," Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae told lawmakers. "If (Pyongyang) needs the May 24 sanctions to be removed, it should come to the negotiating table and discuss it there," the unification minister said as he reported the ministry's 2014 policy plan to the parliament's diplomatic affairs committee. (Yonhap, “Seoul Rules out Unilateral Removal of Sanctions on North Korea,” August 18, 2014)

The Unification Ministry disclosed a package of inter-Korean projects including plans to renovate the road linking Kaesong to Pyongyang and the railroad from Kaesong to Sinuiju if inter-Korean relations improve enough. (Kim Tae-shik, “Park’s Package Proposal for Inter-Korean Cooperation,” Vantage Point, September 2014, pp. 9-10)

Pope Francis wrapped up his five-day visit to South Korea with calls for forgiveness and renewed dialogue on the divided Korean Peninsula and for more humanitarian aid for North Korea. “Let us pray, then, for the emergence of new opportunities for dialogue, encounter and the resolution of differences, for continued generosity in providing humanitarian assistance to those in need, and for an ever greater recognition that all Koreans are brothers and sisters, members of one family, one people,” the pope said during a Mass in Myeongdong Cathedral, the center of South Korean Catholicism. The Mass was attended by President Park Geun-hye. The South Korean Catholic Church had asked the North to send a delegation to the pope’s Mass for peace and reconciliation on Monday, but the North rejected the offer. “Peter asks the Lord: ‘If my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ To which the Lord replies: ‘Not seven times, I tell you, but 70 times seven,’ ” the pope said. “Unless we are prepared to do this, how can we honestly pray for peace and reconciliation?” “In telling us to forgive our brothers unreservedly,” Francis said in reference to Jesus, “he is asking us to do something utterly radical.” Such a message usually is not received very well by right-wing Protestants in South Korea, some of whom have protested the pope’s visit. Although Protestant groups have led efforts to ship aid to North Korea, they also constitute the most vocal activists against the Communist government in Pyongyang. South Korea’s proposal last week requested high-level government talks with the North like the ones held in February, when the rival governments arranged a round of reunions of aging relatives who had been separated in the early 1950s by the Korean War. “If the North has a demand, it must first come to the table of dialogue,” the South’s Unification Ministry said today in a statement. “If the North shows a responsible attitude, we are ready to discuss

**8/19/14**

President Park Geun-hye expressed hope that North Korea will respond positively to a set of her overture meant to improve strained ties and eventually lay the groundwork for potential unification with Pyongyang. “I expect North Korea to respond positively” to the overture, Park said in a cabinet meeting earlier today, the second day of the Ulchi exercises meant to boost capabilities in managing national contingencies, according to her spokesman Min Kyung-wook. North Korea has yet to make an official response to Park's call, but a senior North Korean official has openly denounced her speech that, among other things, called on North Korea to give up its nuclear program. **Kim Yang-gon**, the North's chief policymaker on inter-Korean relations, said that there would be no improvement in cross-border ties as long as South Korea sticks to its current policy of confrontation and makes its peace proposals conditional on the North's nuclear programs, according to Park Jie-won, an opposition lawmaker, who recently met Kim in the North. (Yonhap, “Park Calls for N. Korea’s Positive Response to Her Proposal,” August 19, 2014) President Park Geun-hye said in a Cabinet meeting at the presidential office, “We need to start from small one and take step by step to build trust between the two Koreas and walk the path towards unification. I am looking forward to positive feedback from the North.” (*Jong-A Ilbo*, “Pres. Park Proposes Open Channels of Dialogue to N. Korea,” August 20, 2014)

**8/20/14**

National Defense Commission Policy Department spokesman’s statement: “U.S. Secretary of State Kerry on August 13 issued a ‘congratulatory statement.’ He extended ‘sincere congratulations’ to the Korean nation greeting ‘the day of liberation’ on behalf of President Obama and Americans. Kerry was so shameless as to appear at a university seminar in Hawaii and claim that the U.S. has a ‘willingness to ease’ the strained DPRK-U.S. relations. At the recent ministerial meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum he became vociferous that the U.S. was not interested in its hostile policy toward the DPRK and, if any, it was concerned for the improved bilateral relations. … For the Koreans August 15 is the day in which an end was put to the distress-torn history of more than 40 year-long Japanese imperialists' occupation. It is also the day when occupation of south Korea and shame and tragedy of national division began due to the U.S. imperialist aggressors. However, Kerry ‘congratulated’ the Koreans on this seven decade-long history of shame and tragedy. Can there be more unbearable mockery and insult to the Korean nation than this? As already exposed, not content with inventing new moves for stifling the DPRK and sanctions against it, the U.S. is busy staging Ulji Freedom Guardian, the exercises for mounting a preemptive nuclear attack with huge aggression forces including nuclear war hardware involved. All of a sudden, these aggressors are waving olive branches with the veil of “protecting peace” in a bid to conceal their despicable true colors. Kerry toured the U.S. mainland and Asian countries for just three days, donning masks of sheep and wolf bereft of any elementary face and etiquette, to say nothing of his position as diplomatic chief of the “super power”. His behavior fully revealed once again the U.S. inveterate nature as a hypocrite who has deceived and mocked mankind with all sorts of gimmicks. The DPRK is dynamically advancing full of dynamism, racing against time. This is winning the admiration of the whole world. This is an exciting event that declares a total
bankruptcy of the U.S. heinous hostile policy toward the DPRK. The U.S. finds itself in a dilemma at present. If the U.S. attempts to make a head-on attack upon the DPRK, it is afraid of merciless retaliatory forces built by dint of Songun. It is not in a position to remain an onlooker to the reality, making a scream as a loser. The U.S. poor position reminds one of the Roman Empire which fell while seeking prosperity through aggression and war and was buried into oblivion. The U.S. is running helter-skelter, with its future remaining gloomy. What we would like to advice the U.S. once again is that it had better not waste its last energy while pursuing its hostile policy toward the DPRK which can never be implemented. The U.S. would be well advised to stop playing the disgusting and cheap farce which can never work on anyone, properly understanding who its rival is.” (KCNA, “Spokesman for Policy Department of NDC of DPRK Snubs Sophism of U.S. Secretary of State,” August 20, 2014)

Nick Hansen: “Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that North Korea is nearing completion of several significant construction projects at the Sohae Satellite Launching Station despite heavy rains in mid-July. The effort underway since late last year—to upgrade the gantry tower and launch pad—that will enable the North Koreans to test space launch vehicles with greater ranges and carry larger payloads than the Unha rocket fired in 2012 should be finished by fall. As a result, the North will be able to conduct new launches from this site before the end of the year should it decide to do so. Imagery also indicates other developments that reinforce the conclusion that launches could be conducted from Sohae, possibly by the end of this year, should the decision be made to do so. These include: the rapid construction of a circular pad near two recently completed domed buildings, the exact function of which is unclear but may be intended for training purposes or for helicopters carrying VIPs; the completion of two domed buildings under construction since spring 2014 whose purpose remains unclear but may also serve as a training facility or a VIP center for observing launches and missile systems; the construction of a second buried cable network (the first one was installed in 2005) in a little over a month that is probably intended to link the major Sohae facilities into a high speed communications system as well as improve links with Pyongyang; and what appears to be the winding down of a series of tests of KN-08 road mobile intercontinental ballistic missile engines that took place at the test stand in early July, while construction was ongoing at the launch pad.” (Nick Hansen, “North Korea’s Songhae Satellite Launching Station: Upgrades Near Completion; Ready for More Launches?” 38North, August 21, 2014)

North Korea is expected to make an initial report on its investigation into Japanese nationals abducted or believed to have been abducted by the reclusive country in the second week of September at the earliest, according to informed sources. The Japanese and North Korean governments are now discussing the plan, government sources said today. Japan is preparing an investigation team to be dispatched to North Korea in order to scrutinize the report and make further inquiries, the sources said. At a high-level bilateral meeting held in Beijing on July 1, Japan and North Korea agreed that Pyongyang should make its initial report in late summer or early autumn. During an unofficial meeting in Myanmar on August 10, Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio asked his North Korean counterpart, Ri Su Yong, to carry out the new investigation. Around this time, the governments of the two countries secretly agreed that the report will be
presented at a high-level meeting to be held after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reshuffles his Cabinet on September 3 and visits Sri Lanka and Bangladesh between September 6-8, according to the sources. Of the 12 abductees officially recognized by the government, Pyongyang claims that eight died, while the other four never entered North Korea. A focal point is whether the results of the new investigation will reverse the position presented by the current leader’s late father, Kim Jong Il, critics said. Also watched closely is to what extent Pyongyang will provide information on Japanese citizens who have yet to be officially recognized as abductees but are strongly believed to be victims of the inhumane acts of North Korea. (Jiji, “Pyongyang Likely to Have Abduction Report Ready by Mid-September,” Japan Times, August 22, 2014)

The United States has no objection to South Korea’s plan to develop its own missile defense system but hopes that it would be interoperable with the existing U.S. system, a senior U.S. official said Thursday. “We want the Korean Air Missile and Defense (KAMD) to be independent and strong,” U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Robert O. Work told a news conference at the Osan Air Base in Pyeongtaek before leaving South Korea. “What we hope is to have an extremely interoperable system between the United States’ theater missile defense and the KAMD ... We really want interoperability,” he said, noting that there “are very low-cost, high-impact ways to link these systems together.” (Oh Seok-min, “U.S. Calls for ‘Extreme Interoperability’ with South Korean Air Defense System, Yonhap, August 21, 2014)

8/7/14 A senior official of North Korea’s secret police organ directly linked to leader Kim Jong Un met Japan’s top diplomat for Asian affairs in a closed-door meeting last month to discuss the abduction issue, diplomatic sources close to Tokyo and Pyongyang said. The North Korean representative and Ihara Junichi, director general of the Foreign Ministry’s Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, apparently held the secret contact around Aug. 21 in Kuala Lumpur, the sources said. The official belongs to the Ministry of State Security, which is leading North Korea’s reinvestigation into the fates of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s following an accord between Tokyo and Pyongyang in May. (Kyodo, “Senior Member of N. Korea Secret Police Met Japan Diplomat over Abduction Issue,” Japan Times, September 2, 2014)

8/22/14 Rodong Sinmun: “The on-going large-scale joint military exercises targeting the north are a wanton violation of the north-south agreements fully hailed and supported at home and abroad and whose validity and vitality have been clearly proved in practice as they reflect the general will of the whole nation. …The north-south agreements, the reunification programs common to the nation, are not poor documents which can be twisted whenever regimes are replaced by new ones just as swindlers break their promises, but the sacred treasures of the nation for the country’s reunification. …Turning one’s face away from the north-south agreements and refusing to implement them is an unpardonable treacherous act of seeking confrontation with fellow countrymen and the unification of the social systems, not national reconciliation, unity and independent reunification. In the past the north and the south of Korea provided good principles and agreements for national reunification and unity including the historic July 4 joint statement, the June 15 joint declaration and the
October 4 declaration. If the agreements common to the nation adopted by the top leaders of the north and the south are reduced to dead papers and abused to meet the partisan interests and strategy, what is the use of reaching an agreement between the authorities even a hundred times. Reneging on the north-south agreements is an unbearable mockery and insult to the Korean nation desirous of the country’s reunification and, at the same time, an act of treachery bereft of elemental faith. 

**Implementing the north-south agreements precisely means improving the inter-Korean relations, and denying this means confrontation and war.** If the south Korean authorities deny the July 4 joint statement, the June 15 joint declaration and the October 4 declaration and lay a stumbling block in the way of implementing them while staging the madcap joint military exercises targeting the north, they will not be able to escape the curse and denunciation of all fellow countrymen but, in the long run, will meet a ruin.” (KCNA, “North-South Agreements Are Not the Playthings of Warmaniacs: Rodong Sinmun,” August 22, 2014)

The World Food Program may have to shut down its operations in North Korea by early next year unless it gets more funding from international donors by this autumn, the U.N. agency’s director for Asia said. WFP, which has the largest presence of any U.N. agency in the isolated country, has already scaled back its planned two-year, $200 million program to feed 2.4 million people because it has only enough funds to cover about a quarter of the cost. Regional director Kenro Oshidari told The Associated Press by phone from Bangkok that to run a credible nutritional program, aimed at preventing stunting in children, it needs about $50 million more. That would target about 670,000 children under 2 years of age and pregnant and lactating mothers. Without a replenishment of funds by October or November, WFP could be forced to shut down operations by January or February 2015, he said. The existing program is due to run until June. Another practical headache for foreign aid groups in North Korea – which also include the children’s agency UNICEF and the World Health Organization – are international sanctions against the North’s main foreign exchange bank. It has become extremely difficult for aid groups and embassies to transfer money into the country since the U.S. Treasury blacklisted the North Korea’s Foreign Trade Bank and the state-run Bank of China consequently stopped dealing with the bank. An alternative arrangement using a Russian bank fell through earlier this year. Aid groups have resorted to hand-carrying money into the country. Oshidari said U.N. officials continued discussions on the issue with U.S. officials in New York this month, but without resolving it. The U.S. State Department has said the onus should be on North Korea to make alternative financial services available to international organizations. (Matthew Pennington, “U.N. Warns Its Food ASir Program in N. Korea at Risk,” Associated Press, August 22, 2014)

Rodong Sinmun: The Korean nation can never tolerate the U.S. desperately pursuing its hostile policy towards the DPRK while justifying its aggressor forces’ presence in south Korea. The U.S. imperialist aggressor forces’ presence in south Korea is the root cause of disturbing peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia, and a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of the Korean nation as it is quite contrary to its will and wishes. From a historical point of view, the U.S. forces’ presence in south Korea was a product of its hostile policy of aggression towards the
DPRK, not according to the will and wishes of the Korean nation. U.S. troops occupied the region south of the 38th Parallel under the pretext of “disarming Japanese troops” after the Japanese imperialists’ defeat. But it was aimed to lay a military springboard from which to put the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia under control. This was quite contrary to the interests of the Koreans. The U.S. troops’ presence brought untold misfortune and sufferings to the south Korean people. Not a single day passes without seeing tears and blood of people in south Korea where U.S. aggressor troops behave like brutes. The U.S. is making foolish efforts to establish military domination over the Asia-Pacific region, though it is suffering serious economic difficulties. However, gone are the days never to return when the U.S. could perpetrate military intervention and invasion of other countries as it pleased, styling itself “the world’s only superpower”. The U.S. decline and ruin are a hard reality. The U.S. forces should pull out of south Korea without fail for the peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and in the region and for the U.S. itself. If the U.S. persistently tries to perpetuate its military presence in south Korea, this will only result in the miserable doom of its aggressor forces.” (KCNA, “U.S. Forces’ Presence in S. Korea Can Never Be Justified: Rodong Sinmun,” August 23, 2014)

China’s customs data has shown no exports of crude oil to North Korea in the first seven months of 2014, according to the Chinese data analyzed by the Beijing unit of the Korea Trade and Investment Promotion Agency, even though bilateral trade was little changed.

China, North Korea’s last-remaining patron, supplies nearly all of the North’s energy needs such as crude oil, diesel and jet fuel, but there were no shipments of crude oil from China to North Korea from January to July. Despite the seven-month absence of oil shipments, there have been no reports of a serious fuel shortage in North Korea. Diplomatic sources with knowledge of the matter cautioned against reading too much into the official trade figures because China has been providing crude oil to North Korea in the form of grant aid and such shipments have not been recorded on paper. In the first seven months of this year, China’s exports to North Korea rose 1.8 percent from a year ago to US$1.95 billion, while imports fell 4.3 percent to $1.57 billion, according to the data. (Yonhap, “China Ships No Crude Oil to N. Korea for 7th Month,” Korea Herald, August 23, 2014)

The Navy is sending a second aircraft carrier strike group to the Asia Pacific region amid new tensions with China over a dangerous aerial encounter between a Chinese interceptor and Navy P-8 surveillance craft. The strike group led by the USS Carl Vinson departed San Diego for the Pacific today, the Navy said in an announcement of what it terms a “planned” deployment. The Carl Vinson strike group will patrol “both 5th and 7th Fleet areas of responsibility,” the Navy statement said. The 7th fleet covers the Pacific and the 5th Fleet is responsible for operations in the Middle East. The guided missile cruiser USS Bunker Hill and three guided missile destroyers, the USS Gridley, USS Sterett, and USS Dewey also deployed with the Vinson. The Vinson will join the Japan-based USS George Washington strike group. (Bill Gertz, “U.S. Sends Second Carrier to Asia amid Tensions with China,” Washington Free Beacon, August 23, 2014)
Minju Joson commentary: “The right to mount a preemptive strike is not a monopoly of the U.S. and south Korean warmongers. The DPRK, too, has the right to preemptive strike. Ulji Freedom Guardian joint military exercises the U.S. and south Korean puppet forces describe as "annual and defensive ones" are nuclear war drills for invading the north. … The ‘tailored deterrence strategy’ the puppet forces agreed upon with the U.S. last year is an open scenario for igniting a nuclear war against the north, which calls for mounting a preemptive strike with latest war hardware including nuclear weapons on the basis of ‘judgment’ of ‘the north’s signs of the use of nuclear weapons.’ The danger of the strategy lies in that the U.S. ‘judges’ as it wishes the ‘signs of the north’s use of nuclear weapons.’ Demanding the U.S. and puppet warmongers to stop UFG to which the strategy is applied, the DPRK served repeated warnings that if a fire sparks against the DPRK, it will reduce the White House, Chongwadae and other citadels of aggression into a sea of flames. Whatever we were determined to do has been carried out. The U.S. and puppet warmongers had better clearly understand who their rival is and stop UFG at once.” (KCNA, “DPRK Has Right to Mount Preemptive Strike: Minju Joson,” August 24, 2014)

North Korea appears to be signaling its intention for dialogue after the end of the ongoing South Korea-U.S. military drills later this month, given that it has halted its saber-rattling, experts said. Although Pyongyang continued its verbal attack over the Ulchi-Freedom Guardian exercise to continue through August 29, the experts assumed that the communist regime might want to thaw ties with the South to gain economic aid and help ease its international isolation. “Chances are quite high that the North would change its direction toward dialogue with the South as it is very burdensome for the Kim Jong-un regime to continue its confrontational posture with its southern neighbor,” said Kim Yong-hyun, a North Korea expert at Seoul’s Dongguk University. “Strained ties with Seoul would continue to make it difficult for Pyongyang to enhance relations with the international community. And it also wants to bolster economic cooperation with the South to help ease its domestic economic hardships.” Contrary to their bellicose statements, the North has suggested holding working-level talks with the South over its participation in the Asia Games to be held in Incheon from September 19 to October 4. The agenda for the talks include the North’s dispatch of cheerleaders and the Games’ draw. (Korea Herald, “N.K. Seen Leaning toward Dialogue,” August 24, 2014)

North Korea’s imports of Chinese rice grew sharply in July, apparently due in part to efforts to stabilize the price of the staple food in the impoverished country. North Korea bought $7.02 million worth of rice from the neighboring country last month, up 115 percent from $3.27 million a year earlier, according to Chinese trade data from the Seoul-based Korea International Trade Association. The amount also represents an on-month increase of 53 percent from $4.57 million. The sudden increase in imports comes amid reports that the price of rice has risen sharply in the North. According DailyNK on August 12, rice cost 5,800 won per kilogram in Pyongyang, up 1,550 won from the middle of July. “Because North Korea has reached the point where it has consumed all of the rice it produced last year, it appears that it has increased imports in order to stabilize the price of rice,” said Kwon Tae-jin, a North Korea analyst at the Seoul-based GS&J Institute. Meanwhile, the total amount of North Korea’s grain
imports from China dropped sharply in the first half of this year to 58,387 tons, or 47 percent of the total in the same period last year. (Yonhap, “North Korea’s Imports of Chinese Rice More Than Double,” Korea Herald, August 25, 2014)

James Church: “Here we are, almost at the end of the US-ROK joint military exercise Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG), and the situation is eerily calm. DPRK commentary at the start of the exercise last week was relatively restrained, especially in view of the warnings the North had issued over the preceding months. Meanwhile, North Korean reaction to numerous recent ROK offers to reengage has been of the kicking-the-tires variety. So, is it safe to ask: Are we out of the woods? Have we successfully tiptoed past Vesuvius? For once, we appear to have stumbled into a charmed glen of rationality.

Well, maybe that’s an overstatement, but we can work with the image for now. So far, signs that things are heading in the right direction come not so much from something the North Koreans have said, but from the sounds of silence. Indeed, one of the hardest things to teach new analysts is how to listen for what isn’t said, and then figure out what it means. In this case, at this point, we have no direct, explicit public North Korean response in official DPRK media to: President Park’s remarks to her presidential committee (August 7); a ROK proposal for a “2nd high-level meeting” (August 11); remarks by the vice chairman of the unification committee that there needed to be a change in inter-Korean relations, and the South’s “May 24th” sanctions stood in the way (August 13); or the ROK Ministry of Unification’s release of its “2014 Policy Implementation Plan,” detailing numerous projects the South could take to increase economic cooperation with the North, including significant infrastructure projects (August 18). In the make-a-noise column, the North’s Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK) issued a statement on August 13 that, while not responding explicitly to ROK proposals, signaled the door was open to engagement by, in effect, laying out what the North’s agenda would be if talks materialized. In addition, there was a quick, albeit relatively gentle, Rodong Sinmun commentary responding to President Park’s August 15 Liberation Day speech. In her speech, Park again offered to hold high-level talks, warned the North about its nuclear and missile programs, and suggested a few concrete steps for early cooperation between the two sides. Aside from the usual riposte that it wasn’t the North but the South that was causing problems, Rodong Sinmun did not explicitly reject Park’s call for talks, and referred back to the “basic issues set forth in the CPRK statement.” That article was followed two days later by an equally restrained commentary in Minju Choson on Park’s speech, also referring back to the ideas in the CPRK statement. In contrast to its treatment of the South, the North Koreans over the past week have hauled out the heavy rhetorical artillery to use against the United States, especially aimed at Secretary of State John Kerry rather than at either Seoul or UFG. What stands out in this commentary has been crowing that the US is on its last legs, i.e. not such a huge threat to the North. This propaganda thrust started on July 11 with an unusual KCNA “white paper” detailing why the decline of the US was inevitable. It has now even reached the point that someone in Pyongyang has apparently dragged out an old copy of Gibbons and juiced up a National Defense Commission Policy Department spokesman’s statement (August 20) with a comparison between the US and the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. This portrayal of the US has interesting policy implications. Skeptics might say it portends bad days ahead if the North has miscalculated and thinks the
time is right to attack the old, blind, stumbling lion. A better hypothesis in my view is that, by suggesting that the DPRK ‘deterrent’ has been built up enough and the US is on its way down, Pyongyang is creating space for a decision to move resources away from the defense industries and to the civilian sector. Kim Jong Un suggested in April 2012 he might be ready to do just that, only to have to reverse himself a year later. More to the point of what is going on at the moment, does this formulation (DPRK up, US down) open the way for increased engagement with the ROK, especially given the charge that the US is ‘compelling’ the South to carry out big joint military exercises—i.e. it isn’t that Pyongyang can’t deal with Seoul, it is that Washington is getting in the way. Given the North’s silence or gentle handling of ROK proposals for dialogue over the past month, it is worth wondering whether this is meant to open up room to maneuver, allowing Pyongyang to step into the negotiating arena soon after the current US-ROK exercise is over. Despite warnings that UFG and other events (such as the minor clash in the West Sea a week ago) threatened the atmosphere for the upcoming Asian Games in Incheon, the North has pushed ahead with preparations for the games, even sending sports officials to the South on August 19—in the midst of UFG—to look at the facilities. And a KCNA commentary on August 20 underlined a carefully deployed theme that a “peaceful environment is very dear for the DPRK’s development of economy and improvement of the people’s living standard.” It is not a question of whether or not one thinks Pyongyang is “sincere” in this regard, but what the use of that formula has often signaled about the DPRK’s intent to move to a policy of engagement rather than confrontation. Bottom line: The simplest hypothesis is that both sides are building a bridge that will get them across what still may be rough developments during the remaining week or so of Ulchi Freedom Guardian. Of course, they are each building the bridge starting with their own engineering concepts. Whether it will actually meet in the middle is anybody’s guess.” (James Church, “Bridge Building,” 38North, August 25, 2014)

The South Korean government announced that it would support the North Korean delegation of athletes participating in the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon in order to ensure that the games proceed as planned. “We had a letter from the organizing committee of the Asian Games delivered to North Korea today using communication channels at Panmunjeom Peace Village. The letter contained our acceptance of North Korea’s proposal about the size of the group of athletes, and we stated that there are no problems with the athletes traveling between North and South Korea using the direct air route over the West [Yellow] Sea,” a Ministry of Unification official said yesterday morning. On August 22, North Korea sent a document to the South detailing the proposed number of athletes and staff (273) who will take part in the Asian Games. Officials from North and South Korea agreed that henceforth they would discuss the North’s participation in the games by exchanging documents. Asked whether the South would be covering the cost of the North Korean athletes’ visit, a government official said, “We did not specifically state that we will cover such costs, but we said that we will consider it from the point of view of providing the support necessary to ensure that the North Korean athletes are able to participate in the game without any obstacles.” This represents a considerable retreat from the government’s previous stance that it would only provide support for some of the athletes according to international practices and tournament regulations. The letter sent on yesterday did
not contain any mention of the North Korean cheering squad. (Choi Hyun-june, “South to Support N. Korean Athletes Trip to Incheon Asian Games,” Hankyore, August 27, 2014)

U.S. intelligence agencies believe North Korea is building a submarine capable of launching ballistic missiles, potentially increasing the threat posed by the nuclear-armed rogue state. A missile launch tube on a North Korean submarine was observed recently by U.S. intelligence agencies and is raising new concerns about the missile and nuclear threat from the communist regime in Pyongyang, according to two defense officials familiar with reports of the development. Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Jeffrey Pool declined to comment on the North Korean missile submarine program. “We do not comment on intelligence matters, but we do urge North Korea to become more transparent in their defense sector in order to reduce tensions in the region,” he said in a statement. Details of the missile submarine remain closely held within the government. Disclosure of the missile submarine work followed a recent report from North Korea showing photographs of dictator Kim Jong Un riding in the conning tower of a rusty North Korean submarine at sea. Military analysts expressed surprise at the intelligence on the missile submarine program and speculated the submarine could be a modification of one of North Korea’s Russian or Chinese design Romeo-class diesel submarines. A second possibility is that the new missile submarine is a copy or modification of a Soviet-era Golf-class missile-firing submarine purchased by Pyongyang—ostensibly for scrap metal—in the mid-1990s. North Korea’s current submarine force includes around 70 submarines. Most of the vessels are older diesel submarines, including 22 Romeo-class or Chinese design Type-031 subs—the type of submarine Kim was photographed on in June. The majority of the North’s submarines, more than two dozen, are small, Sango-class mini-submarines used for covert commando operations to infiltrate South Korea during a conflict. The North Koreans also have four 1940s-design Whiskey-class submarines from Russia. North Korea’s use of submarine warfare was evident as recently as 2010, when it carried out a torpedo attack on South Korea’s Choenan coastal warship, killing 46 sailors. A North Korean mini-submarine is suspected in that attack. North Korea denied it was behind the strike. Additionally, U.S. intelligence agencies believe North Korea already has submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). The North covertly obtained several SS-N-6 SLBMs from Russia. The missile has been adapted into North Korea’s new intermediate-range missiles. Until the recent discovery of the modified submarine, there were no intelligence signs North Korea is interested in developing its own submarine-launched missiles. Pyongyang is one of the largest producers and exporters of ballistic missiles in the world, and makes several types of short-range Scuds, medium-range Nodongs, Musudan intermediate range missiles, and long-range Taepodongs. Its missile arsenal is estimated to include between 600 and 1,000 missiles. If the modified submarine is based on the Golf, it is likely the technology or actual missile tubes were derived from the decommissioned submarines obtained in the mid-1990s. The authoritative Jane’s Fighting Ships revealed in May 1994 that North Korea purchased 40 decommissioned submarines from Russia, including several Golf-class and Romeo-class submarines. Former British Navy Capt. Richard Sharpe, stated in the foreword to the 1994 publication that the Golf submarine sale raised concerns about their missile capabilities. It is “possible that the missile tubes may be
adaptable for other weapons,” including ballistic missiles, he stated. Rick Fisher, a military analyst, said he suspects one of the Golf-class submarines obtained by the North Koreans included one or more SS-N-6 missiles in its launch tubes as part of the deal. North Korea then may have used the past 20 years to reverse-engineer a version of the Golf, which was designed to carry up to three ballistic missiles, Fisher said. “In North Korean service, a Golf-size ballistic missile-carrying submarine could potentially carry two Musudan-size liquid-fueled missiles or a larger number of long-range cruise missiles,” he said. If the missile submarine development is confirmed, it would mean North Korea could use one of its submarine missiles to attack Anchorage from waters near Russia’s Sakhalin Island. Another potential target for the North Korean missile submarine could be U.S. forces on Okinawa, Philippines, or Guam from the Yellow Sea. The missile could have a range of between 1,500 and 2,500 miles. Eric Wertheim, an analyst at the U.S. Naval Institute, said he is skeptical North Korea could develop missile firing submarines, either indigenously or by copying or refurbishing a Golf.

“There are very many hurdles that would need to be overcome for North Korea to develop an SLBM and turn a diesel submarine into an operational platform able to launch guided SLBMs,” Wertheim said in an email. “If not a Golf class, launch of SLBMs would probably require another large class of submarine and most recent North Korean submarine production seems to have focused on smaller subs or less than 1,000 tons,” he added. A former intelligence analyst also said North Korea’s refurbishing of the Golf subs would be very difficult, and that the North Koreans would need satellite navigation for the missile. South Korea press reports, however, have indicated recently that China is sharing its Beidou satellite navigation technology with North Korea. A 2009 State Department cable made public by Wikileaks revealed that North Korea developed a new land-mobile intermediate-range missile based on the SS-N-6 SLBM. The missile was deployed on Russia’s Golf submarines, indicating that the Golf missile tubes could be used or copied for the new North Korean missile submarine or as launch tubes on a converted submarine. A modified SS-N-6 engine was used to build what is now called North Korea’s road-mobile Musudan missiles.

“Development of the Musudan with this more advanced propulsion technology allows North Korea to build even longer-range missiles—or shorter range missiles with greater payload capacity—than would be possible using Scud-type technology,” the cable on North Korean missile development stated. A second 2011 cable revealed that North Korea shared the SS-N-6 missile technology with Iran for use in its Safir missile. The cable said “the second-stage of the Safir utilizes steering engines that are almost certainly derived from the Soviet-era SS-N-6 (Soviet designation: R-27 or RSM-25) submarine-launched ballistic missile.” “U.S. information was clear that Iran purchased these [missiles] from North Korea and that its technology was far more advanced than SCUD technology,” a third cable from 2007 said. That cable quoted Russian officials, in talks with U.S. officials, denying any SS-N-6 missiles were sold to North Korea, claiming all were destroyed as part of the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces treaty, which the State Department recently said was violated by Moscow through development of a new cruise missile. Additionally, the Russians in 2007 said North Korea and Iran could not master the technology of the SS-N-6. “The Russians argued that the technology was customized for underwater use; and that the missile would not work without the water pressure at specific depths,” the cable said. Fisher said another possible source for North Korea’s submarine-launched missile program is China, which has produced a
version of the Golf known as the Type-031 and which was used until 2013 as an SLBM test platform. “Given China’s habit of assisting North Korea to obtain earlier generation strategic weapons, the chances are greater that China would have aided North Korea’s rebuilding of the scrap Soviet Golf class submarines,” Fisher said. “Chinese assistance would have been crucial for North Korea to rebuild the pressure hull, missile tubes and to equip the sub with modern command and control systems.” Fisher noted covert Chinese missile assistance in the past to North Korea’s KN-08 long-range missile, specifically the transfer of Chinese-made transporter-erector launchers. “The emergence of a North Korean ballistic missile carrying submarine raises many questions for U.S. strategy and force levels in Asia,” Fisher said. “Should it now be considered a great error for the Obama administration to have retired and dismantled U.S. nuclear-armed cruise missiles for U.S. submarines in 2010?” A missile-firing North Korean submarine also will require increased U.S. and Japanese anti-submarine warfare forces, he said. “Both will have to consider an additional number of submarines to check North Korea,” Fisher said. Another concern is that North Korea will share or export missile-firing submarines in the future to Iran. North Korea cooperated with Iran on submarine training in the past. (Bill Gertz, “North Korea Building Missile Submarine,” *Washington Free Beacon*, August 26, 2014)

Sydney Seiler, in charge of Korea policy at the White House’s National Security Council, is expected to be the prime candidate for chief nuclear envoy, according to multiple diplomatic sources in Washington and Seoul. The position has been vacant for more than a year since Clifford Hart, the former special representative for the six-party talks, was appointed as the consul general of Hong Kong and Macao in June 2013. Because the United States and North Korea do not entertain formal diplomatic relations, Seiler’s appointment as the new six-party top envoy is expected to reinforce the communication line between Washington and Pyongyang the "New York channel" of communication. Seiler, a veteran Central Intelligence Agency analyst, received his master’s degree in Korean studies from Yonsei University’s Graduate School of International Studies and is fluent in Korean. He has spent nearly 30 years analyzing North Korea for the U.S. government and is the author of "Kim II-Song 1941-1948: The Creation of a Legend, the Building of a Regime" (1994). "[He] is a Korea expert who has had exchanges with a wide breadth of Koreans," a high-level diplomat acquainted with Seiler said. Sung Kim, the current U.S. ambassador to Korea, is also expected to replace Glyn Davies as the U.S. special representative for North Korea policy this fall, with Mark Lippert, the chief of staff to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, named as the top U.S. envoy to Seoul. Experts point to Allison Hooker, an East Asia and Pacific affairs analyst with the U.S. State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research, who specializes in North Korean nuclear issues, to replace Seiler as President Obama’s policy adviser on North Korea. (Chun Su-jin and Sarah Kim, “U.S. Giv’t to Shift lineup for Korea,” *JoongAng Daily*, August 27, 2014)

Saenuri Party lawmaker Yoo Ki-june, who chairs the foreign affairs committee in the National Assembly, called on Seoul to lift its sanctions on Pyongyang and resume stalled tours to North Korea’s scenic mountain resort to help improve strained relations. The sanctions "should be lifted for reduction of tension and dialogue between the two Koreas" without prior measures from North Korea, Yoo said in a news
South Korea and the United States wrapped up their joint military exercise today, a day earlier than scheduled, officials here said, spawning speculation that the move might be intended to help soothe North Korea. (Lee Chi-dong, “S. Korea, U.S. End Joint Defense Drill ahead of Schedule,” Yonhap, August 28, 2014)

The chairman of North Korea’s Asia-Pacific Peace Committee made a call for the lifting of the May 24 Measures, South Korea’s 2010 sanctions against the North, a former Minister of Unification said in a lecture today. “We’re proposing dialogue, exchange, and cooperation. President Park Geun-hye needs to make the decision to lift the May 24 measures,” Kim Yang-gon was quoted as saying during the lecture by former Minister of Unification Lim Dong-won at the Shinhan University Institute for Peaceful Unification of the Korean People, a research center headed by director Lee Jong-chan. In addition to chairing the Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, Kim is also the Workers’ Party of Korea secretary for South Korean affairs and director of Pyongyang’s Unified Front Department. Kim spoke to Lim for an hour after delivering a commemorative wreath and message to a group of South Koreans visiting on August 17 to mark the fifth anniversary of the death of former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung. Among the visitors was former lawmaker Kim Hong-up, the former president’s son. “Now is a time when the important thing is practice, not rhetoric,” Kim was reported as saying. “We need a practical determination from the supreme leader.” Kim went on to complain that the sanctions were getting in the way of implementing past inter-Korean agreements. “We need to honor the June 15 Joint Declaration agreed up by the North and South Korean leaders [in 2000], but all contacts and all interchange and cooperation have been cut off,” he was quoted as saying. “Environmental cooperation and a peace park in the Demilitarized Zone [two possible projects proposed by Park] are nice ideas, but we think a resumption of the interrupted contact, exchange, and cooperation needs to come first.” Kim also reportedly voiced concerns when asked by Lim why Pyongyang refused to agree to senior-level inter-Korean meetings. “The South keeps attaching conditions that the North cannot accept, like progress on the nuclear issue, and they proposed senior-level contacts just before joint military exercises with the US,” he reportedly replied. “We’re proposing dialogue, exchange, and cooperation,” he continued, according to Lim. “We made this clear in our New Year’s address, and we’ve stated our position in our National Defense Commission’s statement.” Kim also said the issue of contact and dialogue had been reported to the party’s central executive, which Lim interpreted as meaning “they are now waiting to bring [the resumption of inter-Korean dialogue] up with the supreme leader.” Lim added that details of his conversation with Kim had been summarized in meeting reports and delivered to the Ministry of Unification. Kim visited Seoul after Kim Dae-jung’s death in Aug. 2009 with secretary Kim Ki-nam, head of the North Korean official mourners’ delegation. He succeeded secretary Kim Yong-sun, who died in 2003, as overseeing South Korea policy in North Korea. (Seong Han-yong, “North Korea Calls for Lifting of Sanctions,” Hankyore, August 29, 2014)
A Japanese pro-wrestler-turned-politician arrived in North Korea with a former NFL lineman and more than a dozen martial artists for the first big sports event featuring well-known foreigners since Dennis Rodman’s controversial basketball game earlier this year. Japanese parliamentarian Inoki Kanji (“Antonio”) says he hopes the event will open a door of sports diplomacy with the North. Bob “The Beast” Sapp, who briefly played American pro football before switching to mixed martial arts and gaining celebrity status in Japan, will lead the foreigners in the exhibition, to be held in a 15,000-seat arena in Pyongyang on August 30-31. It will also feature local martial artists and musical acts. About 20 wrestlers and martial artists from around the world are expected to attend. Organizers say the International Pro-Wrestling Festival in Pyongyang will be broadcast online, aired on Japanese network television and shown on North Korean state-run TV. (Eric Talmadge, “Japanese Lawmaker, Ex-NFL Lineman in North Korea,” Associated Press, August 28, 2014)

A group of U.S. officials clandestinely traveled to Pyongyang early this month, [?] apparently to request the release of three detained Americans, Kyunghyang Shinmun reported, citing unnamed multiple diplomatic sources. A military jet carrying the officials entered Pyongyang on August 16 for an 18-hour-long stay, “I believe that officials from the White House and under the Director of National Intelligence were aboard the aircraft,” the newspaper quoted one source. “The U.S. appears to have not gained any tangible results from the trip.” U.S. State Department spokespersons Jen Psaki said at a press briefing in Washington: “I’m not aware of the reports you’re discussing, nor do I have any confirmation of them.” Sydney Seiler, chief of North Korea policy at the White House’s National Security Council, was likely to be part of the delegation for the latest trip. One focal point is whether the covert contact signals a possible shift in U.S. policy toward North Korea and its potential impact on a long-dormant six-nation forum on the country’s denuclearization. The visit coincides with Washington’s ongoing reconfiguration of policymakers for North Korea affairs. Daniel Russel, assistant secretary of state for East Asia, is expected to take over as the chief envoy to the six-party talks from Special Representative for North Korea Policy Glyn Davies, who will be stationed as ambassador to an Asian country later this year. Seiler, for his part, will likely to move to Russel’s deputy and special envoy for the six-party talks, Seoul sources said. This means a resuscitation of the so-called New York channel for bilateral communication with Jang Il-hoon, Pyongyang’s deputy representative to the mission to the U.N. The post has been vacant since Clifford Hart took office as consul general in Hong Kong in July 2013. U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Sung Kim could join Russel and Seiler in Washington, as Mark Lippert has been appointed as his successor, the sources said. (Shin Hyon-hee, “U.S. Officials Made Secret Trip to Pyongyang,”” Korea Herald, August 29, 2014)

A senior North Korean banking official who managed money for leader Kim Jong Un has defected in Russia and was seeking asylum in a third country, a South Korean newspaper reported on Friday, citing an unidentified source. Yun Tae Hyong, a senior representative of North Korea’s Korea Daesong Bank, disappeared last week in Nakhodka, in the Russian Far East, with $5 million, the JoongAng Ilbo newspaper reported. The Daesong Bank is suspected by the U.S. government of being under the control of the North Korean government's Office 39, which is widely believed to
finance illicit activities, including the procurement of luxury goods which are banned under U.N. sanctions. The bank was blacklisted by the Treasury Department in 2010. (Ju-min Park and James Pearson, “Kim Jong-un’s Banker Defects to Russia: South Korean Media,” Reuters, August 29, 2014) Michael Madden: “It is worth noting that rumors of an official from Office 39, the secret organization that handles Kim Jong Un’s financial activities, defecting or absconding with funds are a perennial, even biannual event in the South Korean media. It is true that many of the mid and high-level defectors during the last ten years have come from the North’s foreign currency earning entities. In contrast to diplomats or other personnel working and traveling outside the country, there is a lot less surveillance on personnel working in finance and foreign currency earning activities. This means they can travel to other cities or meet with foreign nationals without arousing suspicion. However, the alleged defector, Yun Tae Hyong, is not a senior money manager who works directly for Kim Jong Un, but rather is the equivalent of a regional manager in the Russian Far East for the Taesong Bank. The Taesong Bank is the financial services arm of the Taesong Group (a.k.a. Taesong General Trading Corporation), which settles the payments of foreign entities with whom the DPRK is doing business. Our information is that Yun’s job involved handling secondary and tertiary accounts for the bank in Primorsky Krai. He was one of at least a half-dozen officials in the area tasked to manage Taesong’s financial affairs. Moreover, while he probably handled accounts for trading companies and elites, he was only peripherally involved with the Kim family. Yun’s name does not appear as an account holder or point of contact on any of the DPRK’s accounts at banks in Primorsky Krai. He certainly would have been aware of DPRK business activities in that part of Russia and might have had information about the organization of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) Finance and Accounting Department and how the DPRK eludes export controls as well as gossip about elite financial activities. He was almost certainly not involved in any management of bigger businesses or accounts handled in Moscow or Vienna.” (Michael Madden, “A Senior North Korean Banking Official Defects?” 38North, September 3, 2014)

8/30/14  
North Korea’s continued missile and rocket launches will not affect the on-going talks with Pyongyang on Japanese nationals abducted by the communist country, a Japanese government official said August 24 with the next round of negotiations expected soon. “Under the current circumstance, (the Japanese government) is not considering suspending the negotiations or any such thing despite the missile launches,” the government official said in a meeting with South Korean reporters in Japan. The meeting was held during the reporters’ one-week visit to Japan under the South Korea-Japan journalist exchange programs run by the foreign ministries of the two countries. Comments from the official were embargoed until today. “Every time there are (missile) launches, we refer to them in talks with North Korea. We (tell them) such launches are not helpful to the Japan-North Korea relations,” the Japanese official said, adding that Japan tries to use the abduction talks also as a venue for conveying such concerns. (Park Boram, “N. Korea’s Missile Launches Won’t Stop Abductee Talks: Japan Official,” Yonhap, August 31, 2014)

8/31/14  
Rodong Sinmun commentary: “The U.S. is fidgety over the drill of firing tactical rockets regularly conducted by the DPRK. Riff-raffs call the DPRK’s regular firing of the tactical
rockets a low-profile provocation to weaken the reaction of the international community. Rocket firing can never be taken up for argument, stressing it is a legitimate right of a sovereign country to exercise the right to self-defense. The provocateur is none other than the U.S. as it shipped nuclear hardware into the Korean peninsula, pushing the situation to the worst phase with war drills. The U.S. insistence that the DPRK’s rocket firing is a provocation is prompted by its intention to escalate joint military exercises over the latter’s exercise of right to self-defence and deteriorate the situation in the peninsula and its vicinity and thus realize the ambition for invading the DPRK. Herein lies the reason that the U.S. violently stirs up the confrontation racket over the DPRK’s rocket firing that has nothing to do with it. Nobody will be taken in by the U.S. tricks, however, as it tries hard to legalize the nuclear arms buildup by shifting the responsibility for the provocation on to the DPRK. The U.S. should know that with no despicable counter-propaganda can it cover up its nature as aggressor and provocateur. The DPRK will take stronger military countermeasures to cope with the joint military exercises for aggression conducted by the U.S. under the veil of ‘annual and defensive ones.” (KCNA, “DPRK’s Tactical Rocket Firing Is Undebatable: Rodong Sinmun,” August 31, 2014)

9/1/14

North Korea fired one short-range missile into the East Sea on Monday, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The projectile was fired at around 10:30 a.m. from a site in its northwestern province of Chagang bordering with China. It was presumed to have landed in the East Sea after flying some 220 kilometers, according to the JCS. “It is the first time that Pyongyang fired a short-range projectile from the province, just 60 kilometers away from its border with China,” a JCS officer said, noting that North Korea is known to have an underground base for Scud missiles in the region. While the military “is analyzing what type of missile the North launched and what lies behind its test-firing,” the officer said that it is presumed to be a Scud or a new type of tactical missile. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Fires Short-Range Missile into East Sea,” September 1, 2014)

North Korea gave foreign media access to three detained Americans who said they have been able to contact their families and – watched by officials as they spoke – called for Washington to send a high-ranking representative to negotiate for their freedom. Jeffrey Fowle and Mathew Miller said they expect to face trial within a month. But they said they do not know what punishment they could face or what the specific charges against them are. Kenneth Bae, who already is serving a 15-year term, said his health has deteriorated at the labor camp where he works eight hours a day. The three were allowed to speak briefly with The Associated Press at a meeting center in Pyongyang. North Korean officials were present during the interviews, conducted separately and in different rooms, but did not censor the questions that were asked. The three said they did not know they were going to be interviewed until immediately beforehand. All said they believe the only solution to their situation is for a U.S. representative to come to North Korea to make a direct appeal. That has often been North Korea’s bargaining chip in the past, when senior statesmen including former President Bill Clinton made trips to Pyongyang to secure the release of detainees. North Korea says Fowle and Miller committed hostile acts which violated their status as tourists. It has announced that authorities are preparing for the trial, but has not
announced the date. Fowle arrived in North Korea on April 29. He is suspected of leaving a Bible in a nightclub in the northern port city of Chongjin. Christian proselytizing is considered a crime in North Korea. Fowle, 56, lives in Miamisburg, Ohio, where he works in a city streets department. He has a wife and three children aged 9, 10, and 12. "Within a month I could be sharing a jail cell with Ken Bae," he said, adding that he hasn't spoken with his family for three weeks. "I'm desperate to get back to them." North Korea says Miller, 24, entered the country on April 10 with a tourist visa, but tore it up at the airport and shouted that he wanted to seek asylum. Miller refused to comment on whether he was seeking asylum. Bae, a 46-year-old Korean-American missionary, has been held since November 2012. He was moved from a work camp to a hospital because of failing health and weight loss but last month was sent back to the work camp outside of Pyongyang, where he said he does farm-related labor. He said he has lost 15 pounds (6.8 kilograms) and has severe back pain, along with a sleep disorder. His family has said his health problems include diabetes, an enlarged heart, liver problems and back pain. "The only hope that I have is to have someone from the U.S. come," he said. "But so far, the latest I've heard is that there has been no response yet. So I believe that officials here are waiting for that." Bae said he did not realize before the trial that he was violating North Korean law, but refused to go into details. He said the lead up to his trial lasted about four months, but the trial itself only took about an hour. He said he elected not to have a defense attorney because "at that point there was no sense of me to get a lawyer because the only chance I had was to ask for mercy." "It was very quick," he said. (Eric Talmadge, “Americans Detained in North Korea Call for U.S. Help,” Associated Press, September 1, 2014)

Kang Sok-ju, a seasoned North Korean diplomat, is likely to make a rare trip to Europe this week, government sources said, in a move seen as in line with the North’s efforts to break from its international isolation. Kang, secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, is expected to make a tour of Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy, starting later this week, to meet political figures in those countries, the sources said. "Taking into consideration Kang’s status in North Korea, his visit may have a specific purpose," a source said, requesting anonymity. Kang’s envisioned visit to Europe coincides with North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Su-yong’s planned trip to New York to attend the U.N. General Assembly slated for later this month. (Yonhap, “Veteran N.K. Diplomat Likely to Visit Europe This Week,” Korea Times, September 2, 2014)

South Korea will share the cost of North Korea’s participation in the upcoming Incheon Asian Games in consideration of inter-Korean ties and previous cases, a government official said. Pyongyang has said it will send a 273-member group of athletes, coaches, referees and other officials to the games to take place in the South’s western port city from September 19 to October 4. "The (South Korean) government will fork out a portion of the cost," the unification ministry official told reporters. "I don't think there is a big gap between the South and the North regarding the cost issue." Without specifying how much Seoul will contribute, he said it will be financed by the South-North Cooperation Fund. "Since taxpayers’ money will be used, we will make public the related information after the games," he added. Meanwhile, the ministry official
reaffirmed that Seoul has no plan to request that Pyongyang send a cheerleading squad to Incheon, saying it is a matter to be decided by the community neighbor on its own. "If it decides to do so, as we said before, we would welcome (it)," he said. (Yonhap, “South Korea to Share Cost on North Korean Delegation to Asiad,” Korea Herald, September 2, 2014)

9/3/14

North Korea’s aggressive diplomatic moves signal that Pyongyang faces a "desperate" situation in trying to break from its international isolation and overcome economic woes, South Korea’s foreign minister said. North Korea is enaging in a diplomatic offensive as Kang Sok-ju, a seasoned North Korean diplomat, is expected to make a rare trip to Europe starting this week for about 10 days. His envisioned visit coincides with North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Su-yong's planned trip to New York to attend the U.N. General Assembly slated for later this month. "North Korea's move indicates that Pyongyang is facing desperate situations due to international isolation and economic difficulty," Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se said at a unification forum. "South Korea plans to strengthen its coordination with the U.S., China and Japan (in dealing with North Korea's nuclear weapons program) and will pursue a strategy in prodding the North into becoming a responsible member of the international community."

(Yonhap, “N.K.’s Diplomatic Moves Show Its Urgency to Escape Isolation: Seoul FM,” September 3, 2014) Foreign Minister Ri is visiting the U.N. for no specific reason. The North’s foreign minister has had little real power, if any. Rather, it has been even believed that the first vice minister or vice minister holds more decision-making authority than the minister. As such, words and behaviors of the people Ri will meet in New York will likely illustrate his political weight. The South Korean foreign ministry said, “Seoul is not seeking inter-Korean foreign ministers’ meeting at the U.N.” A source in the Seoul government said, “The international community is clear in its stance that it would not improve ties with the North unless Pyongyang makes improvement in its nuclear weapons program, the human rights issue, and inter-Korean relations,” adding, “Such messages will also be delivered to ranking North Korean officials on overseas tours.” North Korea seems to have allowed three American detainees in the North to be interviewed by CNN and the Associated Press on Monday apparently with the intention to open a dialogue channel with Washington by staging ‘politics of hostages.’ A diplomatic source in Washington said, “Appeals by Bae and others that ‘the U.S. government has little interest in me’ is the North Korean authority’s real intent,” adding, “The North's purpose is to resume dialogue with the U.S. by using American detainees, and thus seek to secure lifting of sanctions against it.” (Dong-A Ilbo, "DPRK Ends Isolation by Sending Diplomats to Europe, New York," September 3, 2014) "There is a possibility that Kang Sok-ju could meet with Wang Jiarui in Beijing after ending his visit to Europe," a diplomatic source with knowledge of the North Korean diplomat’s itinerary said September 4, adding that such a meeting could serve as a “face-saving” occasion ahead of the 65th anniversary of establishing diplomatic ties between the allies that falls on October 6. The purpose of Kang’s trip to Europe is unknown, but the 75-year-old veteran nuclear diplomat is likely to meet with Wang, head of the Chinese Communist Party’s international department, after wrapping up the European visit. If realized, the meeting between Kang and Wang would mark the first high-level, party-to-party interaction between North Korea and China since their political ties became strained over the North’s third nuclear test in February last year.
and the execution of the North Korean leader’s once-powerful uncle, Jang Song-thaek, who had close ties with Beijing. (Yonhap, “N.K.’s Key Nuclear Diplomat Expects to Meet Chinese Counterpart,” Korea Times, September 4, 2014)

A key presidential adviser on Seoul’s preparations for unification with Pyongyang warned of great risks from continued tensions on the Korean Peninsula. “If the South-North relationship is left as it is, it will be thrown into a very difficult situation and the division of Korea will become more solid,” said Chung Chong-wook, deputy head of a new presidential committee on efforts to move forward reunification efforts. Chung, a former ambassador to China, was speaking at a meeting of presidential advisers on North Korea. (Yonhap, “Presidential Aide Says Inter-Korean Ties in Great Danger,” September 3, 2014)

Breaking more than three weeks of silence, North Korea, through its official Internet website, denounced South Korea’s offer to hold high-level inter-Korean talks, claiming that the proposal is part of Seoul’s attempt to evade responsibility for icy cross-border ties. Uriminzokki criticized the dialogue offer as Seoul’s “heinous trick” to evade its responsibility for worsening inter-Korean relations. “The talk of high-level contact and September dialogue is (Seoul’s) heinous trick to shift its responsibility for spoiling the mood of inter-Korean talks by launching joint war exercises with the U.S.,” it said, referring to media speculations that the two governments may begin dialogue sometime in September. The website also slammed Seoul for proposing the talks ahead of its annual joint military drills with the U.S. in August, which the North often denounces as a prelude to war against Pyongyang. “(South Korea) sparked further criticism and derision by carrying out the wicked plot of proposing the high-level talks ahead of the Ulchi Freedom Guardian joint military exercise,” it noted. The website also said that if the South truly wants to improve inter-Korean relations, it should first declare its willingness to end the joint invasion war drill targeting North Korea forever. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Denounces Seoul’s High-Level Talks Proposal,” September 4, 2014)

Sydney Seiler, who has taken office this week as special envoy for the six-party talks, ruled out the possibility of lowering the bar for reopening negotiations with the communist nation, insisting that it is not too much to demand the regime first demonstrate its denuclearization commitment. He also said the U.S. is trying to win the release of three American citizens detained in North Korea through the “New York channel.” Seiler, a top Korea expert who served as director for Korea at the White House National Security Council, urged Pyongyang to “act in a humane” way and release the three, saying the cases have posed “significant obstacles” to improving relations between the two countries. “We are not ideologically opposed to dialogue with North Korea, nor have we placed insurmountable obstacles to negotiations in our insisting that North Korea simply demonstrate it will live up to international obligations and abide by international norms and behavior,” he said in a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “The bar has not been set too high by insisting that denuclearization talks be about denuclearization,” he said. He also held out the prospect of easing sanctions. “If DPRK makes the right choice, returns to the negotiating table and embarks on a credible path of irreversible denuclearization and
begins to comply with its international obligations and commitments, the appropriateness of sanctions will of course be reviewed," he said. The U.S. has been and will continue to be willing to engage North Korea to probe its intentions and help the regime make the right decision by presenting to the leadership an alternative path as well as to "prove our sincere commitment to improve U.S.-DPRK relations" once the North begins down the path of denuclearization, he said. "But clearly, the ball is in Pyongyang's court," he said. Kurt Campbell, a former assistant secretary of state, said that many U.S. government officials handling North Korea are suffering from "fatigue and a sense of exhaustion" in terms of strategies, after various tools, including pressure, have failed to make progress. "We are in a set of circumstances now where it's not clear fundamentally the way forward," he said. Still, the U.S. has been successful in keeping other members of the six-party talks, including China, together, Campbell said. "I think China over time has come to understand that North Korea is in fact acting in ways that are quite antithetical to its strategic interests," he said. "I think what we've seen in the last several years is a deep frustration and worry that in many respects, what North Korea is doing is creating a security dynamic in North Korea that is profoundly not in China's strategic interests." This attitude is a profound change from the past, he said. (Chang Jae-soon, "New U.S. Envoy Rules out Possibility of Lowering Bar for Nuclear Talks with N. Korea," Yonhap, September 5, 2014)

South Korea seems to be again facing an internal rift over North Korea, this time over the issue of sending a cheerleading squad to the Incheon Asian Games. Seoul's unification ministry reaffirmed it would welcome the cheerleaders if Pyongyang decided to send them to the games. "There is no change in our position that we would welcome North Korea's decision to send a cheerleading squad," a senior ministry official told reporters on background. "But we don't have a plan to request the North to send cheerleaders." The ministry, which handles daily inter-Korean affairs, believes Pyongyang's dispatch of such a team would be conducive to inter-Korean reconciliation, he added. "The government's stance is clear with regard to the participation of North Korean athletes and a cheering squad at the Asian Games ... We will welcome any country sending athletes and cheerleaders' squads for the successful hosting of the Incheon Asian Games," Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae said in a local forum. "If the North dispatches athletes and cheerleaders, it may help improve inter-Korean relations," he noted. Such a stance marks a sharp contrast with the defense ministry's negative view of Pyongyang's cheerleaders. "They are no less than the first contingent for propaganda against the South rather than envoys for inter-Korean reconciliation," the defense ministry said. (Yonhap, "Ministries at Odds over N. Korean Cheerleaders," September 4, 2014)

South Korea and the United States have agreed to establish a combined division of their troops next year that will be tasked with carrying out wartime operations, Seoul's defense ministry said. The unit, slated to be organized in the first half of next year, will be comprised of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division and a South Korean brigade-level unit, according to the ministry. The 2nd Division commander plans to head the newly-made joint staff of the combined unit, with South Korea's brigadier general-level officer to be its vice chief, the ministry said, adding that an equal number of dozens of service personnel from the two sides will form the leadership. "While being operated in a
separate fashion in peacetime, the 2nd Division and the Korean brigade will carry out joint exercises when necessary," a ministry official said, asking not to be named. In time of war, the two entities will get together to carry out diverse "strategic operations" such as eliminating weapons of mass destruction as well as civil missions against North Korea, he noted, without elaborating further. "The joint division is expected to improve the Seoul-Washington deterrence posture by proactively carrying out joint exercises. More chances for our servicepersons to experience such joint operations will also lead to the improvement of our military’s combat capabilities," according to the official. (Oh Seok-min, “S. Korea, U.S. to Form Combined Unit Next Year,” Yonhap, September 4, 2014)

The Chinese town of Fangchuan at the mouth of the Tumen River that runs through the border with North Korea overlooks both the North’s Rajin-Sonbong region and the Russian town of Khasan. The geography has made the North Korean economic zone a hotly contested piece of land between Beijing and Moscow. North Korea shocked China in 2008 by signing a contract with Russia loaning out a port in Rajin-Sonbong for 50 years, recalls Lee Jong-lim at Yanbian University. “That incident prompted China to take a more aggressive approach in developing the Tumen River region.” In 2009, China produced a blueprint for development of the Changchun, Jilin and Tumen regions along the border with North Korea. “This plan shows that China was not going to wait for multilateral cooperation with South Korea and Russia but take the lead in investing in the region to gain an advantage.” South Korea worried that China was trying to turn North Korea into a northeastern province. In 2010, China gained the right to use three ports in the Rajin-Sonbong region and in 2011 it built a freeway linking Hunchun and Rajin port. Beijing also agreed with Pyongyang to build a bridge connecting Hunchun and the North across the Tumen River. Construction of the bridge is reportedly still underway. Not to be outdone, Russia has decided to include the Tumen River region in a US$23 billion plan to develop its far eastern provinces. And in September last year, Russia repaired an old railway linking Khasan and Rajin-Sonbong. Sung Ki-young at the Korea Institute for National Unification said, “North Korea bolstered economic ties with China after sanctions imposed by Seoul, but then cooperation with China came to a standstill” following the execution of former eminence grise Jang Song-taek, “so Pyongyang stepped up cooperation with Moscow.” North Korea is trying to trigger competition between the two big powers. Sung said South Korea too should look into ways of taking part in Tumen River development projects, not only for economic reasons but for political ones as well. (Chosun Ilbo, “China, Russia Vie over N. Korean Economic Zone,” September 4, 2014)

Hwanggumpyong Island in the mouth of the Apnok River separating North Korea and China was once considered a new symbol of economic cooperation between the two countries. But now the area looks derelict. Last week there was still only farmland surrounded by barbed wire fences. The only structure was a small building that appeared to have been built to oversee the envisioned development project. In 2011, North Korea and China hatched ambitious plans to develop Hwanggumpyong into an economic zone for IT, light industry, agriculture and tourism. But the project died with the execution in December last year of former North Korean eminence grise Jang Song-taek had spearheaded the project. But China apparently still plans to complete
construction of a bridge crossing the Apnok River in late October, so it remains to be seen if the project will be revived. (Chosun Ilbo, “N. Korea-China Project Gathers Dust,” September 4,, 2014)

9/5/14  Hwang Joon-kook, special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, will make a three-day visit to Washington starting September 8 to meet with Glyn Davies, the U.S. envoy on the North Korean policy, according to the foreign ministry. (Yonhap, “S. Korea’s Top Nuke Envoy to Visit U.S. Next Week,” September 5, 2014)

Ho Jong Man, chairman of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon), left Tokyo’s Haneda International Airport for North Korea. Ho’s visit to the North is his first since the government in 2006 banned Chongryon executives from re-entering Japan after trips to the communist country. (Kyodo, “Chongryon Leader Departs for North Korea,” Japan Times, September 5, 2014)

9/6/14  North Korea fired three short-range missiles into the East Sea, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The projectiles were fired between 7 and 7:30 a.m. from a site in its eastern border town of Wonsan. They were presumed to have landed in the East Sea after flying some 210 kilometers, according to the JCS. While the military “is analyzing what type of missile the North launched and what lies behind its test-firing,” the officer said that it is presumed to be a new type of tactical missile. The short-range projectiles that the communist country test-fired last month and earlier this week from Wonsan and the northwestern province of Chagang bordering with China respectively were “novel tactical missiles,” which are different from its existing KN-02 missiles and 300-millimeter multiple rocket launcher, the officer said. “We have concluded that the short-range missiles fired on August 14 and September 1 were novel tactical missiles,” the officer said. The military presumes that the ones fired on Sunday are the same ones as well, the officer said. Sunday’s firing marked the 19th time that the bellicose neighbor has launched missiles or rockets this year, with the number of projectiles fired totaling 111, according to JCS data. (Yonhap, “N. K. Fires Short-Range Missiles into East Sea,” September 6, 2014)

Kang Sok-ju, member of the Political Bureau and secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK), called for the implementation of past inter-Korean deals as the first step toward improving bilateral ties. Speaking to reporters outside his hotel in Berlin, Kang called for the implementation of past agreements that were signed between the two Koreas following their leaders’ summit meetings in 2000 and 2007. The deals became the basis for reunions between families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War and a series of joint economic projects, including the industrial park in the North’s border city of Kaesong. “(We are) saying that we should implement them,” Kang said. “Then, everything will be resolved.” The secretary also called for the resumption of the stalled six-party talks on North Korea’s nuclear program without pre-conditions. Washington and Seoul have insisted that Pyongyang first demonstrate its commitment to denuclearization through action. Kang, however, said he has no plans to meet with Japanese F M Kishida Fumio, who is scheduled to visit Berlin September
South Korea said that it will hand over three rescued North Korean fishermen to the North. The Unification Ministry said in a message to North Korea that the repatriation is set to take place on the eastern maritime border at 8 a.m. tomorrow. The decision came hours after South Korea picked up the three fishermen from their boat drifting in waters near South Korea's easternmost islets of Dokdo due to a breakdown of its power system. The North Koreans, who are in their 20s and 40s, expressed their wish to go back to the North, according to South Korean officials. (Yonhap, “S. Korea to Repatriate 3 N. Korean Fishermen,” September 7, 2014)

The head of the most influential pro-North Korea organization in Japan is back in Pyongyang for the first time in eight years and might end up meeting with leader Kim Jong Un. The visit by Ho Jong Man, accompanied by several executives of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon), began today after Tokyo eased travel restrictions between the two countries in July. Ho, a member of North Korea’s top legislature, was welcomed by Yang Hyong Sop, vice president of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly, and Kim Yang Gon, director of the United Front Department of the ruling Workers’ Party of Korea, at Pyongyang’s airport. Upon arriving in Beijing Friday, Ho told reporters he will take part in a session of North Korea’s parliament September 25. Ho is “expected to receive various instructions” from Kim, who inherited power after his father died in December 2011, said an executive of the association ahead of his departure from Tokyo to Beijing. Following the easing of the restrictions, immigration authorities gave Ho approval to re-enter Japan after the visit. The last time Ho visited Pyongyang was April 2006 to attend a session of the Supreme People’s Assembly. For Japan, the issue of citizens whom North Korean agents abducted remains a central sticking point to establishing diplomatic relations with the country. Meanwhile on Saturday, a group related to the late Kanemaru Shin arrived in Pyongyang ahead of the 100th anniversary of the influential politician’s birth on September 17. “Our trip is mainly sightseeing, and we have no political intention,” his son, Kanemaru Yasunobu, said at a hotel in Pyongyang. The delegation of nearly 60 people arrived as Japan and North Korea are working to improve ties by addressing the abduction issue. The party is being led by the eldest son of Kanemaru, a former vice president of the Liberal Democratic Party who worked on establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries in the 1990s. But his son, who is visiting North Korea for the first time, said he hopes his father’s efforts to improve relations will bear fruit in the near future and that the group’s trip will contribute to that end. (Kyodo, “Japan-Based N. Korean Leader in Pyongyang for First Time in Eight Years,” Japan Times, September 7, 2014)

North Korea’s premier called for better ties with South Korea amid lingering cross-border tensions over a series of Pyongyang’s military provocations, including its missile launches. “We will do our best to improve North-South relations,” Pak Pong-ju said in a speech marking the 66th anniversary of the country’s founding. Still, he did not...
elaborate on specifics in his speech aired by the country’s state-run television. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Vows to Improve Ties with S. Korea,” September 9, 2014)

North Korea has signed a United Nations protocol that protects children from trafficking and sexual exploitation, Voice of America reported. Ja Song-nam, the North Korean ambassador to the U.N., signed the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the U.N. headquarters in New York. The protocol, comprised of 17 articles, calls for the prohibition of trafficking of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The North previously signed and ratified the convention in 1990 after it was signed by the U.N. a year earlier. The optional protocol to the convention has been ratified by more than 160 countries. More recently, the North signed a separate U.N. convention on the rights of people with disabilities in July 2013 in a possible move to quell international condemnation over its poor human rights records. If the North ratifies the protocol, it will have to submit a report outlining its progress to the U.N. Children’s Fund every two years. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Signs U.N. Protocol Protecting Children from Trafficking: Report,” September 11, 2014)

South Korea and the United States agreed that North Korea won’t be able to pull itself out of diplomatic isolation as long as it holds onto its nuclear program, Hwang Joon-kook, special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, told reporters after talks with his U.S. counterpart, Glyn Davies, referring to a recent series of diplomatic efforts by the North to engage with the outside world. “With regard to the North’s recent diplomatic activity, the South and the U.S. emphasized that if North Korea intends to get out of diplomatic isolation and cooperate genuinely with the international community, it must first step forward toward denuclearization,” Hwang told reporters. The two also agreed that the North should take positive steps on humanitarian issues, such as organizing reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War and releasing three American citizens held in the communist nation, Hwang added. Hwang also said that the South and the U.S. reaffirmed that six-party talks must be aimed at preventing North Korea from advancing its nuclear capabilities, and making real progress in ultimately denuclearizing the communist regime. (Chang Jae-soon, “S. Korea, U.S. Urge N. Korea to Take Denuclearization Step,” Yonhap, September 10, 2014)

A senior North Korean diplomat has said his country is ready anytime to provide with Japan its initial findings from a special investigation team on the fates of abductees and other Japanese nationals, as the two countries have a tacit understanding for that to happen around mid-September. “But whether Japan will be satisfied with them or not is up to its assessment,” Song Il Ho, North Korea’s top negotiator in talks with Japan said in an interview with Kyodo. “What can be said is that we are conducting the investigation not only in a specific area, but all concurrently in a scientific and objective manner,” he said in Pyongyang. “We are fully prepared (to release the first report).” (Karube Takuya, “N. Korea Diplomat Says Ready to Give Japan New Info on Abductions,” Kyodo, September 10, 2014)

Japan and the United States are exploring the possibility of Tokyo acquiring offensive weapons that would allow Japan to project power far beyond its borders, Japanese
officials said, a move that would likely infuriate China. Tokyo’s focus would be the ability to take out North Korean missile bases, said three Japanese officials involved in the process. They said Tokyo the informal, previously undisclosed talks with Washington on what Japan regards as a "strike capability" are preliminary and do not cover specific hardware at this stage, the Japanese officials told Reuters. Defense experts say an offensive capability would require a change in Japan’s purely defensive military doctrine, which could open the door to billions of dollars worth of offensive missile systems and other hardware. These could take various forms, such as submarine-fired cruise missiles similar to the U.S. Tomahawk. One U.S. official said Japan had approached American officials informally last year about the matter. Tokyo had dropped a request to discuss offensive capabilities during high-profile talks on revising guidelines for the U.S.-Japan security alliance which are expected to be finished by year-end, the Japanese officials said. Instead, the sensitive issue was “being discussed on a separate track”, said one official with direct knowledge of the matter. But any deal with Washington is years away and the obstacles are significant - from the costs to the heavily indebted Japanese government to concerns about ties with Asian neighbors such as China and sensitivities within the alliance itself. The Japanese officials said their U.S. counterparts were cautious to the idea, partly because it could outrage China, which accuses Abe of reviving wartime militarism. Washington did not have a position on upgrading Japan’s offensive capabilities, "in part because the Japanese have not developed a specific concept or come to us with a specific request", said another U.S. official. "We’re not there yet - and they’re not there yet," the official said. "We’re prepared to have that conversation when they’re ready." U.S. forces might hold off in some situations, such as if South Korea wanted to prevent an escalation, said Michishita Narushige, a national security adviser to the Japanese government from 2004-2006. "We might want to maintain some kind of limited strike capability in order to be able to initiate a strike, so that we can tell the Americans, ‘unless you do the job for us, we will have to do it on our own,’" said Michishita, a security expert at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo. Reflecting Japan’s concerns, Abe told parliament in May 2013 that it was vital "not to give the mistaken impression that the American sword would not be used" in an emergency. "At this moment is it really acceptable for Japan to have to plead with the U.S. to attack a missile threatening to attack Japan?" Abe said. Under current security guidelines, in the event of a ballistic missile attack, “U.S. forces will provide Japan with necessary intelligence and consider, as necessary, the use of forces providing additional strike power." Tokyo had wanted the discussions included in the review of the Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation Guidelines that are expected to cover areas such as logistical support and cybersecurity. But the United States was keen to keep discussions on offensive capabilities separate to avoid riling China and South Korea, another Japanese official said. Beijing and Seoul each have territorial disputes with Tokyo and accuse Abe of failing to atone for Japan’s wartime aggression. Reflecting the sensitivities of the issue even in Japan, any talk of an upgraded offensive capability is shrouded in euphemism. Onodera Itsunori, who stepped down last week as defense minister in a broad cabinet reshuffle, a year ago described it as “the capability to attack enemies’ military bases and strategic bases for the sake of self-defense.” Defense guidelines compiled by the government in December watered this down to a "potential form of response capability to address the means of ballistic-missile

North Korea returned a South Korean man who had defected to the North, in the first such repatriation since October. The 52-year-old man, identified as Kim Sang-geun by the North, was handed over to the South Korean authorities at Panmunjom. North Korea said last week that it would send Kim back to the South, saying he entered the North through an unidentified third country to escape his economic difficulties in the capitalist South. It said Kim asked for help in bringing his family from the South so they could live in the North together. But North Korea said it instead persuaded him to return home. (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea: Defector Is Sent Home,” New York Times, September 12, 2014, p. A-6)

Halperin: “The security of Northeast Asia is threatened by North Korea’s apparent intention to continue developing, test and deploy nuclear weapons and their delivery systems and by its assertion that it is a nuclear weapon state. The other five participants in the negotiations of the six-party talks—the United States, Japan, South Korea, Russia and China—have all expressed their opposition to the development of nuclear weapons by North Korea and their refusal to deal with the country as a nuclear weapon state. However, in the past few years none of the five have developed or put forward a workable strategy to prevent North Korea from emerging as a nuclear weapon state. The United States, preoccupied with other matters including a thus-far successful effort to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, has opted for a policy of strategic patience. It has demanded that North Korea implement substantial steps to curb its existing and suspected nuclear capability—both plutonium based and uranium based—as preconditions for holding another round of six-party talks. The United States seems to believe that North Korea will not, under any circumstances, give up its existing nuclear capability and has not been interested in trying to find a way forward. …A new approach is clearly needed to prevent North Korea from testing and deploying its operational nuclear weapons capability. This paper presents such an approach and outlines the steps that might be taken to initiate serious talks either within the six-party framework or under a new arrangement. The process outlined assumes that with the necessary incentives, North Korea might be willing to verifiably dismantle its nuclear weapons programs and rejoin the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear state. At the least, this will require the creation of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Northeast Asia, a peace process in Korea and the establishment of new security architecture to provide protection to all countries in the region. It is certainly possible, however, as many believe, that North Korea is not willingly under any circumstances to give up its existing nuclear stockpile. The only way to explore North Korea’s willingness is to resume serious negotiations. The first step in the process must be to find a way to bring the United States and North Korea to the negotiating table. At this time North Korea seems willing to resume unconditional negotiations under the six-party framework—a result of intense pressure from China, chair of the six-party talks. The United States, as noted, has been unwilling to resume the talks until North Korea agrees to dismantle its nuclear programs. It has not spelled out precisely what it would require North Korea to do before talks can begin. The standoff between the United States and North Korea has lasted for several years. It
results not only from the two governments’ differing security perspectives but also from their diametrically different understanding of their failed efforts to reach an agreement. In short each side believes that it had negotiated in good faith and met its commitments, and that the other had reneged. Historians may, one day, sort out the truth, but what is relevant now is that each side thinks the other violated the agreements they reached and neither is open to another effort to proceed in the same way. A new approach is needed, one which takes account of where we are today and the fundamental interests of the two sides. The first hurdle to overcome is to initiate negotiations. Private conversations over the past year suggest that the gap may be narrowing and point to a possible way forward. The United States is clearly not willing to begin negotiations, only to have North Korea test a nuclear weapon or a space launcher while talks are under way. North Korea now seems willing to reaffirm the so-called “leap day” agreement plus an added ban on space launch vehicle tests in return for some limited forms of economic assistance. The United States still seems to be insisting that North Korea reveal all its uranium-related weapons production facilities and agree to halt production as a precondition for talks. North Korea is unlikely to be willing to make this commitment prior to the initiation of talks. So this gap still needs to be closed. If that is done, the parties should be able to agree that the goal of the negotiations is to reach an agreement on the verified denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, preferably within a larger denuclearized zone in Northeast Asia. Getting North Korean agreement will likely require a comprehensive security agreement which includes an end to hostile intent and a peace treaty. Getting North Korea and the United States to come back to the table on these terms will not be easy. A new impetus is needed. This might well be the moment for Japan to play a leading role in getting the talks under way. With progress toward an understanding on the long-standing issue of abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea, Japan should now be willing to offer some economic assistance to North Korea, which should be tied to a resumption of the six-party talks. More important over the long run would be a Japanese proposal for a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Northeast Asia that would include Japan and both Koreas. This proposal would make denuclearization more acceptable to North Korea since it would involve a treaty commitment from both South Korea and Japan to not develop nuclear weapons, as well as a treaty commitment from the five nuclear weapon states including the United States to not threaten North Korea with nuclear weapons. Japan’s support for the Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons at the U.N. General Assembly in October 2013 suggests that the current government may be open to considering additional steps to demonstrate its commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons including support for a Northeast Asia nuclear-weapons-free zone. This proposal would also increase China’s interest in securing an agreement considering it has long held concerns that Japan and/or South Korea would develop nuclear weapons. A commitment by Japan to participate in a nuclear-weapons-free zone would benefit the country by helping to cope with the Asian response to various action of the Japanese government in the security field, including its assertion that it wants to expand Japan’s security role by reinterpretting the Japanese Constitution so as to permit the exercise of the right to collective self-defense. There is substantial opposition to this proposal in Japan including from the New Komeito party, which is part of the ruling coalition. The objections are both to the effort to make this change without formally amending the
Constitution and to the substance of the change. Whether it can push this change in the understanding of the Constitution through or not, the current government will press forward its effort to expand Japan’s security role. Much of the concern about these actions both in Japan and elsewhere is the fear that it reflects a revival of Japan’s nationalism, which will ultimately lead to Japanese nuclear weapons capability. Japan can counter this concern by announcing its support for a Northeast Asia nuclear-weapons-free zone and playing an active role in spurring agreement to resume the six-party talks. When the six-party talks resume, the governments should focus on simultaneous, serious negotiations about each element of the package. Only after the text of the full package is agreed upon should the parties negotiate the steps each will take to bring the entire agreement into force in a way that assures compliance with all the provisions of the agreement. Such an approach will avoid the misunderstandings of the past. The end result will be spelled out in a binding international treaty with a clear understanding of the commitments of each participant and with international verification and enforcement procedures. Every participant will be aware of what the final result will be. The steps toward implementation need to be equally unambiguous—they will need to be spelled out clearly and precisely with no party free to add or subtract from the agreed steps with unilateral statements to the world or to its own society. The proposed comprehensive treaty would be signed and ratified by a number of states. Some sections would be adhered to only by some of the signatories; others would be adhered to by all the parties. Some provisions may go into effect as soon as the treaty is ratified by the required states. Other provisions would enter into force in the future when specified conditions are met. The elements of the comprehensive Treaty on Peace and Security in Northeast Asia would include: (a) Termination of state of war in Korea -- This is clearly a major objective of North Korea. This section should be adhered to by the armistice nations and by South Korea. It should end the state of war and provide for the normalization of relations among the signatories while providing for the eventual unification of the peninsula. (b) Creation of a permanent council on security -- The treaty should create a permanent council and organization to monitor the other provisions of the treaty and to provide a forum to deal with future security problems in the region. In addition to the six parties, and the other two nuclear weapon states, other states from the region and beyond would be invited to join. (c) Mutual declaration of no hostile intent -- This is a key objective of North Korea, which put great stock in getting such a statement from the Clinton administration. It was flummoxed when the Bush administration simply withdrew it and when this policy was continued by the Obama administration. To be credible this commitment must be embodied in the treaty and affect all the parties’ relations with each other. (d) Provisions of assistance for nuclear and other energy -- The right of all parties to the treaty to have access to necessary sources of energy including nuclear power will need to be affirmed. Any limitations on North Korea will need to apply equally to other non-nuclear states party to the treaty, especially South Korea and Japan. North Korea will also want assurances that its energy needs will be subsidized. Beyond a general commitment this will probably need to be negotiated as a separate agreement. (e) Termination of sanctions -- The parties to the treaty will need to commit not to impose sanctions on any other party to the treaty or to maintain them on a list of state sponsors of terrorism. The parties would reserve the right to collectively impose sanctions on any state which violates its commitments under the treaty. (f) Nuclear-
Finally, the treaty would contain a chapter which would create a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Northeast Asia. The elements of that treaty are discussed in the next session. This chapter of the treaty would be consistent with the U.N. resolutions concerning the appropriate elements of a nuclear-weapons-free zone treaty. It would have specific obligations for the non-nuclear states and others for the nuclear powers. South Korea, Japan and North Korea (and possibly other states including Mongolia and perhaps Canada) would commit themselves neither to manufacture, test (for any purpose) or deploy nuclear weapons nor to allow nuclear weapons to be stored on their territory. They might agree to future restrictions on reprocessing and enrichment. They would agree to permit agreed inspections on their territory by the security organization created by the treaty so as to ensure effective verification of the agreement. The inspection provisions and the obligations to provide information would apply equally to all the non-nuclear parties to the treaty. In the case of North Korea there would need to be specific provisions providing for the destruction of their existing stockpile and production facilities under the auspices of the security organization. South Korea would need to commit that if Korea were unified before the weapons and the production facilities were dismantled, it would immediately turn over the weapons to a nuclear weapon state for destruction and agree to international supervision of the dismantlement of the facilities. The United States, China and Russia, as well as Britain and France, would agree to abide by the provisions of the treaty and not to store nuclear weapons in the zone or support in any way violations of the treaty by the non-nuclear states. They would agree not to threaten or use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear state that was observing the terms of the treaty. (Note that this offer by the United States is inherent in the clean negative security assurance offered by the United States in the Nuclear Posture Review and consistent with past commitments of Russia and China as well as the United States. Britain and France have made such commitments to states in other nuclear-weapons-free zones). The parties would agree to confer and to take appropriate actions if any non-nuclear state party to the treaty was threatened with the use of nuclear weapons by another party to the treaty or another state with nuclear weapons. There would need to be provisions spelling out issues of transit of nuclear-armed ships or planes and defining the territorial scope of the treaty in terms of international waters. It goes without saying that any hope of success for the proposed treaty depends on North Korea being willing at the end of the day to give up its nuclear weapons. There is a chance that with the right incentives and the right pressure, especially from China, that it might at the end of the day be willing to do so. The provisions in the treaty relating to when it enters into force and possible transition period should be structured so as to maximize the pressure on North Korea and to give both China and North Korea the greatest incentives to accept the framework. One piece of that is to include in the same treaty the other elements that North Korea has been seeking. Another is to propose a scenario for adherence by Japan and South Korea that contributes to this process. One way to achieve this is to have a provision in the treaty which permits South Korea and Japan to sign and ratify the treaty on a conditional basis. The treaty could be structured so that it goes into effect when the three nuclear weapon states (the United States, Russia and China) ratify the treaty and when two non-nuclear states (Japan and South Korea) ratify it. However, South Korea and Japan would have the right to withdraw from the treaty after three or five years unless the provisions are being
enforced effectively throughout the Korean Peninsula. Effective enforcement would occur if either North Korea ratified and implemented the treaty, or it collapses and the peninsula is unified under South Korea. If this condition was not met, Japan and South Korea could opt to remain in the treaty for a period of three or five years or to terminate their obligation. If the condition was met, they would be permanent parties to the treaty subject only to the standard withdrawal clause. The obligations of nuclear weapon states that ratify the treaty or the protocol would apply only to those non-nuclear states that also ratify and are in compliance with all the provisions of the treaty. These provisions would accomplish several purposes. First, South Korea would be obliged to surrender any nuclear weapons or weapons-grade material it acquires as a result of the collapse of North Korea. Second, China would know that if it persuaded North Korea to adhere to the treaty, it would have a permanent treaty commitment by Japan and South Korea to not acquire nuclear weapons or permit them to be stored on their territory. North Korea would be aware of this, and would have a negative security assurance from the United State if it joined the treaty. Specific provisions would be included to develop a process by which North Korea would dismantle its existing stockpile over some period of time and receive compensation the specifics of which would be subject to agreement. A provision of the treaty might permit North Korea to accept the basic commitment that it will become a non-nuclear weapon state while delaying its obligation to begin the dismantling process. Still it will not be easy to persuade North Korea to give up its existing nuclear capability, and it will certainly take some time. One possible approach to it would be through Mongolia, which has declared itself to be a nuclear-weapons-free zone and which has good relations with North Korea. In fact, it might make sense to include Mongolia in the proposed treaty. (Morton H. Halperin, “Time to Strike a Comprehensive Security Deal in Northeast Asia,” Asahi Shimbun, September 11, 2014)

The trial about charges that the National Intelligence Service (NIS) manipulated public opinion and interfered in politics shortly before the 2012 presidential election, ended with the court concluding that the agency illegally interfered in politics on the orders of former NIS director Won Sei-hoon, 63. However, the court found Won and the other defendants not guilty of charges of violating the Public Official Election Act, arguing that no illegal election campaigning had occurred. If the court had also found the defendants guilty of violating the Public Official Election Act, it could have undermined the legitimacy of President Park Geun-hye’s victory in the election. Hon. Lee Beom-gyun of the Seoul Central District Court, criminal division no. 21, on Sep. 11 found Won guilty of violating the National Intelligence Service Act. Won had been indicted on charges of having around 70 agents from the NIS psychological warfare team post political comments on websites from Feb. 2009 to Dec. 2012. The judge sentenced Won to two years and six months in prison and stripped him of his job qualifications for three years, with the sentence suspended for four years. Thus, Won managed to avoid returning to prison only two days after his release on September 9, following the completion of a one year and two months prison term for graft. “The actions of the National Intelligence Service are a grave crime, since they involve a state institution interfering directly in the free development of public opinion, thus weakening democracy,” the court said, but explained that it had taken into consideration the fact that Won had committed the crime without being actively aware that the deed was
illegal. Lee Jong-myeong, former third deputy department head at the NIS, and Min Byeong-ju, former chief of the psychological warfare division, who were indicted on the same charges, were both sentenced to a prison term of one year and stripped of their job qualifications, with their sentence suspended for two years. The court accepted the prosecutors’ argument that Won Sei-hoon gave orders for agents from the psychological warfare team to interfere in domestic politics by using 175 Twitter accounts to make 113,621 tweets and retweets and to make 2,125 posts and click support/oppose 1,214 times on internet portal sites. (Kim Seon-sik, “NIS Director Found Guilty of Interfering in Politics, But Avoids More Jail Time,” Hankyore, September 12, 2014)

Egle Murauskaite: “North Korea has been actively pursuing both espionage and disruptive/destructive technologies, investing in education and training of cyber specialists in local and foreign universities since the 1980s. It has also successfully cross-purposed the cyber offensive tools at its disposal, utilizing data collection and system penetration of foreign targets in the public and private sector not only to exfiltrate information, but also to test adversaries’ defenses, detection capabilities and their range of responses. While the prestige associated with demonstrating mastery of increasingly sophisticated cyber offensive technologies seems to have initially appealed to North Korea in a manner comparable to its pursuit of nuclear weapons technology and the status associated with membership in that exclusive club, the DPRK has shifted towards stealthy long-term data collection and sensitive target penetration missions. Reports in early July 2014 indicate that over the last two years the DPRK has doubled the number of personnel working in its cyber offensive technologies division under the General Reconnaissance Bureau. The North has a number of known units with the two largest believed to be conducting DDoS attacks from Chinese territory. Office No. 91 is believed to be the headquarters of the cyber division, and is reportedly based in Pyongyang. Unit 121, forms the bulk of the cadre and has the most advanced capabilities. This unit is presumably tasked with disabling command, control and communications structures in the ROK in case of an armed conflict. Lab 110, is understood to be responsible for technology reconnaissance and targeting the ROK’s telecommunications infrastructure. This unit was identified as the group of hackers behind the DDoS attacks against the ROK and the US in June 2009. Unit 35, the smallest of this task force, is responsible for internal investigations and security functions, but also maintains offensive cyber capabilities. Unit 204 is designated for psychological operations and information warfare. Offices 31, 32 and 56 form the Command Automation (i.e. hacking) Department under the General Military Staff, and are responsible for developing system penetration programs. … Paradoxically, North Korea might prove increasingly able to cause greater damage by destroying data and equipment through cyber strikes than by launching conventional missile strikes, especially when the likelihood and costs of retaliation are considered. A cyber arsenal offers North Korea a cheaper way of developing global military reach, in contrast to the enormous political costs of its nuclear pursuits, and the price tag attached to WMD technology. In addition, unlike missile systems, the range of which the DPRK has been struggling to extend for years, cyber offensives are by design not limited in range. Moreover, adapting to US reluctance to commit troops to conflict and increasing reliance on forward-deploying advanced military technologies instead, the DPRK could
potentially use cyber offensives to disrupt satellite communications or the Global Positioning System (GPS) signals of these forces moving into an armed conflict theater, impeding their ability to maneuver, coordinate and effectively support US regional allies in a confrontation with the North. In addition, Pyongyang would be able to acquire such capabilities faster and with greater functional certainty in the cyber domain than by trying to develop comparable kinetic military technologies. These concerns may not be unique to North Korea’s cyber offensive arsenal, but they seem to carry the most immediacy and potentially greatest impact, being the first such integrated strategic pursuit and carried out by an isolated adversarial regional power aspirant. The problem extends beyond the increasingly damaging impact of North Korea’s cyber offensives. Once a cyber incident occurs, the difficulty in attributing it to a particular perpetrator is widely recognized, and poses a two-fold risk of escalation. First, there is a risk of involving more parties in a conflict, e.g. if the victim of the attack retaliates against a misidentified attacker or against a group of states allied with a labeled culprit. Second, the challenge of effective retaliation for an attack in the cyber realm, and the abovementioned spillover effects of such attacks outside the cyber domain, mean that retaliation is highly likely to take place outside the cyber realm. The subsequent difficulty in establishing a proportionate response poses a high risk of conflict escalation, for example, by meeting a DDoS attack that shuts down an electric power plant with drone strikes against the presumed perpetrator’s industrial targets. On a related note, in constructing and communicating an effective deterrent stance, in the cyber domain it seems even more problematic to establish red lines not to be crossed and to convey the punishment due for their violation to potential adversaries. Cyber attacks attributed to North Korea are a rather frequent occurrence, but so far none of these incidents have been met with a direct military or economic response by target states or their allies. Indeed, given the restrained international response to the DPRK’s limited conventional attacks on South Korea in 2010, an incident in the cyber realm can hardly be expected to produce a more forceful (or even equivalent) response, since the applicability of the rules of armed conflict is still under discussion. Significantly, these incidents risk leading North Korea to believe that it can act with increasing impunity without realizing how close it might be inching to the line of conflict. Moreover, North Korea’s reliance on high-end Chinese hardware, and third party internet infrastructure insulates it against potential retaliation in kind, another factor weighing in favor of cyber aggression. …Ironically, the international effort to curb North Korea’s attempts to procure technology and materials for nuclear weapons and missiles is pushing the DPRK to double down on developing cyber offensive capabilities. …According to the head of the Military Cooperation Department in the Strategic Planning Bureau of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff, we might already be seeing the first indications of the DPRK’s integrated use of cyber offensive tools and more conventional weapons. Namely, in the controversial sinking of the South Korean navy corvette Cheonan during one of the largest joint US-ROK anti-submarine warfare exercises in 2010, the North Korean torpedo that hit this vessel may have been equipped with a device that disrupted the Cheonan’s GPS signal, impeding its ability to navigate and detect the incoming torpedo. In more comprehensive armed engagement scenarios, the DPRK’s stated four-pronged strategy designates cyber offensives for striking critical infrastructure of its adversaries, while WMD-armed missiles are meant to destroy the allied military bases, conventional forces—to attack
the demilitarized zone, and commandos—to take on the rear guard. In addition, in an armed confrontation, the joint operational command and control of US forces in the region and South Korean and/or Japanese defenses would be a likely target of cyber disruptive activities. Meanwhile, regional powers are increasingly vocal about their perceived need to develop military technologies of their own as a direct response to North Korean ones: South Korea has declared its pursuit for cyber offensive capabilities, while Japan has shown a growing appetite for conventional military technologies, as well as more expansive civilian nuclear technologies. Traditional US security guarantees to these countries, backed by a nuclear arsenal, may increasingly be seen as a less credible threat if the North’s nuclear and missile arsenal continues to grow, but particularly as a likely response to the North’s cyber provocations. In short, a deterrent geared towards thwarting a direct military confrontation may need to be reconsidered in the face of the new realities that spell more frequent hostile interactions in cyberspace. It is important for the US to find new ways to effectively reassure its regional allies—their inclination towards a demonstrably tougher military stance in response to presently growing security concerns seems likely to further the escalation spiral vis à vis the North....The changing nature of the DPRK’s capabilities and strategic stance dictates a need to re-calibrate the collective defenses of the US and its regional allies. Henceforth, it is important not only to integrate cyber and traditional military forces on the operational level, but also to bridge the gap between the communities of defense policy and technical experts in the cyber field. Synergies between conceptual strategic thought on the future of armed conflict and technical expertise in the rapidly evolving cyber domain can open new avenues better suited to address the emerging challenges discussed in this article. However, such a change in strategic approach necessitates recognizing a broader conceptual scope of problems at hand and accepting the challenges involved in adjusting the analytical lens.” (Egle Murauskaite, “North Korea’s Cyber Capabilities: Dterrence and Stability in a Changing Strategic Environment,” 38North, September 12, 2014)

DPRK delegation to the north-south high-level contact spokesman’s statement: “Recently the south Korean authorities vociferated about achieving the reconciliation and unity between the north and the south and repairing the relations through “confidence-building” in each public appearance. They called for resuming the north-south high-level contact as early as possible, asserting that “the improvement of the relations” is urgent. …[T]his nothing but a hypocritical act of mocking at the nation and deceiving the world. This is evidenced by the anti-DPRK psychological campaigns including ever-more undisguised leaflet scattering operations, the statement noted, and went on: The south Korean authorities have become evermore frantic in their anti-DPRK leaflet scattering operations. They are driving the present inter-Korean relations into a deeper mire of catastrophe. We have already declared solemnly that the scattering of leaflets is the most undisguised practice of the psychological warfare, a gross violation of the national agreement, an open confrontation with the DPRK and an action to provoke a war against it. The south side will find no excuse even in case the Korean People’s Army deals a retaliatory blow at any target any time to frustrate the “balloon operation.” The KPA does not hide the fact that it is determined to wipe out “the source of psychological warfare and forces supporting and commanding it” at once in case the leaflet scattering operation kicks off. The north-south relations can
never be improved by empty words and deceptive wordplays. It is a great historic cause of the nation which can be accomplished only through sincere practical actions. It is crystal clear to all that the north-south relations can never be mended with such stand and attitude as throwing away like a pair of old shoes even the agreement reached with the special mandate given by the top leader as what is happening at present. It is the primary requirement for improving the inter-Korean ties to uproot the south Korean authorities’ true colors as diehard confrontation elements. In other words, they should halt before anything else such anti-DPRK psychological warfare as leaflet-scattering operations at once. The south Korean authorities should not forget that their priority task is to have elementary decency to appear before the north’s delegates before repeatedly calling for the above-said contact. **We would like to reassure them that the door will automatically open for the dialogue between the north and the south if such actions of confrontation as leaflet-scattering operations stop.** We will continue to closely follow the attitude of the south Korean authorities.” (KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities Urged to Show Sincerity for Improving North-South Relations,” September 13, 2014)

North Korea, a country widely condemned for egregious rights violations, issued its own report on the state of human rights in the country, disputing outside criticism and suggesting that accusations of abuses are politically motivated. The “all-inclusive,” five-chapter report was prepared by the North’s Association for Human Rights Studies “to lay bare the false and reactionary nature of the reckless anti-North Korean human rights racket and to wipe out the prejudice and misunderstanding,” KCNA said. The report, more than 53,000 words in the English translation, did not mention prison gulags, which have been described in detail by defectors, including a handful of survivors, as places where anyone deemed disloyal to the country’s ruling family is detained in brutal conditions. The report instead claims that North Koreans enjoy robust human rights, including freedom of speech and religion and protection from slavery and torture. “In the confrontation between the D.P.R.K. and U.S., the U.S. learned that it was impossible to overthrow the people-centered system by means of political and military threats and pressure as well as the economic blockade,” the report said, using the abbreviation for the country’s official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. “What they found next was the human rights issue.” Its report comes ahead of a meeting on human rights in the North that Secretary of State John Kerry, Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se of South Korea and other top diplomats are scheduled to attend this month on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. North Korea has rejected the Human Rights Council resolution as “a product of confrontation” and called the defectors interviewed by the commission of inquiry “fanatics” and criminals who fled punishment in the North and “cook up groundless stories.” (Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Says Reports of Abuse Are Produced by Political ‘Racket,’” New York Times, September 14, 2014, p. A-12)

South Korea’s military confirmed Sunday it has detected signs of North Korea’s development of a submarine-based ballistic missile launch system. In a report to an opposition lawmaker, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said there is an indication that the North is developing a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM). “There is no intelligence yet that North Korea has an SLBM in operation. But the possibility of a
North Korean submarine equipped with an SLBM has been detected recently,” the JCS said in the document submitted to Rep. Jin Sung-joon of the main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy. A senior South Korean government source also said the South Korean and U.S. intelligence agencies spotted signs that the North has developed a ballistic missile launch tube. “A missile launch tube for submarine use has been spotted, which appears to have been developed at North Korea's submarine base,” the source said. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Spots Signs of N. Korea Submarine Rocket Development,” September 14, 2014) South Korea has not confirmed whether North Korea has a submarine-based ballistic missile system in operation, South Korea's Defense Ministry spokesman said September 15. “As of now, there has been no confirmation of North Korea’s operation of a system to launch a ballistic missile from a submarine,” Kim Min Seok said at a press briefing. (Kyodo, “N. Korean Submarine-Based Missile Launch System Not Confirmed: Seoul,” September 15, 2014)

The Supreme Court in North Korea sentenced one of the three Americans known to be held in the country to six years of hard labor for committing “hostile acts” against the North. North Korea said the American, Matthew Todd Miller of Bakersfield, Calif., committed the crime while entering the country on a tourist visa in April, according to KCNA. Associated Press and Choson Sinbo, both of which were allowed to attend the trial, said that Mr. Miller was convicted on spy charges under Article 64 of the country’s criminal code. Miller was accused of entering North Korea with the “ambition” to deliberately violate North Korean law so he could experience life in a North Korean prison and later become a firsthand witness about the human rights conditions in the North, Associated Press and Choson Sinbo reported. Choson Sinbo, quoting the North Korean court in its ruling on Miller, wrote, “His was an anti-state crime perpetrated under the protection and encouragement of the current U.S. government, which is intent on isolating and stifling our republic, and must be sternly punished.” North Korea had earlier accused Miller of unruly behavior, saying that he had torn up his visa at the Pyongyang airport and demanded asylum. In interviews with Associated Press and CNN, which were conducted while North Korean officials were present, Miller said he apologized for his crime but did not discuss whether he had asked for asylum. Choson Sinbo, quoting North Korean court records, reported on Sunday that Mr. Miller was born in California on Aug. 26, 1989, and visited South Korea before entering North Korea through China on April 10. The newspaper said he had developed a deep hostility against North Korea while reading anti-North Korean publications. During the trial, the prosecution presented as evidence Miller’s iPad and iPod, his American passport, his torn-up North Korean tourist visa and his notebook. (Choe Sang-hun, “American Sentenced to 6 Years of Hard Labor for ‘Hostile Acts,’” New York Times, September 15, 2014, p. A-4) Matthew Miller, the U.S. citizen imprisoned in North Korea on espionage charges, spent months in South Korea pretending to be an Englishman named “Preston Somerset,” acquaintances who met or worked with him say. The 25-year-old native of Bakersfield, California, did not seem to have close friends, a regular job or means of support during the months he spent in Seoul over a period of at least two years, they said. He gave no inkling of any interest in nuclear-capable and unpredictable North Korea. Instead, he spent time and money hiring artists to help create his own anime adaptation of the Lewis Carroll fantasy “Alice in Wonderland,” with which he seemed fascinated. At one point, he joined a debating
class that helped Koreans converse in English, but rarely spoke. “He was just a mysterious character. He said nothing unless I asked questions,” said Hur Sung-doh, who organized the weekly group debate. To Hur, the English-language teacher, he wrote in 2012 in response to an advertisement: “My name is Preston and I have been in Seoul for about 6 months. I am a student from London and saw (your) post.” Hur said of Miller: “He said he studied journalism and was engaged in newspaper publishing, although I am not sure if he really did that job.” Miller’s family has not spoken publicly about him, and neither have any neighbors or friends he may have had in the United States. Those who met him in South Korea only recalled a slightly odd, quiet young man who gave little away. “It was very curt and very awkward, speaking to him,” said Mike Stewart, a Seoul-based artist’s studio director who met Miller last year, when he received an e-mail from “Preston Somerset,” which Miller later said was a pen name. “He seemed very birdy, like ready to bolt at any minute, like he didn’t know what to say and things like that.” Miller inspected space that Stewart was leasing to local artists and paid hundreds of dollars to rent a studio but never returned. “He gave me a good chunk of change – and then I never saw him again,” said Stewart, who runs the Jankura Art Space, in which Miller had planned to exhibit work from an artist he had commissioned to help create his own spin-off of “Alice in Wonderland.” Francis Cole – an American who produces Japanese-style erotic art – said on a freelancing website that he was one of several artists, writers and musicians whom Miller commissioned to help produce his own Alice-inspired fantasy tale in the style of a Japanese anime. Miller, under his Preston Somerset alias, and Cole, with the user name “Eirhjien,” were members of the deviantArt.com community, where people can post and share user-made artwork. He recruited a gaming programmer to produce music for him, artists to draw men dressed as Cheshire Cats, and a ghostwriter to help piece the whole thing, named “Alice in Red,” together, according to posts on the deviantArt website. “I vividly remember that he wanted it to have an Alice in Wonderland-like feel,” one of the ghostwriters, who was paid $200 to write for Miller, said via e-mail. Miller identifies himself as Preston Somerset on several social media websites and cites steampunk, a genre of science fiction, and the Japanese vocal synthesized “humanoid” Hatsune Miku as some of his interests. He lists British writer George Orwell and Irish poet Oscar Wilde as two of his favorite writers. (James Pearson and Ju-min Park, “Alice in Wonderland, Steampunk, and a False Name: The Enigma of an American Jailed in North Korea,” Reuters, September 21, 2014)

9/16/14

The United States has proposed discussing candidates with North Korea for a special envoy to visit Pyongyang to negotiate freeing three Americans detained there, the Voice of America reported. According to the Korean-language edition of the VOA, the State Department will not insist on sending Robert King, special envoy for North Korean human rights issues. “Our source with expertise on U.S.-North Korea relations told us that the State Department is open to every possibility in selecting an envoy,” the VOA said. “The source said Washington made an inquiry to Pyongyang to outline specific profiles of U.S. officials whom it can consider.” (Yi Whan-woo, “U.S. to Discuss Special Envoy with N.K. to Save Detained Americans,” Korea Times, September 17, 2014)
South Korea and the US have reportedly agreed on an early-2020s target date for the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON), and entered discussions on the specific conditions and timeline. The issue of an additional postponement of the transfer was discussed at a senior meeting at the Ministry of National Defense complex in Seoul by ministry policy office chief Ryu Je-seung and US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia David Helvey. The two sides reportedly reaffirmed plans to announce the official timeline and conditions for the OPCON transfer at mid-October’s ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting. Delegations for both countries plan to hold additional discussions at the two-day senior-level Korea-U.S. Integrated Defense Dialogue (KIDD), which begins tomorrow. (Park Byong-su, “Opcon Transfer Delayed Again, This Time to Early 2020s Target Date,” Hankyore, September 17, 2014)

South Korean President Park Geun-hye, thwarted so far in ambitious plans to begin the process of reunifying the Korean peninsula, said the door is open for talks with the North during the upcoming U.N. General Assembly. However, Park said in an interview that Pyongyang must show sincerity in seeking a constructive dialogue and "walk the talk" in taking up South Korea's offers for engagement aimed at ending a deadlock after a decade of warming ties. North Korea will send its foreign minister, Ri Su Yong, to the U.N. General Assembly meeting, the highest ranking official from the reclusive state to attend in 15 years. "If the opportunity does arise and they actually have the opportunity to respond and take up our offer, our earlier offer to engage in high level contacts and for dialogue, I think such opportunities would be a good thing," she told Reuters at the Blue House. "If our foreign ministers were also able to engage in dialogue on that particular point, that would also be a good thing," she added. (Jean Yoon and Tny Munroe, “South Korea’s Park Says Door Open for Talks with North,” Reuters, September 17, 2014)

An American man was arrested after being caught trying to swim across a river from South Korea into North Korea, apparently because he wanted to meet Kim Jong Un, officials in Seoul said. South Korean Marines found the man lying on the banks of the Han River, which runs through Seoul but forms the border with North Korea along its western stretch, just before midnight local time yesterday, a defense ministry spokesman said. The man is in his early 30s and was being questioned by South intelligence officials, the spokesman said, but declined to provide any further details. “I was trying to go to North Korea in order to meet with supreme leader Kim Jong-un,” the man told his interrogators, Yonhap reported, quoting a government source. (Anna Fifield, “American Man Arrested While Trying to Swim to North Korea,” Washington Post, September 17, 2014)

DeThomas: “Even before BNP’s guilty plea was announced, nonproliferation sanctions experts inside the US government were aware of an interesting development in the international financial community. The private sector—particularly the financial and insurance communities—was increasingly avoiding involvement with countries subject to US sanctions even when the transactions in question and the parties involved were not subject to those measures. In effect, the biggest players in international finance expanded the impact of sanctions on key proliferators like Iran by simply walking away from their financial markets. The same proved true in the highest profile example of US
financial sanctions against North Korea: the 2005 Banco Delta Asia (BDA) case. The Macao-based bank, used by Pyongyang for financial transactions and the movement of gold bullion, was cited for money laundering and some $25 million in North Korean assets were frozen. Several things resulted, all seemingly disproportionate to the size of the seizure. First, there was a serious run on BDA and other Macao banks were also shaken. Second, Pyongyang reacted with great volatility in the diplomatic sphere, making the return of the frozen assets its main demand for returning to nuclear talks. Third, the international financial community became very reluctant to involve itself in any financial dealings with North Korea for fear of following in BDA’s footsteps. While the Bush administration eventually relented on the frozen assets in order restart nuclear negotiations, by-and-large the financial community outside of China has remained hands-off with regard to business with North Korea. Indeed, Pyongyang has had a difficult time moving money and often is reduced to using couriers to lug cash back into the country. Both of these models are providing new impetus for advocates of getting sanctions against North Korea to work faster and better. This certainly seems to be one factor driving legislation (H.R. 1771) introduced by House Committee on Foreign Affairs Chairman Ed Royce and passed by the House on July 29. The legislation seeks to: strengthen already powerful authorities under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to sanction entities that facilitate North Korean proliferation activities; press the Obama administration to declare North Korea a jurisdiction of primary money laundering concern and to ban Pyongyang from using the SWIFT system for processing international financial transactions. (Similar steps used against Iran resulted in the corporate self-censorship described above.); undo the decision of the Bush administration to remove North Korea from the state sponsors of terrorism list; and increase pressure on North Korean shipping by pressing countries to inspect their cargos and to crack down on their violations of shipping norms and regulations. Other advocates of increased sanctions have focused on the opportunities available through derivative sanctions to pressure Chinese entities to halt their involvement in proliferation-related activities. For example, the House legislation would give the Administration the ability to sanction firms and governments that tolerate North Korean front operations. The theory is that, like the Europeans and others in the case of Iran, Chinese banks and firms would walk away from their North Korean business if forced to choose between that and access to the US financial system. Aside from dealing a major blow to Pyongyang’s proliferation programs, reducing Chinese support for its economy by inducing the kind of financial self-censorship we have seen with regard to Iran could be a sanctions magic bullet for North Korea. There isn’t enough space to walk through all the elements necessary for a thorough consideration of the risks and benefits of using US financial sanctions to compel China—both the government and private entities—to cut support for North Korean proliferation activities. But answers to four critical questions might begin that discussion. Question 1: Isn’t Washington allowing North Korea to use the US financial system while blocking Iran from doing so by declaring it a jurisdiction of primary money laundering concern?Answer: No, in fact both countries’ access is highly constrained. The designation of Iran as a jurisdiction of primary money laundering did not significantly affect the scrutiny that the US government or the private sector gave to transactions involving Iran. Rather, the designation was a coalition building measure, imposed in solidarity with other governments that needed to take steps to constrain
Iranian access to their financial systems. Some advocates believe that designating the DPRK as a country of primary money laundering concern will have an exponentially larger impact on Pyongyang than the Banco Delta Asia sanction. But the reality is most banks connected to the US banking system have already voluntarily stepped away from dealing with North Korea. Question 2: What about other steps taken from the Iran playbook to pressure North Korea like denying it access to SWIFT? Answer: A complete answer would require detailed financial analysis. However, in general, the North’s banking system is so crude and its entry points into the international system so limited that it seems, at first glance, that this would not likely have a major impact on North Korea or on its proliferation programs. In fact, actions at the most basic level of international finance—scrutiny of North Korean couriers carrying large quantities of cash through international airports—would have a more significant impact. There is also a risk to the US in continually intervening in the operation of international funds transfer services like SWIFT (which is a business entity subject to Belgian and EU law), since we are far more dependent on the smooth operation of such services than North Korea. Question 3: Why don’t we sanction a major Chinese financial player for transactions involving North Korea the way we have hit French, US and Swiss banks in recent years for activities with Iran? Does the Obama administration need more authority or just more will? Answer: Easier said than done, the answer revolves around a number of important considerations. First, is there a clear case to be made against an offending entity? Even when imposing sanctions under Executive Order, the US bureaucracy has been extraordinarily careful to build strong cases against offenders. This due diligence has insulated US sanctions from the kind of court challenges that have threatened to unravel EU sanctions. The IEEPA gives the bureaucracy remarkably broad power to seize private property and to intervene in normal economic activity. But case-building takes months and involves a wide variety of Executive Branch agencies. Moreover, in many cases involving administrative sanctions, foreign governments, including China, are given the opportunity to take remedial action prior to the imposition of penalties. Without such a step, collateral damage—described below—becomes far more likely. When matters go to prosecution, case-building becomes even more exacting. The BNP case, for example, took five years to build. Second, is there a clear case that the offender will actually be hurt by sanctions or prosecution? Self-censorship has been the primary trend to avoid US penalties in these sanctions cases but a second trend is the evolution of “designated evaders”: firms and banks that do not have interests in the US market and do not have correspondent accounts with American banks. The US can deny such firms access to its financial system but that will have no effect. This, of course, is the case for nearly all sanctioned North Korean entities. Sanctions against them are largely just pieces of paper without effect given the lack of almost any economic interchange between the US and North Korea. While major Chinese and Russian entities tend to be as averse to US sanctions as their US and European counterparts, there are also many niche banks and players without such interests willing to earn large risk premiums by servicing North Korean clients. Such “designated evaders” seem to be a way for governments unsympathetic to US sanctions laws to work around them without a major confrontation either with Washington or their own large international business entities. Of course, one could seek to continue to expand US sanctions reach to deal with this reality, but at some point the exercise would end up targeting entities and governments several levels
away from the original problem being addressed. Moreover, each time the US imposes these sanctions it exposes its disproportionate influence and dependence on smoothly functioning international financial markets to a test. If Washington’s actions were seen as a greater threat to the markets than the problem it was seeking to address, our influence could evaporate quickly and US prosperity would be damaged.

Third, are the governments of the offending firms on the same page as the US with regard to the object of the sanctions? This is perhaps the most telling difference between BNP and what the US would face in the case of a major Chinese entity supporting North Korean proliferation. At one time, the US and Europe were at loggerheads on sanctions. This came to a head when the US sought to use the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA)—prohibiting foreign investment in its oil sector—against Iran. The matter came close to triggering a trade war between the US and Europe but both sides blinked and an accommodation was found. As international concern about Iran’s nuclear activities grew, however, so did European willingness to impose sanctions and to find a way to accept measures aimed against their own firms. In the end, the French government intervened with the Obama administration over the BNP case, but was silent after the plea bargain was announced. The same cannot be said for Chinese attitudes over North Korea. While the Chinese leadership may be frustrated and unhappy with Pyongyang (and also unhappy with American policy towards that country), there is no evidence that Beijing believes economic pressure will improve matters. Indeed, it appears the Chinese leadership believes that economic development in North Korea is the long-term answer to the entire North Korean problem.

Question 4: How might China react to unilateral sanctions that affect its banks and businesses? Answer: Major elements of the Chinese economy are much more interested in doing business in the US than with North Korea. These elements—both private and state-owned enterprises—are likely to exhibit very creative means of avoiding entanglements with sanctioned North Korean entities, as long as the US government and media do not force them to declare public fealty to US policy. But, this will not solve the problem of support for North Korea’s proliferation programs by the many small and medium sized Chinese entities that can profit from this niche market. It also can not address the tendency of Beijing to tolerate work-arounds to financial and other sanctions on North Korea that Chinese and North Korean traders continue to develop. It is possible to envision steps that could create powerful sanctions compelling the Chinese to make an “us-or-them” choice between North Korea and the US, but the risks to American interests in East Asia and to our long-term role in the international economy need to be assessed much more carefully than is likely in today’s Washington. There is no guarantee in the current global climate that the Chinese will pick us despite the obvious economic logic of that choice. To take one complicating factor out of many that must be dealt with in this context, how wise would it be to force together an alliance of Moscow and Beijing aimed at derailing US financial sanctions by sanctioning both powers simultaneously over Ukraine and North Korea? Given the apparent inability of today’s Washington to cope with rapid shifts in geopolitical reality in Europe, East Asia and the Middle East, this writer would counsel against subjecting national security and US prosperity to such a complicated test of strategic analysis and choice. Looking for a single magic bullet that can achieve all our North Korea policy desires in one stroke may not only be a fool’s errand, but could also prove counterproductive, particularly given the dangers of Chinese economic
retaliation and the likelihood of damaging any possibility of future US-Chinese cooperation in dealing with Pyongyang. It is worth remembering that the BDA sanctions were embedded in an overall "strategic sanctions" approach to North Korea, namely an "Illicit Activities Initiative" intended to deny Pyongyang profits from counterfeiting, drug trafficking and smuggling that advocates believed were important for maintaining support for the regime among the elite. There is still considerable debate over whether this approach had a hope of providing leverage for other national security purposes such as getting Pyongyang to yield on its nuclear weapons ambitions. But at least it had a strategic logic. If Congress and the Obama administration wish to make another sanctions push on North Korea to effect change in its policies, Washington would be well-advised first to determine what its strategic approach should be, which targets are the most lucrative and how key countries (notably China and the ROK) can be persuaded to move in the same direction. In that context, while patiently expanding those areas where Beijing and private Chinese firms will consent to move farther against North Korea, it might be worthwhile to look for a "Chinese BNP." An entity that violated both US sanctions law and UN Security Council Resolutions on North Korea, thus violating both countries' policies, would be an excellent candidate for the kind of sanctions that could have the right effect on enterprises considering involvement with the wrong North Korean entities." (Joseph DeThomas, “Next Steps in DPRK Sanctions: Is There a Magic Bullet?" 38North, September 17, 2014)

9/19/14 A South Korean government panel approved the unification ministry’s plan to provide North Korea with $13.3 million in humanitarian aid via international organizations. Under the decision, the South will contribute $6.3 million to the World Health Organization’s projects to help babies and pregnant women in the impoverished communist nation, who are in need of more medical services. Seoul will also offer $7 million in nutritional assistance for them through the World Food Program as they are especially vulnerable to malnutrition. The South plans to spend an additional 36 million won ($34,000) to support the implementation of the aid programs, which will be financed by the government’s South-North Cooperation Fund, according to the ministry. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Green-Lights N. Korea Aid Worth US$13 Million,” September 18, 2014)

9/19/14 More than half a year after a landmark report by a United Nations commission of inquiry pinned responsibility for crimes against humanity on North Korea’s leadership, the North’s ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva said that the North had accepted a wide range of recommendations for improving its human rights record. North Korea’s declaration falls far short of a commitment to follow through with any action, but the contrast with its blanket refusal to even consider similar recommendations in the past could be seen as a willingness to engage on some issues. “There obviously has been some decision that this is the way the rest of the world relates, and the decision seems to be that North Korea should do it as well,” said Robert R. King, the United States’ special envoy for human rights in North Korea. Sounding a note of caution, though, King added, “We ought to be careful about assuming this means a great deal in terms of what they do.” But, in what is seen as a further sign of North Korea’s growing attention to international criticism, the North’s
government is sending its foreign minister to participate in the United Nations General Assembly for the first time in 15 years, King said. The 268 recommendations were made under a review process that all member states of the United Nations undergo every four years. The North’s ambassador, So Se-pyong, speaking before the Human Rights Council, signaled that the North’s leadership was now willing to consider suggestions about, among other things, freedom of thought, “free and unimpeded access to all populations in need” for humanitarian agencies and freedom for them to monitor distribution of their aid. The prevention of human rights violations and punishment for violators were also on the list. But So said the North had rejected some recommendations that were “based on distorted information provided by hostile forces which aimed to dismantle the country’s social system,” including calls for unfettered access to detainees for the International Committee of the Red Cross, disclosure of the extent and methods of capital punishment, and the end of restrictions on movement and expression. North Korea has made some progress on disability issues, King told the council. But laying out the breadth of international concerns, he added that it also needed to “acknowledge the existence of political prison camps, to dismantle all such camps, to release all political prisoners, and to abandon the use of torture, arbitrary detention, summary execution, forced abortion and other forms of sexual violence.” “I think the North Koreans are feeling some pressure,” King said in an interview, noting the practical costs of the outrage stirred by the commission of inquiry.

“Contributions to aid groups have declined because North Korea’s reputation has declined. I think growing concerns about human rights conditions in North Korea make it much more difficult to raise money from foreign governments” and private sources. Secretary of State John Kerry is to host a landmark meeting on human rights in North Korea on September 23, just before the General Assembly opens. The North’s decision to send its foreign minister to New York for the General Assembly session is a sign of the leadership’s concerns, King said. “I think there’s a certain recognition on the part of the North Koreans that if you’re going to play with the big boys you’ve got to participate, and I think that’s a positive sign,” he said. Those signs of engagement dispel what was once a common assumption that the North’s leadership was immune to foreign criticism on issues of human rights, said Param-Preet Singh, senior counsel with Human Rights Watch’s international justice program. “However sincere or insincere it may be, it’s a reflection it does care what the international community thinks and the international community does have leverage to push for change in North Korea,” Ms. Singh said. (Nick Cumming-Bruce, “North Korea Agrees to Weigh Steps on Rights,” New York Times, September 19, 2014)

Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo Abe expressed hope to meet with South Korean President Park Geun-hye on the sidelines of an international conference in fall, Park’s office said, a move seen as aimed at repairing relations soured by historical disputes. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Says Abe Expresses Hope for Summit with Park in Fall,” September 19, 2014) Former Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro met with South Korean President Park in Seoul on the sidelines of the opening ceremony for 17th Asian Games in an effort to make a breakthrough in relations with Seoul. “It’s true that Japan-Korea relations are deeply troubled . . . the government welcomes the courtesy call on President Park by former Prime Minister Mori,” Chief Cabinet Secretary SugaYoshihide Suga said in Tokyo. “We hope that this visit will lead to an improvement in bilateral relations,” Suga
said. He said Mori would carry a letter to Park but declined to comment on its contents. (Kyodo, Reuters, “Mori Takes Abe Letter to Park,” Japan Times, September 19, 2014)

A North Korean patrol boat briefly violated the tensely guarded western maritime border, but it retreated after the South Korean Navy fired warning shots, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The boat crossed the Northern Limit Line in the Yellow Sea at around 12:10 p.m., but it returned to its territory six minutes later as the South Korean Navy fired six warning shots, the JCS said. “The military is keeping close tabs on any North Korean military movement, maintaining our war readiness,” a JCS official said. It was the first incursion by a North Korean boat following the last sea border violation in late May. (Yonhap, “N. Korean Patrol Boat Violates Western Sea Border,” September 19, 2014)

Pyongyang retracted its schedule and said it needs more time to issue its first progress report on the reinvestigation into Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide said. North Korea had said that first report would be issued “from late summer to early autumn.” But Suga quoted a statement from Pyongyang that said: “We aim to complete the investigation in about a year, and we are now in the initial stage. As of now, we cannot provide an explanation beyond this stage.” Suga expressed displeasure at the development. “We recognize that negotiations (with Pyongyang) will not go smoothly,” he said. “We think that North Korean authorities know the whereabouts of all of the abducted Japanese citizens. We hope that North Korea will conduct (the reinvestigation) with sincerity.” Through the Japanese Embassy in Beijing, Japan now plans to urge North Korea to make the first report as soon as possible. “It is necessary for us, Japan, to receive detailed explanations promptly on the progress of the investigation,” Suga said. (Asahi Shimbun, “North Korea Delays First Report on Reinvestigation of Abduction Issue,” September 19, 2014)

KCNA: “Recently another American was arrested and tried for committing criminal acts against the DPRK. A due legal judgment was passed on the American for his crime committed as part of the U.S. anti-DPRK human rights campaign and he admitted his crime and accepted the judgment. However, officials of the present U.S. administration responsible for his crime took issue with the just legal action taken by the DPRK like a guilty party filing the suit first. They raised unreasonable “human rights issues” in a foolish attempt to cover up the crimes perpetrated by Americans. Upon the authorization, the KCNA discloses the truth behind the crimes committed by American Miller Matthew Todd. He was sentenced to six years of hard labor at a trial held on September 14. He entered the DPRK as a tourist on April 10, 2014 and rudely behaved, tearing off his tourist visa when he was going through formalities for entry at Pyongyang Airport. So, he was put in custody by a relevant organ. The results of the investigation made it clear that he did so not because of simple lack of understanding and psychopathology but deliberately perpetrated such criminal act for the purpose of directly going to prison after being intentionally reprimanded by a legal organ of the DPRK, pursuant to the present U.S. administration’s anti-DPRK campaign, spying on “human rights” performance and making it known to the world. On the basis of this investigation the DPRK Supreme Public Prosecutors Office issued warrant of arrest for
Miller Matthew Todd and accused him of criminal responsibility according to Article 64 of the Criminal Law of the DPRK and put him in custody. According to the preliminary examination, Miller Matthew Todd left a university halfway and remained jobless in Yongdungpho District, Seoul City of south Korea. There he had inveterate hostility towards the DPRK while systematically listening to broadcasting programs and reading publications of the U.S. and south Korea slandering the DPRK. He believed that people in the DPRK have neither freedom nor human rights and if they disobey the government they would be subject to a miserable prison life. So, he had a foolish idea of spying on prison and human rights situation while experiencing "prison life" after intentionally committing crimes in violation of the law in the DPRK. He tried to find a way for entering the DPRK. It was his calculation that when he kicked up a fuss tearing off tourist visa while going through formalities for entry as a tourist he would be arrested by a relevant organ and taken to "prison". So, he applied for tour through a travel agency in the U.S. Prompted by the intention to refurbish his image before finding his way to "prison" he had prepared a memo book in advance. It contained the following sentences: "I seek a political asylum. I am seeking refuge after failing in my attempt to collect information about the U.S. Government. I am planning to open to public information like Snowden." He, at the same time, prepared iPad and iPod he claimed containing important information about the military bases of the U.S. imperialist aggressor forces in south Korea which he gathered by having access to internet and papers containing invectives against the north let loose by defectors from the north he obtained by visiting them. According to the already worked out scenario, he tore off his tourist visa while going through formalities for entry and insisted that he came in pursuit of "refuge" and he sought "political asylum." He confessed during the preliminary examination that he tried to meet American Kenneth Bae who had been sentenced to hard labor if he succeeded in going to "prison" and have negotiations for Bae's "release" and become "witnesses" together with Bae disclosing the "human rights" situation in the DPRK after leaving prison. As proved by his confession, the crime committed by Miller Matthew Todd was prompted by his sinister political aim to deliberately slander the DPRK in the light of his aim, preparations and implementation of his plan. He perpetrated the above-said acts in the hope of becoming a "world famous guy" and the "second Snowden" through intentional hooliganism. This is an intolerable insult and mockery of the DPRK and he, therefore, deserved a punishment. What mattered was that his crime timed to coincide with the reckless remarks made by officials of the present U.S. administration including Secretary of State Kerry terming the dignified DPRK a "country of evil" over its rocket firing and elections to power bodies in March and April this year, and the smear campaign over its "human rights issue." What he committed was espionage coming under Article 64 of the Criminal Law of the DPRK. This case of the American helps the army and people of the DPRK recollect what miserable end American spies met after being arrested before infiltrating into the prisoners’ camp where a lot of American POWs including Dean, commander of the 24th Division of the U.S. imperialist aggressor forces, were in custody, for the purpose of spying on it during the last Fatherland Liberation War. Much water flowed under the bridge and old generation was replaced by a new one but the shameful tradition of the U.S. in which it was hit hard and sustained heavy setbacks by the DPRK historically and the latter’s proud tradition in which it meted out a stern judgment to the former, the kingpin of plot-breeding, are given steady
continuity and these law-governed two traditions will last forever. The Supreme Public Prosecutors Office of the DPRK brought the Supreme Court an indictment against the American as the truth about the crime committed by the accused was confirmed by his statement and evidence. The Supreme Court of the DPRK held a trial of him on September 14. There was no pleading by the counsel as the accused rejected it and the trial was held in camera according to his request. At the trial he admitted that he committed the crimes, prompted by his political motive to personally spy on the “human rights” situation in the DPRK and disclose it in a bid to isolate and stifle the DPRK’s system. The Supreme Court of the DPRK sentenced Miller Matthew Todd to six years of hard labor according to Article 64 of the criminal law. The army and people of the DPRK are now watching with vigilance the forces behind the scene as Miller’s crime was committed in pursuance of the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK and strongly calling for ferreting out all those who dare provoke the dignified DPRK and meting out a merciless punishment to them, no matter who they are and where they are. The disgusting U.S. which is behaving in the international human rights arena as if it were an inborn “judge” and those who are acting like tiger moths, talking about “human rights” pursuant to its line will not be able to escape a judgment by the era and history and the present U.S. administration clinging to the evil repugnancy toward the DPRK and its inveterate hostile policy toward the latter will not be able to evade the responsibility for the recent case of the American.” (KCNA, “KCNA Releases Detailed Report on Truth about Crime of American,” September 20, 2014)

Spokesman for the north side’s delegation to the north-south high-level contact: “The south Korean authorities are behaving shamelessly, far from repenting of their frantic anti-DPRK psychological campaign. The south Korean authorities are claiming that they are abiding by the agreement reached at the north-south high-level contact and making excuses that leaflets scattering has nothing to do with the authorities. This is the height of shamelessness. They clarified the stand that they cannot stop such anti-DPRK psychological campaign as leaflets scattering because of “nature of the social system” and “basic right”. But this is nothing but sheer sophism. What is more intolerable is that they are spreading rumor that at the first round of the high-level contact they made the DPRK “understand” that it is impossible to settle the issue of scattering leaflets because of “nature of the social system.” Whether it is true or not will be clearer when Kim Kyu Hyon, chief delegate of the south side at that time, is given a chance to open his mouth. It is nonsensical to build confidence and promote reconciliation while persisting in slandering the fellow countrymen. To scatter leaflets peppered with invectives hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK and its social system is the gravest hostile act of barring the inter-Korean relations from being mended and national reconciliation and unity from being achieved. That is the reason why at the first round of the north-south high level contact the DPRK raised the issue of stopping the mud-slinging at each other as the first requirement for improving the relations. If he or she is a politician ready to put an end to the history of division and an intellectual sincerely concerned for the peace of the country and security of the nation, they should make utmost efforts to create an atmosphere favorable for improving the relations, first of all. If a dialogue is to take place, it is necessary to build confidence and create an atmosphere for improving the relations, to begin with. The north-south relations will never improve if the south Korean authorities shamelessly
employ a trick to evade their “responsibility,” persisting in the smear campaign against the other party under the pretext of “nature of the social system.”

The DPRK will closely watch how the south Korean authorities will deal with the anti-DPRK leaflets scattering by human scum [tomorrow]. **If Chongwadae’s commitment to confidence building between the north and the south is made with sincerity, they will make a practical courageous decision to unconditionally halt leaflets scattering operation. Herein lies the way out for improving the north-south relations.** (KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities’ Evasion of Blame for Anti-DPRK ‘Balloon Operation’ Is Height of Shamelessness,” September 20, 2014)

North Korea requested South Korea to make additional investment in Mount Kumgang and Wonsan areas, claiming that “it never confiscated the South’s property,” which it had forfeited and frozen in April 2010. Oh Eung Kil, general president of Wonsan district development company under the North’s external economy ministry, told South Korean reporters at an informational session on investment in the North in Dalian, China. “We did not confiscate Hyundai (Asan)’s asset. We will not confiscate and will wait (going forward). We have waited for long (thus far),” Oh said. “The South’s asset is just in our territory because it is real estate, and the property is registered in Hyundai’s name.” Notably, citing the North’s foreign investment act providing that Pyongyang does not nationalize foreigners’ asset, Oh said, “Because we cannot afford to continue waiting, blindly trusting the South, we will form ties with investors from various countries. Still, we are not excluding the South. The door is open.” (Dong-A Ilbo, “N.K.: ‘We Never Confiscated Facilities from Hyundai,’” September 22, 2014)

A group of South Korean activists released balloons carrying anti-North Korean leaflets across the border Sunday, brushing aside warnings of retaliation from the North. In an unusual letter sent recently to the presidential office Cheong Wa Dae, the North called on the South Korean government to stop local activists from sending such anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the border and alluded to retaliation against the senders. Defying the warning, 10 activists from Fighters for Free North Korea launched 10 big balloons carrying 200,000 anti-North Korea leaflets into the sky in Paju, north of Seoul. The waterproof leaflets contain messages denouncing the three-generation power transfer in the North as well as the dire economic situation, while praising South Korea’s economic prosperity. “In spite of any threat or warning from the North, we will continue sending letters of truth until the North Korean people achieve liberalization,” the activist group’s chief, Park Sang-hak, said during the leaflet campaign. The controversial campaign also drew a group of opposing activists to the border town, who called for a suspension of the practice. “Sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets constitutes a dangerous act that devastates peace on the peninsula,” said an activist from the Korea Alliance of Progressive Movements. The government has long maintained that it has no legal basis to stop civic groups’ leaflet activities. It has recently said that “The anti-Pyongyang leaflet issue is something private activists have to decide for themselves.” (Yonhap, “Activists Send Anti-Pyongyang Leaflets to N.K. Despite Warning,” Korea Herald, September 21, 2014)

Hong Seok-hyun: “The two Koreas seem at an impasse. In March Park Geun-hye’s Dresden speech held out a hand of friendship. Brusquely dismissing this, North Korea
showered insults on the South’s President. Fortunately rhetoric is not the whole reality. For over a decade, one project has shown how both Koreas can cooperate to their mutual gain. The joint venture Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), a short drive from Seoul just across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), has weathered many storms. In May 2010 Seoul banned trade and investment with Pyongyang after the sinking of the warship Cheonan, but wisely exempted Kaesong. Last year when the North pulled out its 55,000 workers, President Park patiently negotiated the KIC’s reopening under a new joint management structure. Since 2005, this potent combination of Southern capital and technology with Northern discipline and diligence has produced goods worth US$2.3 billion and generated US$9.45 billion in trade, according to Seoul’s unification ministry (MOU) last month. Yet it could achieve much more. As originally conceived, Kaesong would have hosted 250 Southern companies (twice the current total) by 2007. Planned expansion envisaged as many as 700,000 Northern workers by 2012. Both Koreas need to recover that early ambition. Those who think North Korea is unchanging forget the heroic risk the late Kim Jong-il took, facing down his own military to lease part of the front line to the enemy. Hoping for large-scale foreign investment, Kim invited Samsung and other major South Korean corporations to come in -- only to be thwarted by his own bureaucracy. ‘Trustpolitik’ is President Park’s watchword, and trust is what the Koreas need most and first. To that end, each side must reconsider its past practices and offer the other a basis to move forward. Until the North rashly withdrew its workers last year, Kaesong was mostly a sanctuary insulated from the peninsula’s knotty wider issues. That status must be re-established. Southern companies need a firm guarantee from the North that business is business and will never be sabotaged again. On that basis Seoul should let another joint venture restart. The Mount Kumgang resort on North Korea’s southeast coast saw 1.9 million Southern visitors in the decade to 2008, when the South suspended tours after a straying tourist was shot. That was tragic, but the eight-year impasse has benefitted no one. Like Kaesong, Kumgang was a win-win project overall. It is time to try again. Once it is clear Seoul means business, Pyongyang will reciprocate. Kim Jong-un recently created a dozen new special economic zones, but given North Korea’s reputation he will find few takers. Not wishing to become yet more dependant on China, South Korea is his only realistic option. For South Korean companies the North’s advantages are obvious. Language, labor, logistics and location are all favorable. North Korea’s educated but underemployed workforce, vast amounts of underutilized land, and worn-out infrastructure and plant are all opportunities for Southern firms. A precedent lies close at hand. Cross-straits politics are as fraught as Korea’s, yet for 25 years China and Taiwan have forged business ties. Deepening economic integration has helped reduce tensions. The two Koreas could learn much from such a pragmatic, long-term strategic approach. It is ironic and tragic that Samsung et al. have large operations all over Asia, not least in China - yet none on their doorstep in North Korea. This can and must change, to all Koreans’ benefit. Criticisms that this rewards Pyongyang’s misbehavior miss the point. Of course UN Security Council sanctions must be observed. But expanding Kaesong and resuming Kumgang are small beer: Those few extra dollars won’t buy Kim any new bombs or major missiles. It’s worth a try. Two further arguments. Existing policy towards North Korea isn’t working: on the nuclear issue, human rights and much else. We need to try another tack, more long-term and imaginative. Second, South Korea has a unique responsibility. As we Koreans say, Uri
nara: It’s our country. While careful to treat the North as a partner -- and to insist that they equally respect the existing Southern state -- we both know that between us it’s different, because we are the same people. Both North and South Korea see unification as their goal. That will take time, and a road-map - which must be a shared one. The obvious way forward is to build on what works. Kaesong works. By expanding it and creating other Kaesongs, we can show North Korea two things. First, we are sincere. And second, win-win is better than confrontation. Kim Jong-un has promised his people that they need no longer tighten their belts. Only with South Korean help can he deliver that. Pyongyang will remain a tough and sometimes tiresome partner. Yet we must not let irritation over minor issues distract us from long-term goals. South Korea’s retreat in recent years has left China dominant over the North’s economy. With Russia and even Japan forging fresh links with North Korea, Seoul can ill afford to be a laggard. The challenge for President Park Geun-hye is not only to deal South Korea back into the Northern game, but to take - and keep - the lead role.” (Hong Seok-hyun , Former ambassador to the U.S. , now chairman of Joong-Ang Media Group, “To Reunify Korea, Start from Kaesong,” Huffington Post, September 21, 2014)

A key North Korean party official, who oversees Pyongyang’s foreign policy, returned home from Beijing on Monday, wrapping up his five-nation tour but without meeting with Chinese officials, a a diplomatic source said. The absence of a meeting between Kang Sok-ju, the secretary handling international relations at the North’s ruling Workers’ Party, and Chinese officials on the way to or from the trip represented strained political relations between Pyongyang and Beijing, the source said. Kang arrived in Beijing on yesterday from Ulaanbaatar, the final leg of his five-nation tour that had taken him to Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Italy, and flew to Pyongyang today, the source said. “To my knowledge, Kang didn’t hold a meeting with senior Chinese officials, including Wang, during his trip," said the South Korean diplomatic source who was briefed by th

North Korea is developing new missiles capable of carrying tactical nuclear warheads, South Korean intelligence authorities told JoongAng Ilbo. The North has performed a series of test-firings of new short-range missiles since August 14. Designated as KN-10, the new ground-to-ground missiles are believed to be designed to carry nuclear payloads. “We’ve come to the conclusion that the rockets test-fired three times since last month are new missiles based on their speeds and altitudes,” a senior South Korean government official told JoongAng Ilbo. “Based on our analysis and other intelligence, we concluded that they are intended to carry tactical nuclear weapons.” They are developed by placing a relatively smaller nuclear payload on a short-range missile to destroy a military target. It was the first time the government detected Pyongyang developing a tactical nuclear missile. “The new missiles have a range of about 200 kilometers [124 miles], which is similar to their existing 300-millimeter-caliber multiple rocket launcher systems,” the source said. “They are developing the new missiles, although they already have artillery with similar ranges, because they want a more powerful weapon.” The 300-millimeter artillery rockets are already capable of hitting major military installations in the South, including Pyeongtaek, where the U.S.
military’s main base will be relocated in 2016. The North, however, is going after a more powerful weapon. Another source told JoongAng Ilbo that the perennial economic crisis of the North, ironically, is the reason behind the new weapons system. “Because the North has no possibility to win a conventional arms race due to its economic hardships, it is using all its resources to develop nuclear capability, which is an asymmetrical weapon,” the official said. “We believe the North is developing a tactical short-range missile because it has reached the final stage of miniaturization of a nuclear warhead.” KN-10 missiles are modified versions of the Soviet Union’s SS-21 ground-to-ground missiles, and the South will fall into the nuclear range of the North if the Communist country manages to succeed in the miniaturization of nuclear weapons. The new missiles are also fired from transporter erector launchers, or mobile launching pads, and use solid fuel. Those characteristics make it hard for the system to be detected in advance, posing a new threat to South Korea. “Even without tactical nuclear warheads, the new missiles will have destructive power that is far stronger than the multiple rocket launcher systems,” said Yang Uk, a senior research fellow at the Korea Defence and Security Forum. “The South Korean military must change its strategy to counter them.” The intelligence community believes the North has been developing the new tactical missiles since early 2010. The new system is believed to have a range of about 200 kilometers and is capable of carrying a warhead of up to 500 kilograms. The 300-milimeter artillery rockets, developed in the late 2000s, have a similar range, but they are only capable of carrying up to 100 kilograms of payload. Nuclear warheads are far heavier. While the 300-milimeter multiple rocket launcher system is guided by a Russian satellite, the method of guidance for the new tactical missile is unknown, the sources said. The new missiles are built by using Russian technologies, sources said.

9/23/14 Kerry: “We are here today to really confront some of the most urgent issues of conscience, and policymaking is often marked by complicated decisions, by close calls. But some things remain crystal clear: Barbarity, inhumanity – I think you can call it evil – we all recognize still exist. …What goes on inside North Korea – systematic repression, collective punishment, arbitrary execution, penal colonies, prison camps – these abuses are actually unfathomable to nearly the entire world, and they should have no place in the 21st century. North Korea’s leadership may act as if it is impervious to our concern, as if nothing that we say can penetrate its self-imposed isolation. And yet on some level, North Korea’s leaders do understand that their behavior brings shame upon their country in the eyes of the world. Why else would Pyongyang go to such extraordinary lengths to keep their prison camps secret? Why else would they refuse to allow access to the Red Cross, the UN, and the international NGOs, or dismiss out of hand horrific accounts provided by defectors as mere propaganda? Well, in many ways now, the veil has been truly lifted. No longer can North Korea’s secrecy be seen as an excuse for silence or ignorance or inaction, because in 400 pages of excruciating detail and testimony from over 80 witnesses, the UN Commission of Inquiry’s report on the DPRK has laid bare what it rightly calls systematic, widespread, and grave violations of human rights. Thousands upon thousands of North Korea’s citizens are being robbed of their dignity and stripped of their humanity in penal colonies, if they are lucky enough to survive at all. Torture and
forced abortions are routine. And the sentencing of Americans to labor camps without a trial – a fair trial – is as unjust as it is reprehensible. … We should all ask ourselves if we who are free, we who have the extraordinary privilege of coming together in a way like this today, if we don’t stand with men and women suffering in anonymity in places like North Korea, then what do we stand for? And if we don’t give voice to the voiceless, then why even bother to speak about these issues? So we say to the North Korean Government, all of us here today: You should close those camps. You should shut this evil system down.” (Secretary of State John F. Kerry, Remarks at Event on Human Rights in the DPRK, New York, September 23, 2014)

North Korea has asked to participate in a ministerial meeting that U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is hosting on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly to discuss the North’s human rights record, Pyongyang’s ambassador to the United Nations said. Ambassador Ja Song-nam told reporters that the North is waiting for a response from the United States after asking for the country’s participation in the human rights meeting set for tomorrow. The envoy said the North should attend the meeting and put forward its position because it is an issue about the country. He also emphasized that there is no reason for the U.S. to oppose the North’s participation if it is truly interested in resolving problems through dialogue. Tuesday’s meeting would mark the first ministerial meeting on North Korea’s human rights record on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly. The meeting is aimed primarily at drumming up international support for a U.N. resolution on the North’s human rights record. Other participants in the meeting include South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se, Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio and the new U.N. high commissioner for human rights, Zeid Ra’ad Zeid al-Hussein. The North’s foreign minister, Ri Su-yong, arrived in New York on Sunday to attend the U.N. meeting. Meanwhile, the North’s ambassador brushed aside the possibility of Ri holding a meeting with his South Korean counterpart on the sidelines of the U.N. session, saying it is not right for people from the same country to meet and talk in another nation. In Seoul, South Korea’s foreign ministry said Tuesday that North Korea’s bid to attend the planned ministerial meeting on the North’s human rights is “improper,” given Pyongyang’s continued violations of human rights. “The Korean government sees the North’s possible participation in the planned meeting as improper, given that the North has not accepted U.N. recommendations to improve its human rights condition,” an official at the foreign ministry said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Calls for Participation in U.S.-Led Meeting on Human Rights,” September 23, 2014)

North Korea detained a Chinese fishing boat and demanded a fine for its release, Chinese media reported, apparently the first such move in more than a year, risking further straining ties between North Korea and its only major ally. A boat from the northern China seaport city of Dalian, with six crew on board, was seized by North Koreans on September 12 while fishing in the Yellow Sea Beijing News reported. The owner of the boat told the newspaper that he received a phone call, apparently from the North Korean coast guard, two days later and was told that his boat and crew had been detained for fishing in North Korean waters. The North Koreans demanded a fine of 250,000 yuan ($40,700) for releasing the boat and its crew, but on September 17th the six crew returned to their fishing village with wounds on their bodies from being beaten, the newspaper said. Their wallets and belts had been stolen. "The crew insist
that their boat did not enter North Korean waters, not to mention crossing the line for fishing," Zhang Xikai, the fishing boat owner, was quoted as saying. "They were conducting normal operations within Chinese waters when they were hijacked by North Korean personnel with guns and dragged into North Korean waters by force." (Li Hui and Megha Rajagopalan “North Korea Seizes Chinese Fishing Boat, Demands Fine,” Reuters, September 23, 2014)

South Korea wants to include North Korea’s human rights situation on the agenda of any future talks between the two sides, the unification ministry said. In ministerial talks on North Korea's human rights conditions held on the sidelines of a U.N. general meeting in New York on Tuesday, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se proposed the two Koreas convene talks on the matter. "Not only in high-level talks but also in any occasions of inter-Korean dialogue in the future, (Seoul) expects to have comprehensive discussion on all sorts of humanitarian issues including human rights," unification ministry spokesman Lim Byeong-cheol said in a briefing. "If high-level talks are held (between Seoul and Pyongyang), I think it is desirable that they discuss all the issues they want to discuss including this (human rights) issue," Lim said. (Yonhap, “Seoul Hopes to Discuss Human Rights Issue with North,” September 24, 2014)

In her debut speech at the United Nations President Park Guen-hye presented her vision of Korean unification to leaders from more than 140 countries, including North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Su-yong, and called for their support to convince Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons. She also pressed Japan by addressing the thorny issue of sex slavery during World War II. “The DPRK must make the decision to give up its nuclear weapons,” Park said at the annual U.N. meeting in New York. “The DPRK should follow in the footsteps of other countries that have abandoned their nuclear weapons in favor of reform and opening up, and choose a different path that supports its economic development and improves the lives of its people,” the president said. Park’s keynote speech at the General Assembly marked her debut at the U.N. In a 20-minute speech delivered in Korean, President Park also called for international support to bring peace to the divided Korean Peninsula and the Asia-Pacific region. “I call on the international community to stand with us in tearing down the world’s last remaining wall of division,” she said. As parts of efforts to end inter-Korean division, she asked for global support for building a peace park in the Demilitarized Zone that separates the two Koreas. The North has publicly rejected the project. “Building a park that embodies respect for international norms and values, and doing so under U.N. auspices with all the parties to the war on board — the two Koreas, the U.S. and China — would serve the cause of easing tensions and peaceful reunification of the two Koreas,” she said. “A unified Korea will be the starting point for a world without nuclear weapons, offer a fundamental solution to the North Korean human rights issue, and help unlock a stable and cooperative Northeast Asia.” (Cho Chung-un, “Park Presents Vision of Unified Koreas at U.N.,” Korea Herald, September 25, 2014)

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un did not show up for the country’s rubber-stamp parliament, raising speculations about his health. He has not been a presence in state media since attending a concert in Pyongyang on September 3. State television
showed him limping in July and again earlier this month. According to reports obtained by the Ministry of Unification from the state's television service, North Korea convened the second session of the 13th Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) without Kim. It said the SPA promoted Hwang Pyong-so to vice chairman of the country's powerful National Defense Commission (NDC). Hwang has been the director of the General Political Bureau of the Korean People's Army, the North Korean military's top political officer. Hwang will replace Choe Ryong-hae who had been seen as the regime's No. 2 man since the execution of Jang Song-thaek, Kim's uncle, in December last year. KCNA confirmed yesterday that Choe is the secretary of the Korean Workers' Party, the ruling political party, a job previously held by Jang. Today's meeting came amid speculation over Kim's health recently. According to Seoul, the absence from today's meeting appeared to be Kim's first since he took power after his father Kim Jong-il died in December 2011. Government officials here have speculated that Kim has been ill although there has been no discussion of his absence in the North Korean media. "It's possible that Kim's health is not so good and that seems to be the reason why he did not attend the SPA session this time," said Yoo Ho-yol, a North Korea studies professor at Korea University. "However, this may not be the case. Considering the SPA session takes place twice a year, the North Korean leader did not necessarily have to show up." (Yi Whan-woo, "N. Korean Leader Misses High-Profile Meeting," Korea Times, September 25, 2014)

Speaking at a forum, South Korean Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae called on Pyongyang to come to the negotiating table, adding that an array of pending issues between the two Koreas can be solved only through face-to-face dialogue. "The (Seoul) government is ready to deal with all pending issues by putting them on the negotiating table," Ryoo said. Ryoo added that the Seoul government will make efforts to improve the North's dismal human rights conditions. "The international community is well aware of North Korea's appalling human rights situation," he said. Ryoo also stressed the importance of promoting international cooperation to brace for unification, saying that the two Koreas and their neighboring countries need to participate in various logistics projects in the North. He said that efforts should be made to invite more countries, such as China and Japan, to potential logistics projects in North Korea. Currently, the two Koreas and Russia are involved in the so-called Rajin-Khasan logistics project linking the North Korean port city to Russia's Trans-Siberian railway. The minister, meanwhile, said that he believes it is possible to create a joint unification committee between the two Koreas if Pyongyang accepts such an offer. (Yonhap, "Seoul Renews Call for N. Korea to Come to Negotiating Table," September 25, 2014)

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se has agreed with Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio to continue efforts for stable bilateral relations at their meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, the foreign ministry said September 26. (Yonhap, “S. Korea, Japan FMs Agree to Work toward Stable Ties,” September 26, 2014)
the 69th UN General Assembly malignantly pulled up the DPRK over its nukes. She talked such rubbish as the "north is a serious threat to international peace" and south Korea would "support the north in economic development" if it makes a "decision of dismantling its nukes." Raising the non-existent "human rights" issue in the DPRK, she ballyhooed about "concern of the international community" and cried out for "taking necessary measures." She went the lengths of letting loose jargons that the international community should pay attention to the human scum despised by everybody and give necessary help to them. The statement branded this as a blatant challenge to the dignity and social system of the DPRK and an extremely dangerous provocation driving the bedeviled north-south relations into a total catastrophe. What she uttered about the north’s "decision to dismantle its nukes" is nothing but foolish remarks made by a colonial stooge who is ignorant of the sacred mission and might of nukes in the DPRK. …Her harangue about "support for the north’s economic development" is so ridiculous as to make even a cat laugh and the accusation made by her against the DPRK over its "human rights" issue is nothing but foolish balderdash of a psychopath bereft of elementary common sense and understanding of human rights.

What Park uttered on the UN platform clearly reveals that the call for "confidence" and "improvement of relations" she has made so far is no more than a sheer lie and she is dreaming a foolish dream of achieving "unification through absorption." If the puppet forces want confrontation and war, obsessed by "unification through absorption", the DPRK will be compelled to achieve the final victory in the struggle for national reunification by its own mode. It is fully ready to do so. The DPRK does not hide the fact that those who hurt the dignity and social system of the DPRK will not be able to escape a punishment and its just punishment knows no mercy. What Park Geun Hye uttered this time revealed her sinister intention to escalate confrontation with the DPRK. There is an adage saying the cunning wife makes her husband her apron. She malignantly slandered the fellow countrymen in the north even at UN, venomously swishing her skirt in a bid to make troubles wherever she went. This would bring nothing but misfortune and disaster to the nation. The world people are spitting at her, disillusioned with this political prostitute and confrontation maniac as she behaves in a capricious way here and there, selling off national interests.

Her UN trip fully proved that the one taking her under one’s wing would face misfortune only. The DPRK will never pardon Park Geun Hye for her recent confrontation behavior. Whoever hurts the dignity and social system in the DPRK and goes against the aspiration and wishes of the Korean nation will never escape curse and denunciation by all Koreans.” (KCNA, “CPRK Slams Park Guen-hye’s Reckless Remarks,” September 26, 2014)

The United Nations aid program for malnourished North Koreans may close after raising only a fraction of the money it needs to operate in the country, a senior U.N. official said. “We may need to scale down or think about closing altogether,” Dierk Stegen, the Pyongyang-based North Korea head for the U.N. World Food Program, said in an interview. The agency, which has operated in North Korea since 1995, could shut down early next year if there is no indication it will be able to raise needed funds by the end of October, he said. Contributions from private organizations and the South Korean government in recent weeks have helped, but the program is far from its goal of $50 million, already a significant reduction from the original target of $200 million.
set last year. While North Korea is getting better at feeding its people, hundreds of thousands of young infants and their mothers remain chronically malnourished, he said. Nicholas Eberstadt, a political economist at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington who has studied North Korea's food situation, said the WFP's work in the country was "a disappointment -- perhaps a terrible disappointment," arguing that the agency has put up little resistance even as Pyongyang restricts oversight from foreign aid groups. "Outside humanitarian assistance will not work in North Korea unless it is intrusive -- and the WFP has no stomach for such work," Eberstadt said. Stegen acknowledged past shortcomings in its ability to monitor the distribution of its aid, but he blamed a lack of funding and cited recent improvements in its access inside the country. He said that the WFP can now get permission within 24 hours to visit any school or household that is receiving its aid. In the past, two weeks' notice was required. Stegen said criticism of a government's priorities isn't unique to North Korea, and urged donors to prioritize vulnerable infants over politics. "Intervention and assistance on a humanitarian basis should be separated from political things," he said. Stegen said North Korea had markedly improved its capacity to produce food for its people since a devastating famine in the 1990s. He said that fewer people in the country remain hungry today, even as the population has increased. But he cautioned that the country's agricultural efforts have focused too much on producing rice and other grains, at the expense of protein. That has led to malnourishment of infants and children under the age of four, he said, putting them in danger of stunted growth, even as Kim Jong Un has made a public show of encouraging fisheries as a potential source of protein. "For many of the children of North Korea, it's already too late," said John Aylieff, the WFP's deputy regional director for Asia. "They've been dealt a life sentence of impaired mental functioning and impaired physical development." A drought this year has also meant a throttling back of government rations to ordinary citizens, which fell to about 250 grams a day, Aylieff said. Marcus Noland, an economist and North Korea expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington, said that given the WFP's funding problems, its ability to monitor its work would be limited. But the WFP's absence from North Korea would also likely exacerbate any food crisis. "The advantage of having the WFP in-country in even a limited capacity is that they are prepositioned to monitor conditions and respond if there is an emergency," Noland said. (Jonathan Cheng, "North Korea Food Aid May End, Lacks Funds," Wall Street Journal, September 26, 2014)

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is suffering from "discomfort", state media has said in the first official acknowledgement of ill health after a prolonged period out of the public eye. Kim, 31, who is frequently the centrepiece of the isolated country's propaganda, has not been photographed by state media since appearing at a concert alongside his wife on September 3, fuelling speculation he is suffering from bad health. He had been seen walking with a limp since an event with key officials in July and in a pre-recorded documentary broadcast by state media yesterday appeared to have difficulty walking. "The wealth and prosperity of our socialism is thanks to the painstaking efforts of our marshal, who keeps lighting the path for the people, like the flicker of a flame, despite suffering discomfort," a voice over for the hour-long documentary said. The documentary was followed by a pre-recorded broadcast of a North Korean Supreme People’s Assembly meeting from which Kim Jong Un was
notably absent. (James Pearson, "North Korea TV Acknowledges Leader Kim Jong-un's Health Problems," Reuters, September 26, 2014) Kim is believed to be suffering from gout due to his poor management of his health as well as family traits, a source familiar with North Korea affairs said. "Kim Jong-un is suffering from gout, which is why he is limping on both legs," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "I understand that he is suffering from gout along with hyperuricemia, hyperlipidemia, obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure." (Yonhap, "N. Korean Leader Suffering from Gout: Sources," September 26, 2014)

9/27/14

North Korea's foreign minister Ri Su-yong in an address to the U.N. General Assembly said that the standoff over the country's nuclear weapons program will be resolved if the U.S. ends its "hostile policy" toward the communist nation. He claimed that Washington's "hostile policy, nuclear threats and stifling strategy" resulted in the "decision of nuclear weapons state" of the country. "The nuclear deterrent of the DPRK is not intended to threaten or attack others. Neither is it a bargaining chip to be exchange for something else," Ri said. **"The nuclear issue will be resolved if and when the threat to our sovereignty and right to life is removed in substance with termination of the U.S. hostile policy against DPRK."** (Yonhap, "N.K. FM: Nuclear Issue Will Be Resolved If U.S. Ends 'Hostile Policy,'" September 28, 2014)

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has officially requested United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to visit North Korea. North Korea's Foreign Minister, Ri Su Yong, who is currently attending the 69th UN General Assembly, is said by multiple informants well-versed in UN affairs to have delivered Kim's letter at a meeting with Ban this afternoon. If Ban accepts the invitation of North Korea, it would be the first visit by a UN Secretary General to North Korea. In addition, as a Korean, Ban is highly likely to make a significant contribution to inter-Korean relations and key issues surrounding the Korean Peninsula. A UN official said North Korea appears to be more favorably disposed to Ban than any other secretary general in history. "Ban is highly committed to visiting North Korea and has pushed for a visit there multiple times," South Korean government sources said. "Ban’s visit to North Korea all depends on how he thinks." (Dong-A Ilbo, "N. Korean Leader Requests Visit by UN Secretary General," September 29, 2014) Kim Jong-un sent a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today through North Korea's Foreign Minister Ri Su-yong, according to Ban’s office. It did not disclose details of the letter. (Yi Whan-woo, "N.K. Rules out Talks with S. Korea, U.S.,” Korea Times, September 28, 2014)

North Korea’s U.N. Ambassador Ja Song-nam said at the U.N. that there will be no dialogue between the two Koreas and between Pyongyang and Washington, following criticism of President Park Geun-hye for her recent U.N. address on seeking international support for inter-Korean unification efforts. Firing volleys of criticism were the National Defense Commission (NDC), Pyongyang’s supreme policy-making body, and two other organizations affiliated with the communist regime’s ruling party -- the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland (CPRF) and Rodong Sinmun. "President Park will pay the price for her’ provocative and unacceptable speech," they said. Rodong Sinmun said her speech will "lead to extreme calamity." It said its nuclear weapons are means of self-defense against South Korea and the U.S.
Today, the NDC denounced Park a "the worst traitor of all kinds." It said it would not regard her as a partner for inter-Korean dialogue. The President referred to German unification as a model to bring peace on the Korean Peninsula in her U.N. speech. The NDC said such remarks revealed "Park's greed toward tearing down North Korea." CPRF, an offshoot of the Workers' Party, handles inter-Korean issues. It said that Park’s speech was a form of "provocative action that puts inter-Korean relations on the brink."

According to Jang, North Korea will not hold inter-Korean dialogue as well Pyongyang-Washington talks temporarily because both South Korea and the U.S. turned down its offer for dialogue. He referred to Seoul and Washington's denial to allow North Korea to participate in high-level talks in New York hosted by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to condemn Pyongyang's human rights violations. (Yi Whan-woo, “N.K. Rules out Talks with S. Korea, U.S.,” Korea Times, September 28, 2014)

NDC Policy Department spokesman's statement: “termed Park Geun Hye the primary root cause of deteriorating the north-south relations and fostering mistrust and confrontation. Her disposition was fully revealed through the unspeakable invectives she let loose against the DPRK as she pleased during her recent trip to the U.S., lashing all Koreans into fury. ...She labeled the DPRK the "only criminal country that carried out a nuclear test in the 21st century", blustering that the DPRK's nuclear weapons are the "biggest threat" to peace on the Korean Peninsula and in the rest of Northeast Asia and its nuclear activities are the "total denial" of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Park should properly know that the mission of the DPRK's nuclear deterrence is to terminate the nuclear threat and blackmail that have been escalated by the U.S., to eliminate the U.S. imperialists, robbers keen on swallowing up the land of Korea and to throw overboard modern day sycophants and traitors like Park who brings only national disgrace and tragedy, pursuant to the U.S. line. Nothing will be more foolish than trying to force the army and people of the DPRK to lay down the treasured sword-nukes. Park’s nature was also revealed when she malignantly took issue with the “human rights issue” of the DPRK at the UN arena. She went so impudent as to call for implementing what she called "recommendations" adopted by the UN Human Rights Council, while letting loose vitriol in a bid to give impression that the international community is greatly concerned about the “north’s human rights issue.” She went the lengths of making such provocative vituperation that "north's human rights office” will be set up in south Korea. Originally, the DPRK has never recognized any "resolution" adopted by the UN that had been reduced to a voting machine of the U.S. and its followers. If the UN is to remain true to its original mission, though belatedly, and if it is so concerned about the improvement of human rights, it should buckle down to transforming south Korean society and U.S. society that turned into veritable hells and theatres of human rights abuses under the unpopular rule and the “yusin” fascist dictatorship of modern version.Park Geun Hye had better build a "south's human rights office," not a "north's human rights office," and introduce best man-centered, Korean-style socialism in the world so that south Korea may not remain a tundra of human rights causing miserable death. She was so obsessed by confrontation with fellow countrymen at the UN arena that she did not hesitate to shield human scum as "defectors from the north” though they had been de-listed as inhabitants long ago. The foolish efforts of Park to gain something by pinning hope on such human
scum as "defectors from the north" and having them under her wings would only prompt all fellow countrymen and the nation to condemn her for being an indecent woman reeking off nasty smell. She fully disclosed her inveterate ambition for achieving "unification through absorption" when she referred to the lapse of 25 years since the Berlin Wall was pulled down. If she truly wants "demolition of barrier", she should make a bold decision to pull down, to begin with, the concrete wall built by her father and his followers to divide the territory of the country into two. This time she fully revealed herself she is a modern-type sycophant and traitor and the worst traitor for all ages. If the north-south relations are to be improved and peace and stability of the nation ensured, it is necessary to decisively eliminate such hordes of traitors as Park. This is the conclusion drawn by the army and people of the DPRK. Her miserable doom has already been sealed." (KCNA, “NDC Policy Department Blasts Park Guen-hye’s Anti-DPRK Invective,” September 27, 2014)

9/28/14

The U.S. special representative for North Korea policy called for North Korea to get back to the "path of denuclearization." Glyn Davies made the remarks upon his arrival at the Beijing airport, the first leg of his Asian trip that also includes South Korea and Japan. Davies was accompanied by Sydney Seiler, the new U.S. special envoy for the six-party nuclear talks. "We would like to talk about how to compel North Korea to get back on the path of denuclearization," Davies told reporters. "North Korea is trying to avoid living up to its expectations and obligations." Davies is scheduled to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wu Dawei, tomorrow to discuss "the strategy for ensuring North Korea to understand that it has to get back to denuclearization, meeting the expectations of its neighbors, talking to its neighbors in a meaningful way." (Yonhap, "U.S. Envoy Calls on N. Korea to Return to ‘Path of Denuclearization,’” September 28, 2014)

9/29/14

Japan was unable to find out when North Korea will report its initial findings of a special investigation committee into the fate of at least 12 Japanese abducted in the 1970s and 1980s. After a meeting with North Korean officials in Shenyang, a senior Japanese diplomat told reporters that he urged them to release the findings without delay, but when that will happen is still undecided. “I told them the abduction issue is particularly important,” Ihara Junichi, Japan’s top diplomat in charge of Asian affairs, said. Ihara’s North Korean counterpart, Song Il Ho, ambassador for negotiations to normalize relations with Japan, suggested that his country’s position remains unchanged. “This meeting is not aimed at reporting the results of the special investigation committee’s activities,” he said. “It is a place to report each other’s activities and check both sides’ stances.” Following the last official meeting between the diplomats, in Beijing on July 1, Japan lifted some unilateral sanctions against North Korea to reward Pyongyang for launching the investigation. Since then, in secret contacts held in Malaysia and China on at least three occasions between August and September, North Korea has demanded that Japan promise to relax its sanctions further as a quid pro quo for releasing the first report, according to sources familiar with the matter. Japan’s response has been circumspect in the absence of clear indications that North Korea ever intends to provide any useful information on the whereabouts of the 12 missing persons, the sources said. Japan requested the meeting in an attempt to persuade North Korea to follow through on its commitment
to explain fully what happened to the 12. Of the six men and six women still unaccounted for, North Korea said prior to launching its reinvestigation that eight of them – including Megumi Yokota, a 13-year-old girl who disappeared from a coastal village in Niigata Prefecture in 1977 while on her way home from school – are dead and that the four others never entered its territory. Besides the 17 individuals Tokyo recognizes as abductees, it suspects North Korean agents in hundreds of other disappearances. Since five of the 17 were repatriated to Japan in October 2002, 24 years after their abduction, no further tangible progress has been seen. (Karube Takuya, “N. Korea Refuses to Say When It Will Deliver Abduction Report,” Kyodo, September 29, 2014) Prime Minister Abe Shinzo said September 30 that North Korea has asked Japanese officials to visit Pyongyang to receive the latest information on its probe into the fate of Japanese abductees. Ihara met for 4½ hours with a North Korean delegation led by Song Il Ho, North Korea’s ambassador for negotiations to normalize relations with Japan. Song “asked director Ihara to come to Pyongyang to meet members of the special investigation committee to get updated on the details of the probe,” Abe told reporters at the prime minister’s office. The North Korean side told Ihara that Pyongyang is conducting a scientific and objective investigation but is unable to report concrete results at this time because the probe is still in the initial stages, according to Abe. Japan officially recognizes 17 Japanese as being abducted by North Korea in the 1970s and ’80s. Of them, five returned to Japan in 2002 following a landmark visit by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to Pyongyang that year. North Korea claims the remaining 12 either died or never entered the country. According to the latest estimate of the National Police Agency, as many as 883 Japanese may have been abducted by North Korea. (Kameda Masaaki, “North Korea Asks Japanese to Go to Pyongyang for Abduction Briefing,” Japan Times, September 30, 2014)

President Park Geun-hye’s foreign policy smacks of her own brand of isolationism — focusing on China and the United States to the exclusion of all others — namely North Korea and Japan. It also raises questions over how it will affect her “unification will be a bonanza” assertion. Experts say that the Park government should open up a channel of dialogue with Pyongyang and Tokyo, both key players that would exert influence in the event of unification. “Seoul has not been earnest in pursuing dialogue with Pyongyang,” said Paik Hak-soon, the director of the Center for North Korean Studies at the Sejong Institute. He referred to Park’s speech at the U.N. General Assembly last week. Stressing the need for international support for inter-Korean integration, she called for an end to North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and improvements to its human rights record. “To maintain a healthy diplomatic relationship, the countries should not ignore or isolate one other. “The Park government, however, has assumed an attitude of superiority over the Kim Jong-un regime and sometimes acts as if he was a child. "Under such circumstances, little progress will be made on inter-Korean ties and Park’s Dresden Initiative will not be successful," Paik added. Another expert said the Dresden Initiative was based on a conservative notion that does not recognize North Korea as a “legitimate government.” “Park came up with the initiative amid concerns rising over a sudden collapse of the totalitarian state,” said a researcher at Sejong Institute. “Therefore, the projects under her initiative are aimed at helping the common people in the North.” These lack measures to woo the political elite and the
Military — the two most powerful social groups — and the President's unification efforts will stumble unless she deals with them, too." "At the six-party nuclear talks, Japan has its unique role to promote peace on the Korean Peninsula," the Sejong Institute researcher said. "As long as Park continues her emotional and hard-line policy toward Tokyo, Seoul will have difficulties in winning Tokyo's support for inter-Korean unification." Jin Chang-soo, the director of Japan Center at the Sejong Institute, echoed a similar view. "As democratic nations in Northeast Asia, both South Korea and Japan can work together for North Korea to open door to outside. "Such job takes tremendous effort which we can't handle on ourselves in some ways." (Yi Whan-woo, "Isolationism Hampers Park's Unification Initiative," Korea Times, September 29, 2014)

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un had surgery in Pyongyang in mid-September to treat fractures to both ankles and remains in hospital, a source claimed. The source, who recently visited the North, said, "I heard that Kim Jong-un injured his right ankle in June after pushing ahead with on-site visits and ended up fracturing both ankles because he left the injury unattended." The source added Kim had surgery at the Bonghwa Clinic, an exclusive hospital for high-ranking party members, in mid-September and is now recovering there. The source said bodyguards have been posted around the ward and security remains tight. "There's been a marked increase in the number of elite officials visiting the ward," the source added. The official said Kim is overweight and appears to have sprained his ankles during a grueling tour of military bases and factories in Cuban heels. Kim is around 170 cm tall and has become noticeably overweight since he came to power. There has been speculation that his obesity and binge drinking brought on gout. A government official here said, "It's unlikely that a young man like Kim Jong-un would have missed the Supreme People's Assembly just because he has gout." (Chosun Ilbo, "Kim Jong-un 'Hasd Surgery on Fractured Ankles,' September 30, 2014)

A U.S. envoy called on North Korea to release three detained American citizens, saying that the issue poses a "serious impediment" to better ties with Washington. Glyn Davies, the top U.S. nuclear envoy, was in Seoul as part of his three-nation Asian tour that already took him to China. "It remains a significant serious impediment to the betterment of our relations with North Korea," Davies told a group of reporters in Seoul. "It remains for us a source of real concerns that North Korea not only won't release them, but it won't talk to us about how we might go forward to secure their release." The envoy said that Washington has sought to have "conversations" with North Korea over the issue and expressed its intention to send senior American diplomats to resolve it, but the North has rejected such offers. "It really does put the lie to North Korea's insistence (or) contention that they truly seek better relationship with the U.S. If so, let our people go," he said. In Beijing, Davies openly denounced North Korea for using the three U.S. detainees as political "pawns" but said behind-the-scenes diplomacy is under way to seek their release. Accompanied by Sydney Seiler, the new special envoy for the six-party nuclear talks, and Allison Hooker, director for Korea at the National Security Council, Davies flew to Seoul from Beijing earlier in the day and later met with his South Korean counterpart, Hwang Joon-kook. He was scheduled to fly to Tokyo tomorrow. (Korea Herald, "Top U.S. Envoy Urges N. Korea to Release Detained Americans," September 30, 2014)
Gi-wook Shin, David Straub and Joyce Lee, *Tailored Engagement* (Stanford: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, September 2014): “The already serious situation on the Korean Peninsula is worsening. North Korea is on a path to credibly threaten South Korea, Japan, U.S. forces in Northeast Asia, and eventually the United States with nuclear attack. Inter-Korean relations have become dangerously unstable, with the risk of renewed military conflict. U.S. relations with China and Russia are deteriorating and China is gradually incorporating North Korea’s economy, deepening the geopolitical divide between North and South Korea. To address the growing crisis, concerned countries need to use all available means, including engagement of the North. With the United States and China showing no disposition to change their approaches, however, the principal hope for an engagement initiative rests with Seoul.

...As a conservative leader, President Park has the “Nixon to China” political space in South Korea to pursue engagement. Despite North Korea’s criticism of South Korea, its leaders need foreign assistance and do not wish to be completely reliant on China. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) supports increased inter-Korean engagement, and the United States will not oppose it as long as it does not preclude continued application of pressure on North Korea to end its nuclear weapons program. Seoul has an opportunity to begin to bridge the gap with Pyongyang by pursuing a hardheaded approach that we call tailored engagement. Its aim is to reduce the risk of conflict now while fostering inter-Korean reconciliation and effecting positive change in North Korea, with the ultimate goal of laying the basis for peaceful unification. The concept is based on the conviction that engagement is only one means—albeit an essential one—of dealing with North Korea, but that engagement must be carefully “tailored” or fitted to changing political and security realities on and around the Korean Peninsula. Like President Park’s trustpolitik, it is based on a step-by-step confidence-building approach. ...President Park should begin by creating a new senior-level North Korea policy representative position to assist her in developing the initiative, furthering domestic consensus, managing the South Korean interagency process, and leading negotiations with Pyongyang, similar to the “Perry Process” in the United States in the late 1990s. A significant portion of this study is devoted to a discussion of projects that a government-prepared, comprehensive road map of tailored engagement might include. Such a road map should proceed from projects that are easier to implement, politically and substantively, to those that are more difficult. In practice, this will generally mean starting by expanding existing engagement efforts and resuming worthwhile projects that have been suspended. There is considerable urgency for Seoul to act. Further rounds of North Korean nuclear and missile tests will make engagement even harder, and strategic mistrust between the United States and China and Russia continues to mount. ...At this point, it is not even clear whether President Park remains committed to trustpolitik or if that has been superseded by her new focus on unification. For reasons we discuss below, we believe that unification should be the ultimate aim of the ROK’s North Korea policy. Until, however, circumstances are in place for a peaceful unification that will likely succeed, the immediate aims should be a reduction of tensions, reconciliation, and convergence of the two societies.

...Generally, South Korea should allow international organizations and other countries to take the lead internationally in addressing North Korea’s human rights abuses. This will be more persuasive internationally and also deprive North Korea of the pretext that South Korea is not really concerned about human rights but is using the issue as a
weapon against Pyongyang. In votes in international organizations, the Republic of Korea should join in supporting all important and accurate criticism of North Korea’s human rights situation. To underline its support for the well-being of the people of North Korea, the ROK should increase humanitarian provision of nutritional assistance and public health services to the people of North Korea without linkage to the nuclear issue. …The primary form of ROK humanitarian assistance to the DPRK should no longer be the provision of rice or fertilizer. Instead, the ROK should focus on programs that increase food security and improve public health. Food and nutritional assistance should encompass technical assistance and training to boost and diversify agricultural output and otherwise contribute to improved diets. Assistance with sloping land management, for instance, could be an excellent incentive program for the North Koreans, as it results in higher yields and reduces flooding, as Swiss government efforts in North Korea have demonstrated. …The ROK should provide greater leadership internationally on humanitarian aid to the DPRK. …The ROK should devote greater resources to educational engagement with the DPRK. It should focus especially on areas in which it has a comparative advantage. These include agricultural and public health education, as South Korea is very knowledgeable about the soils and weather conditions on the Korean Peninsula and the diets of the people of North Korea. More generally, because the two Koreas share a language and because South Korea possesses advanced technologies in many areas, the ROK can assist the DPRK with educational exchanges in key fields such as the physical and life sciences. South Korea could, for example, modify its existing medical texts and manuals for use by personnel in the North. It could further assist North Koreans by preparing North-South medical terminology glossaries and providing them directly to North Korean authorities as well as publishing them on the Internet. …Critics argue that tourism supports the DPRK regime by allowing it access to more hard currency without engaging in reform, and thus undermines the effectiveness of sanctions posed on the country to end its nuclear weapons program and human rights abuses. We believe, however, that the benefits of tourism to North Korea outweigh the problematic considerations. The amount of money the regime earns through tourism is limited, especially after operating costs are deducted. Tourism provides an opportunity for North Korean tour guides to interact with foreigners. Even if the guides are members of the privileged class, the interaction is still worthwhile. Indeed, the fact that they come from the privileged class may make such interaction even more significant. Moreover, by all accounts, the DPRK is permitting more casual interaction between tourists and average North Koreans than ever before. While still limited, such interaction serves to expose ordinary North Koreans to the outside world. …The authors acknowledge that the Kumgang resort is problematic in terms of tailored engagement, because it plays primarily to South Korean national sentiment and does not represent a good balance of mutual benefits. The desire of South Koreans to set foot on North Korean territory is understandable, but there is no substantial contact with North Koreans and the proceeds underwrite the Pyongyang government. Nevertheless, we support renewed South Korean efforts to negotiate the conditions for a resumption of the project. Doing so would demonstrate, in general, the ROK’s goodwill and, in particular, its intention to respect existing inter-Korean governments. The amount of hard currency that Pyongyang would receive from a resumption is significant but not enormous. The South Korean government should make it clear to
North Korean authorities that it does not see Kumgang as a model for other inter-
Korean tourism and that it will not subsidize the expansion of the Kumgang project,
should it be resumed. The ROK should also link a resumption of the Kumgang project
to a regular schedule of inter-Korean family reunions there, including an offer of South
Korean subsidies for the travel of North Korean family members to the site. …The
authors believe, however, that establishing a mutually beneficial economic relationship
with North Korea through trade, investment, and other forms of economic partnership
will slowly but surely deepen inter-Korean relations at the personal, institutional, and
political levels. The longer and the more extensive such cooperation, the greater will
become North Korea’s interest in maintaining it. This will greatly improve the North
Korean people’s standard of living in preparation for peaceful unification. It is thus of
key importance to vitalize the North Korean economy through inter-Korean as well as
multilateral economic engagement. Economic engagement with the North based on
the principles of tailored engagement will require change in North Korean practices,
and attitudes will eventually follow. It will not undermine international efforts to press
North Korea to abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons; indeed, over the mid- to long-
term, it will encourage and support the kind of change in North Korean attitudes
necessary to make progress on the nuclear issue. North Korea will earn more hard
currency, but that should reduce its tendency to rely on earnings from illicit activities.
We focus here on the major existing economic engagement project, the Kaesong
Industrial Complex. It serves as a testing ground for further economic cooperation,
including possibly in the other special economic zones (SEZs) that the North Korean
government has announced. …North Korean authorities should be made to
understand that additional SEZs cannot and should not be islands unto themselves. To
help the broader North Korean economy as well as to be fully successful as individual
projects, SEZs should be able, as in other economies, to recruit local workers and draw
on the local economy for other inputs. Currently all workers at Kaesong are selected by
the North Korean government and contracted out to companies. Companies may
interview the selected workers and decline to employ them, but there exists no free
labor market environment in which companies may recruit and hire their own workers.
Salaries and pay are set by contract between the North and South. South Korean firms
are unable to pay North Korean workers directly (companies pay the North Korean
government, which then pays the workers). South Korean companies also have only a
limited ability to provide direct cash incentives to reward North Korean workers for
quality and productivity. The ROK government should encourage the North to support
market-based wage and employment practices. Another important long-term
objective for Kaesong should be backward integration into the North Korean
economy. Ultimately, backward integration is crucial in inducing long-term
marketization of the North Korean economy as well as to increase the likelihood of
profitability for SEZs. So far, there has been only minimal backward integration: only a
nominal amount of construction materials and raw materials have been imported from
other parts of North Korea into Kaesong. One of the main aims of ROK economic
engagement of the DPRK should be finding ways to normalize trade and investment
regimes in the North Korean economic system. …Most of North Korea’s thirteen new
SEZs are concentrated on the coast and on the North Korea-China border. Only one
new North Korean SEZ seems to have been planned with South Korea in mind—the
Kaesong high-tech development zone located next to the Kaesong Industrial Complex.
This strongly suggests that North Korea is focused on China as its long-term partner for economic development. Reportedly, when the May 24 Measures went into effect, PRC-DPRK trade received a major boost. Thus, the sanctions had little impact on the North Korean economy as a whole (but did have a major detrimental effect on South Korean companies doing business with the North). …Despite the myriad problems, the potential importance of infrastructure development for the situation on the Korean Peninsula warrants close ROK consideration of the various possibilities and conditions of its involvement. The Park administration already appears to be exploring some options. While all developmental engagement with the DPRK halted with the May 24 Measures, the Park administration recently made an exception to those sanctions and signed an agreement with Russia to take part in a Russian-led rail and port development project in North Korea. Hopes are that this project will help to reduce tensions on the peninsula as it opens a new logistical link between Korea and Europe. The $340 million project, launched in 2008 by North Korea and Russia, is intended to develop North Korea’s ice-free northeastern port of Rason into a logistics hub connected to Russia’s Trans-Siberian Railway. A double-track rail link reopened between Rason and the nearby Russian town of Khasan in 2013 after years of renovation. Once the modernization of the Rason port is completed, it can be used as a hub to send cargo by rail from East Asia to as far as Europe. Thus, South Korean firms would be able to transport exports by ship to Rason, where they would be transferred to railroad cars and forwarded to Europe via the Russian rail system. As security, political, and business conditions permit, the ROK should pursue developmental engagement efforts in North Korea, perhaps beginning with the selective reactivation of joint projects previously agreed upon by the two Koreas. Prior to the May 24 Measures, the two sides had agreed on many such projects, and some were nearly implemented. Examples include humanitarian energy supply for residential heating, energy supply for the Mount Kumgang Tourist Region, the Tanchon Three Mines development project, and the Chongchon Graphite Mine development project. …Trilateral or other multilateral developmental cooperation projects are less likely to fall through than bilateral inter-Korean cooperation projects, as the presence of other stakeholders incentivizes North Korea to isolate such projects from inter-Korean political issues. Such considerations appear to have been behind the South Korean government’s decision to make the Rason-Khasan railroad project the first step in resuming developmental engagement with North Korea. …South Koreans view the DMZ as a green belt, but North Koreans see it as a black belt—a constant reminder of war. South Korean government officials need to develop plans and arguments that will appeal to the North Koreans, especially the military, and then find an appropriate way to begin to communicate their proposal to North Korea. In this respect, a unilateral “demonstration model” or a “transitional model” in which South Korea builds a park on South Korean territory just south of the DMZ could be a starting point. It would be intended to demonstrate the South’s good will as well as the feasibility of the DMZ peace park. …North Korea may be particularly receptive if the ROK underscores the immediate economic and financial benefits to the North from a DMZ cooperation project. The DMZ peace park could serve as another form of joint economic complex, creating jobs, investment, and infrastructure. One plausible sub-project might be a clean water fund, in which South Korea, which uses water that crosses the DMZ from North Korea, would pay North Korean farmers to keep the upstream water clean. As
part of this effort, South Korea could diplomatically support DPRK membership in the Ramsar Convention (formally known as the “Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat”). As President Park has argued, an area as small as two hundred and fifty acres could provide an adequate starting point. The ROK government should be able to explain to the North that a symbolic area of this size would not have any negative military impact on North Korea but would rather bring in immediate revenue as well as much greater long-term benefits for them.”

Disarmament and Peace Institute of the DPRK Foreign Ministry statement: “We will soon greet the 34th anniversary of the proposal for founding the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo advanced by President Kim Il Sung, the eternal sun of the Korean nation. The President clarified the proposal at the historic Sixth Congress of the Workers’ Party of Korea on October 10, Juche 69 (1980), indicating the most correct orientation and way for achieving national reuniification. The proposal calls for setting up a reunified national state, keeping the ideologies and social systems that exist between the north and the south as they are, through the establishment of a unified national government, a government under which the north and the south exercise regional autonomy. Differing ideologies and social systems have existed in the north and the south for nearly seven decades and they preserve their own social systems. Under this situation the proposal for achieving reunification by federal formula is the most realistic one to reunify the country peacefully and fairly in line with the will, wishes and interests of the whole nation. Leader Kim Jong Il deemed it a sacred national duty to successfully achieve the cause of national reunification true to the behests of the President. With his noblest patriotism he ushered in the June 15 era of reunification and opened a rosy prospect for national reunification. In the June 15 joint declaration the north and the south recognized that there is commonness in the north-proposed low-level federation and the south-proposed confederation and agreed to work for reunification in this direction. This is the only agreement on the reunification formula in the long history of national division and it received unanimous support and welcome not only from the Koreans but also from the international community. The DPRK government has made strenuous efforts to improve the north-south relations and achieve national reunification under the leadership of the respected Marshal Kim Jong Un who is faithfully carrying out the last instructions of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il for national reunification. But the whole nation’s desire and efforts for the reunification of the country are facing a grave challenge of the anti-reunification forces, and big obstacles and difficulties still lie in the way of reunification. The Korean Peninsula still remains divided not because there is no way of achieving reunification but because of the south Korean authorities’ moves for achieving "unification through absorption." They are keen to internationalize the reunification issue, an internal affair, after coming out with varieties of “theories of unification” in a bid to stay in power whenever one "government" is replaced by another in south Korea. The present south Korean puppet President Park Geun Hye let loose all sorts of sophism such as “confidence-building process on the Korean Peninsula” and “Dresden declaration” while peddling the reunification issue here and there. She deliberately linked the reunification of Korea with German unification at the UN arena, openly disclosing her ambition for "unification through absorption." Her behavior of peddling her own "theory of unification," seized by
the idea of depending on foreign forces in total negation of the reunification formula on which the north and the south had already agreed is a revelation of disregard of the other party and policy of confrontation and a serious provocation. The danger of the moves pursued by the south Korean authorities lies in that they not only repeat the confrontational racket kicked up by their predecessors but seek a sinister intention to stoke anti-DPRK atmosphere through "international cooperation" while dreaming of achieving "unification through absorption," a dream which will only escalate the confrontation between fellow countrymen and bring a war to the Korean Peninsula. If the international community truly hopes for reunification, stability and reunification of the Korean Peninsula, it should clearly understand that the present north-south confrontation precisely means the confrontation of the formulae for reunification and the anachronistic attempt of the south Korean authorities at achieving "unification through absorption" is bound to bring a war, and support the reunification by federal formula agreed upon by the north and the south. If the south Korean authorities are truly interested in reunification, they should not peddle the issue abroad but clarify their stand on whether they can respond to the national discussion on the issue of reunification by federal and confederal formulae agreed upon by the north and the south, to begin with. The DPRK will make consistent efforts to foil by the concerted efforts of the nation the reckless confrontational racket being kicked up by the south Korean puppet forces in collusion with outside forces, being indifferent to the interests of the nation, and pave a wide avenue for independent reunification.” (KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities Urged to Support Proposal for Achieving Unification by Federal Formula,” October 1, 2014)

South Korea and Japan held a strategic dialogue in Tokyo for the first time in nearly two years to discuss an array of bilateral issues and North Korea's nuclear program, Seoul’s foreign ministry said. Seoul’s First Vice Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yong met with his Japanese counterpart, Saiki Akitaka, for talks on pending bilateral, regional and global issues, including the situation on the Korean Peninsula, officials said. “Seoul-Tokyo ties should be based on a correct perception of history as well as mutual understanding and trust that could bring about future-oriented bilateral relations,” Cho said during his opening remarks for the meeting. He stressed that bilateral ties could only be developed by balancing these factors. It marked the first Seoul-Tokyo strategic dialogue since South Korean President Park Geun-hye took office in February 2013. Such a meeting was last held in January last year. (Yonhap, “S. Korea, Japan Hold First Strategic Dialogue in 2 Years,” October 1, 2014)

KCNA: “Talks were held between DPRK Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong who is on a visit to Russia and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [today]. Present at the talks from the DPRK side were Ri Su Yong and his party, the DPRK ambassador to Russia and staff members of his embassy and from the Russian side relevant officials of the Foreign Ministry of Russia. Both sides discussed the issues for boosting the friendly relations between the two countries and some international issues of mutual concern. Meanwhile, Ri Su Yong met and had a talk with Alexandr Galushka, minister of the Development of Far East who is chairman of the Inter-Governmental Committee for Cooperation in Trade and Economy, Science and Technology between the DPRK and
Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that North Korea has completed a major construction program begun in late 2013 to upgrade the Sohae Satellite Launching Station. A key component of that program has been to upgrade an existing launch pad, enabling it to launch rockets larger than the existing Unha-3 space launch vehicle in the future. North Korea is now ready to move forward with another rocket launch. Should a decision be made soon to do so in Pyongyang—and we have no evidence that one has—a rocket could be launched by the end of 2014. The most likely candidate remains the Unha-3 SLV, last tested in December 2012, since a much larger rocket, reportedly under development, is at least several years from becoming operational. Imagery from mid-September spotted tanks near the propellant storage buildings at the launch pad for the first time since the 2012 launch. The exact purpose of this activity remains unclear. Recent imagery also indicates that Pyongyang conducted another engine test in early August of the rocket motor used in the KN-08 road-mobile ICBM, part of a series begun in early 2013. It remains unclear how successful these tests have been. However, rocket motor tests are typically conducted prior to full-scale test launches of a missile that precede a weapon becoming operational. (Nick Hansen, “North Korea's Sohae Satellite Launching Station: Major Upgrade Program Completed; Facility Operational Again,” 38North, October 1, 2014)

North Korea is ready to resume six-party talks on its nuclear program but must maintain its readiness in the face of joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises, a senior envoy in Geneva said. So Se Pyong, the DPRK ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, told Reuters that his country was not planning a nuclear or missile test. In a wide-ranging interview, he said that reports about the ill health of its leader Kim Jong Un were “fabricated rumors” and that it was not clear whether the United States was willing to negotiate the release of three detained Americans. “For the six-party talks we are ready, and as far as I think, China and Russia and the DPRK are ready,” So said in the interview in the DPRK’s mission overlooking Lake Geneva. “But America, they don't like that kind of talks right now. Because America does not like that, so that's why the countries like South Korea, Japan also are not ready for those talks.” So, without being specific, linked North Korea’s military preparations to “very serious” U.S.-South Korean exercises earlier this year that he said had deployed nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, submarines and B-52 bombers. “We have to be alert also, we have to be prepared to make counter measures against that military exercise which are against us.” Asked specifically whether North Korea was preparing a nuclear test or to fire a missile, he replied: “No, no. In case, in case, if they do that kind of joint military exercise, the joint nuclear military exercise against my country continuously, we have to, also.” North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme protected it from the United States, So said. “In case if we give (the weapons) up like other countries, then of course I think they would have attacked us already,” he said. Asked whether North Korea’s leader Kim was committed to denuclearisation, So said: “It is the party’s policy.” Kim failed to appear at the Supreme People’s Assembly last month and state media said he was suffering from “discomfort. Asked about the nature of his ailment, So said: “That is rumors, fabricated rumors.” He said that media reports Kim may have had surgery on his ankles were
wrong. Three Americans are currently being held in North Korea on charges of crimes against the state. A pro-North Korean daily published in Japan today quoted one of them appealing to the U.S. government to help to secure their freedom. "It is true that three Americans are detained in my country now...They came into my country illegally and also they committed some crimes against my country, that is why they are on trial and then they were sentenced," So said. He added: "I was told that they asked for the government of America to have negotiations on those problems, but I don't know whether America is ready or not to release them or have some understandings or the recognition of those crimes they made." So disclosed that North Korea has sought closer cooperation on human rights, first with the United Nations for technical assistance, and also through dialogue with the European Union. "Actually we just gave a hint to have that kind of dialogue to one of the EU member countries, but still they don't give us any feedback, any answer," So said, noting that the EU has taken the lead in criticising North Korea at U.N. rights forums. "Of course every country has prisons. That is true. We have also prisons. But not labour camps they are talking about," So said. "That is a totally fabricated discrimination." On the politically-charged issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea over the years, So said that he did not know how many abductees there had been, but noted there had been recent contacts on the issue. "Whether it is a hundred, or 200 or 500, I don't know exactly. We don't know the exact numbers, those are very difficult problems there," So said. Japan’s Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, who has made resolution of the dispute a top priority, said this week that North Korea had invited Japanese representatives to Pyongyang. So said he did not know if a trip would take place. "I was told also there were some more contact last week," So said. "So anyway, we are ready to solve that problem because we are very frank." (Stephanie Nebehay, “North Korea Envoy Says Door Is Open on Nuclear Issues, Rights, Abductees,” Reuters, October 2, 2014)

NDC Policy Department spokesman in connection with the fact that “Park Geun Hye again let loose vitriolic language against the DPRK: Park who earned an ill fame as top class confrontational manic and modern day traitor by calling for the “north’s dismantlement of nuclear program” and the solution of the "human rights issue in the north" at the UN, again pulled up the DPRK at a "state council meeting" on September 30. She said "human rights issue" in the north is the "major aim of unification" pursued by the south Korean authorities, revealing that "unification" touted by them is to bring down the social system in the north in the end. Seized by the ambition for confrontation with fellow countrymen, she said that "no passive approach should be taken in fear of the north’s backlash". She even cried out for passing the "North Korean Human Rights Act," which was not adopted for the past decade, at the puppet National Assembly session. The racket over the "north’s nuclear program" and "human rights in the north" kicked up by Park Geun Hye is no more than a struggle of a mentally deranged woman thrown into despair and a desperate bid of a criminal facing her miserable end. Park seems to think that it is wisest to support her master’s rhetoric about the “human rights in the north” in order to prolong her remaining days even by clinging to the dirty coattail of the U.S. She is resorting to the racket of "human rights in the north" in a bid to bury into oblivion the horrible human rights situation in south Korea. She should seriously think why the "North Korean Human Rights Act" is rejected by south Koreans including the political circle. If she has even a bit of normal
thinking faculty, she should face the harsh denunciation of the nation and keep her mouth shut even though she may not take necessary measures. She was raised in Chongwadae watching her father taking to flunkeyism and submitting to big powers. After his father’s tragic death she led an isolated life, away from ordinary people. So, she might know about “human rights” in the society where the rich gets ever richer and the poor ever poorer but she can never understand the genuine human rights in genuine society centered on the popular masses.

Park is seriously mistaken if she thinks she can distort the truth and defy the just mindset of the people by making such coarse invectives. Her ugly stream of invectives that she will settle the “human rights issue in the north” through “cooperation with the international community” is little short of an open declaration of her intention never to give up the ambition for “unification through absorption.” Park should clearly face up to the reality, not forgetting even a moment that her short tongue can put her long neck at stake.” (KCNA, “NDC Urges Park Guen-hye to Face up to Reality,” October 2, 2014)

KCNA: “DPRK Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong on a visit to Russia met and had a friendly talk with Yuri Trutnev, deputy prime minister and presidential envoy of the Far Eastern Region of the Russian Federation. Both sides exchanged views on the issues of boosting economic cooperation between the two countries. That day Ri Su Yong met with Nikolai Fyodorov, minister of Agriculture of Russia, and discussed the issues of developing bilateral cooperation in the agricultural field. A MOU on cooperation between the ministries of agriculture of the two countries was signed.” (KCNA, “DPRK DFM Meets Presidential Envoy of Far Eastern Region of Russia,” October 2, 2014)

Rodong Sinmun: “Shortly ago, Park Geun Hye again talked such rubbish as "responsible member of the international community" and "participation in the efforts made by south Korea" while crying out for the DPRK’s "dismantlement of its nuclear program." She also tried to create impression that the mission of the south Korean army is to "make someone's life affluent and build a foundation for peaceful unification" while pulling up the north over its "human rights" issue. …What Park uttered inciting confrontation wherever she went, swishing her skirt despite the stern warnings of the DPRK, indicates that she has lost her senses as she stakes her fate on the confrontation with the fellow countrymen. If she has an elementary insight, she should understand that the DPRK will never give up its nuclear program unless the U.S. rolls backs its hostile policy toward the DPRK and stops posing nuclear threats, and that the DPRK considers her oft-repeated cry for the north’s "dismantlement of its nuclear program" as no more than a dog’s barking. The DPRK’s nuclear deterrence is not a bargaining chip for holding negotiations or getting something. The puppet forces do not have any justification and face to talk about “the north’s dismantlement of its nuclear program” as they have frequently introduced U.S. nuclear forces into south Korea and stepped up the preparations for a war of aggression, squandering a colossal amount of money collected from people as taxes every year. "Human rights" issue oft-repeated by her is groundless sophism that can be let loose only by one steeped in bitterness toward the DPRK to the marrow of one’s bones.” (KCNA, “Rodong Sinmun Blasts Park Guen-hye’s Confrontational Remarks,” October 3, 2014)
KCNA: “The ship with the first batch of 50,000 tons of free food aid provided by the government of the Russian Federation to the DPRK arrived in Nampho Port. The sincere aid from the Russian government and people proves the development of the traditional relations of friendship and cooperation between Russia and the DPRK and encourages the Korean people in their struggle to build a thriving nation.” (KCNA, “Russian Government Provides Food Aid to DPRK,” October 3, 2014)

ISIS: “Commercial satellite imagery dated August 27 and September 29, 2014 show the possible shutdown of North Korea’s Yongbyon 5 megawatt-electric (MW(e)) reactor, possibly for either partial refueling or renovations. Roof renovations continue on a building adjacent to the uranium centrifuge building located in the southern part of the Yongbyon nuclear site. Analysis of imagery dated June 30, August 27, and September 29, 2014, combined with procurement data obtained by ISIS, suggests that North Korea is emphasizing the production of weapon-grade plutonium as well as enriched uranium for its nuclear weapons program. The start-up date of the experimental LWR continues to remain uncertain.” (David Albright and Serena Kelleher-Vergantini, “Yongbyon: Centrifuge Enrichment Plant Expans While 5MW(e) Reactor Is Possibly Shut down,” Institute for Science and International Security, October 3, 2014)

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se on October 7 refuted a claim by a U.S. think tank that North Korea may have shut down its sole plutonium-producing nuclear reactor, saying many believe it is still in operation. "Many believe it is still in operation," he said during a parliamentary audit of the foreign ministry. "On whether the Yongbyon nuclear reactor has been shut down, and on the reasons for the shutdown if it is true, I do not necessarily have the same views as the report." (Yonhap, “N.K. Reactor Believed to Be in Operation: S. Korean FM,” October 7, 2014)

KCNA: “Vice Marshal of the Korean People’s Army Hwang Pyong So, vice-chairman of the DPRK National Defense Commission and director of the General Political Bureau of the KPA, left here by air to participate in the closing ceremony of the 17th Asian Games. He was accompanied by Choe Ryong Hae and Kim Yang Gon, secretaries of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea.” (KCNA, “Hwang Pyong So Leaves to Participate in Asian Games,” October 4, 2014)

South Korean Prime Minister Chung Hong-won voiced hope for improved inter-Korean ties during a meeting with a high-profile North Korean delegation on a surprise visit to the South. Chung met with the North’s officials at the Incheon Asian Games main stadium where the closing ceremony for the games took place. The Northern officials included Hwang Pyong-so, vice chairman of the National Defense Commission; Choe Ryong-hae, secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea; and Kim Yang-go, head of the United Front Department. It marked the first time that a sitting South Korean prime minister has met with high-ranking North Korean officials since their prime ministerial talks in 2007 to discuss follow-up measures to the summit between then President Roh Moo-hyun and late leader Kim Jong-il. The two sides largely exchanged friendly remarks in the 14-minute meeting without going into sensitive political topics, Chung’s office said in a news release. Chung noted good performances by both South and North Korean athletes in the Asian Games, it said. “I hope that it will lead to South-North cooperation and exchanges,” he told the North Koreans, according to his office. Chung especially expressed hope for more exchanges in football, as the South won the men’s football
gold medal and the North won the women’s one. In response, Hwang said Korea dominated Asia in football, and it is expected to take the top of the world. The North’s delegation also had a separate meeting at the stadium with top South Korean political leaders, including Kim Moo-sung, head of the ruling Saenuri Party and Moon Hee-sang, interim chief of the main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy. (Yonhap, “S. Korean PM Meets with Top N. Korean Officials,” Korea Herald, October 4, 2014) North Korea agreed to hold another high-level talks with South Korea in late October or early November, as leader Kim Jong-un’s top aides made a surprise visit here. The North’s military-party delegation was headed by Hwang Pyong-so, believed to be the second most powerful man in the communist regime. It also included Choe Ryong-hae, the Workers’ Party of Korea secretary, and Kim Yang-gon, who is in charge of Pyongyang’s relations with Seoul. They met with South Korea’s national security adviser Kim Kwan-jin and other senior officials over lunch in Incheon, just west of Seoul. It was the highest-level meeting between South and North Korea in five years. “In today’s talks, the North said it would hold the second round of high-level contact, which we have proposed so far, between late October and early November,” the unification ministry’s spokesman, Lim Byeong-cheol, said. The North said the meeting can be held at a time when the South wants, he added. The North’s delegation arrived in Incheon this morning ostensibly to attend the closing ceremony for the Incheon Asian Games. But its trip is widely expected to help thaw frosty inter-Korean ties and ease years of sharp military tensions on the peninsula. President Park Geun-hye was willing to meet with the North’s delegation, but the visitors courteously declined the offer, citing time constraints, according to Seoul officials. The North Koreans, as scheduled, flew back to Pyongyang on a special plane after the closing ceremony. As the last formal activity in their 12-hour stay here, the North’s delegation had a farewell meeting with South Korean Prime Minister Chung Hong-won just before departure. The North’s delegation did not bring a personal letter from leader Kim Jong-un, but it delivered his verbal “message,” a unification ministry official told reporters on background. He did not go into details. Many agree that the North’s dispatch of such a high-profile delegation indicates its desire to improve ties with the South, thus getting out of its deepening international isolation. Kim Yang-gon, head of the United Front Department controlling Pyongyang’s daily affairs on Seoul, openly said he came here with hopes that it will serve as a good opportunity for improving inter-Korean ties. Experts took note of the posts the delegates hold in the communist regime. “Hwang Pyong-so and Choe Ryong-hae are among closest aides to Kim Jong-un. Kim Yang-gon is in charge of South-North relations,” said Inje University professor Kim Yon-chel. Their visit here itself shows the North’s willingness to improve inter-Korean relations, he added. Hwang, vice marshal in the Korean People’s Army, was recently made the director of the military’s General Political Bureau, the top military position. He is widely viewed as the No. 2 man in the nation. He landed at Incheon International Airport in full military regalia. Choe, who is a secretary of the WPK and head of the Physical Culture and Sports Guidance Committee, is said to still have influence despite stepping down from his post of vice chairman of the powerful National Defense Commission. Chang Yong-seok, senior researcher at a Seoul National University institute, said their trip seems to be also aimed at congratulating the North’s athletes for good performances at the Asian Games. Kim Jong-un has a key policy of promoting sports, Chang said. Pyongyang had sent a 273-member team to the
Incheon games. (Yonhap, “Two Koreas Agree to Hold Another High-Level Talks in Late October-Early November,” October 4, 2014) North Korea insists its leader Kim Jong-un has "no problems" with his health, South Korea’s unification minister said one day after a rare visit by North Korean high-ranking officials to the South. Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae made the remarks after he met a delegation headed by Hwang Pyong-so, believed to be the second-most powerful man in the communist regime, on Saturday in the western port city of Incheon. "I asked Kim about the health condition of the North Korean leader and Kim responded that there is no problem with his leader’s health," Ryoo told a TV program aired KBS. "Given the tone of (Kim Yang-gon), there were remarks sufficient to think that the North’s leader has no problems with his health," Ryoo added. The unification minister said that Hwang had asked him to deliver a “heartfelt greeting” to South Korean President Park Geun-hye, but there was no specific message from the leader of the communist country. Ryoo said that they shared the view that the two Koreas should seek to mend icy inter-Korean relations through various dialogue channels. "I think that the (Saturday) talks paved the way for improving inter-Korean ties," he said. The minister also said that there were no discussions on a possible inter-Korean summit. "From now on, there could be various types of meetings as high-level contact among the two Koreas comes to be resumed," Ryoo noted. "Seoul is always open to dialogue with the North in terms of formality and content.” (Yonhap, “N. Korea Says Leader Has ‘No Problems’ with Health: Seoul Minister,” October 5, 2014)

DPRK FoMin spokesman’s statement: “The U.S. is becoming all the more pronounced in its hostile moves against the DPRK. After ceaselessly staging war maneuvers against the DPRK from the outset of the year with huge armed forces and destructive weapons involved, the U.S. is intensifying its anti-DPRK operations, while totally denying its line, policies and social system. This is clearly evidenced by the fact that the U.S. is running the whole gamut of invectives against the DPRK over its nuclear issue and “human rights” issue and all other matters. On September 23 U.S. Secretary of State Kerry held a "high-level meeting" with those toeing the U.S. line to pull up the DPRK over its "human rights" issue at which he malignantly slandered its social system. The U.S. assistant secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor disclosed the U.S. intention to continue encouraging human scum to take the lead in the human rights racket against the DPRK. The U.S. special representative for north Korea policy and the U.S. assistant secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, in their official appearances slandered the DPRK’s line of simultaneously pushing forward economic construction and the building of nuclear force and blustered that only when north Korea dismantles its nuclear weapons, can it achieve security and prosperity, while talking about its nuclear issue and “violation of international law.” Explicitly speaking once again, the DPRK was compelled to make a bold decision to have access to nuclear weapons due to the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK, nuclear threat and strategy for stifling it for more than half a century. The DPRK’s nuclear force serves a powerful treasured sword to protect the sovereignty of the country and the dignity of the nation under the prevailing situation and provides a sure guarantee for focusing efforts on preserving peace and security, building economy and improving the standard of the people’s living. The DPRK’s line of simultaneously developing the two fronts serves as a banner for bolstering nuclear deterrence for self-defense to cope
with the reckless nuclear threat and aggression by the U.S. and its followers and, on its basis, winning a decisive victory in building a thriving nation. The nuclear deterrence of Songun Korea can never be given up and bartered for anything unless the U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat are fundamentally terminated. The DPRK’s line of simultaneously pushing forward economic construction and the building of nuclear force is the strategic line which should be permanently maintained to meet the supreme interests of the Korean revolution.

The U.S. act of pulling up the DPRK’s nuclear deterrent and its line of simultaneously pushing forward economic construction and the building of nuclear force is a revelation of its sinister intention to swallow up the DPRK after forcing it to disarm itself. The U.S. frantic human rights racket is the heinous hostile moves to tarnish the image of the DPRK and destabilize it in a bid to bring down its social system. It is highly illogical for the U.S., the chief criminal of international terrorism and human rights abuses and the world’s biggest graveyard of human rights, to behave as if it has become a “human rights judge,” while hardly settling its own problem. The U.S. human rights moves against the DPRK find their clear manifestation in that it persistently prevented the DPRK, party directly concerned with the “human rights issue” that was tabled during the UN General Assembly, from taking part in the meeting. The DPRK has a will to strengthen the international cooperation in order to make its people enjoy better human rights, but it will never allow any attempt to use the “human rights” issue as leverage for putting pressure to bring down its social system. The discussion of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula will be meaningless as the U.S. is set to bring down the DPRK’s state system at any cost. The DPRK agreed to work for the denuclearization of the peninsula because the U.S. expressed its will to respect the DPRK’s sovereignty, stop the nuclear threat against it and coexist in peace. What is left for the DPRK to do now is to take all possible measures for self-defense to cope with the U.S. hostile policy toward it. The U.S. frantic racket of pulling up the DPRK’s line, policies and social system out of its evil repugnancy and inveterate hostility will only harden the DPRK’s faith and will to keep to the path chosen by it.” (KCNA, “Spokesman for DPRK FM Slams U.S. Frantic Anti-DPRK Campaign,” October 4, 2014)

North Korea may become self-sufficient in feeding its own people in three or four years, a representative who heads the U.N.’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) office in the communist country said. Speaking at a Voice of Russia (VOR) program, Belay Derza Gaga said the North is expected to produce some 6 million tons of grain this year and that output has been growing steadily. He pointed out that policymakers have been emphasizing the importance of agriculture in economic policies that has led to more investment in related fields. Gaga, however, said that the country still suffers from shortfalls in electricity, fuel and farm equipment. The FAO official said in the VOR program monitored in Seoul that Mongolia’s plan to provide 10,000 livestock to the North is part of a move to help the North feed itself. The animals are expected to be shipped to a special region in the North that will be used as a new base for the country’s livestock industry. (Yonhap, “N.Korea May Become Self-Sufficient in Food in 3-4 Years: FAO Official,” October 4, 2014)
President Park Geun-hye called for regular inter-Korean talks to improve relations following a surprise visit to South Korea by top North Korean officials. “I hope that the two Koreas will open the door for peace through dialogue on the occasion of the visit,” Park said in a meeting with her top aides. “We should make efforts to ensure that the high-level contact will lay the groundwork for a peaceful unification by holding regular inter-Korean dialogue, not just a one-time dialogue,” Park said. (Yonhap, “Park Urges Regular Inter-Korean Talks to Improve Relations,” October 4, 2014) President Park’s statement at Blue House staff meeting: “North Korea’s high level delegation has just participated in the closing ceremony and met our officials. I hope that this visit will help us to open a door of peace through inter-Korean talks. So far, South-North relations have not made a sustainable progress because of the vicious cycle of repeating deterioration after talks. That South and North agreed to hold the second high-level talks is significant as it paved a road to improved inter-Korean relations. NSC and related offices should prepare for the dialogue well. Especially, we should make sure that this visit will not just be a one-time event but be a beginning of regular meetings between the two Koreas and will be a road to peaceful reunification. I expect that North Korea will also show their will to improve our relations by sincere behavior.”

At the Blue House, there is hope that progress can be made on the Trust-building Process for the Korean Peninsula and “Unification as Jackpot,” which have long been stalled. But the Blue House is acting cautiously, with the president declining to issue any official statement about the North Korean delegation’s visit. “We need to avoid jumping to conclusions with inter-Korean relations. The view inside the Blue House based on past experience is that it is important to calmly determine what the real intentions of the North Koreans are,” an official at the Blue House said. In line with this, the Blue House has been devoting its energy to having the National Security Office and associated ministries analyze the reasons and motivations behind the North Korean senior officials’ visit to South Korea. Blue House Chief of Staff Kim Ki-choon also convened a meeting of senior secretaries on Sunday afternoon to review trends in public opinion and to discuss what should be done in the future. Examining the Blue House’s response to the announcement of the North Korean delegation’s visit, it can be inferred that the Blue House has been relatively proactive in using the visit as an opportunity to improve inter-Korean relations, which have been at a standstill for the past eight months. One good example is how the Blue House did not get hung up on the fact that the closing ceremony of the Asian Games was a sports event and promptly assigned Kim Kwan-jin as the counterpart for Hwang Pyong-so. This was an appropriate choice, since Hwang is the director of the General Politburo of the North Korean People’s Army, while Kim, as National Security Chief, coordinates diplomacy and security for South Korea. In addition, the fact that Kim Gyu-hyun, first deputy director of National Security, attended the luncheon with Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae also suggests that the Blue House means to play a central role in advancing inter-Korean relations. Kim was the chief envoy to the first round of high-level inter-Korean talks that took place in February. The fact that the South Korean delegation indicated it will arrange a meeting with President Park can also be understood in the same context. Analysts say that the Blue House’s proactive attitude was also propelled by the long-lasting stalemate in inter-Korean relations and the increasing criticism Park has faced about her North Korean policy. In particular, Park’s direct reference to North
Korea’s human rights issues during her keynote address before the UN General Assembly in September elicited criticism from North Korea as well as expressions of concern from the ruling Saenuri Party (NFP) and South Korean conservative media about relations with the North. Talk about revoking the May 24 sanctions against North Korea has also been circulating in the Saenuri Party, the government, and the business world. The Blue House’s actions seem to have been prompted by the awareness that this may be the best chance to seize the initiative in inter-Korean relations for the indefinite future. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether the second round of high-level talks, which are scheduled to take place at the end of October, will lead to significant results. There is sure to be friction between President Park’s Dresden Declaration, which seeks to build trust in non-political areas such as the people’s livelihood, the environment, and cultural exchange; North Korea’s wish for the May 24 measures to be lifted and resuming tours to Mt. Keumgang; and the demands of conservative forces in South Korea that North Korea must take responsibility for the sinking of the 2010 Cheonan warship and the shooting of a tourist at Mt. Keumgang in 2008. Then there is the fact that President Park has herself prevented inter-Korean relations from improving by standing on principle and placing conditions on dialogue with the North. It is uncertain whether Park can let go of her habit of insisting on principles and instead take a more flexible approach. Another perspective at the Blue House is that these high-ranking talks are a chance to assess the ability of the current officials in charge of diplomacy and security. The situation is different from the past year and a half, when diplomacy and security were in the hands of National Intelligence Service Director Nam Jae-joon, National Security Chief Kim Jang-soo, and Defense Minister Kim Kwang-jin. These figures were all graduates of the military academy and hardliners on the issue of North Korea. It will be interesting to see what advice Park receives from more recent appointees such as National Intelligence Service Director Lee Byeong-gi and National Security Office Vice Director Kim Gyu-hyun, who represent a diplomatic approach that puts more weight on dialogue. (Seok Jin-hwan, “An Unusual Opportunity for Inter-Korean Dialogue,” Hankyore, October 6, 2014) Many saw the gesture as showing Park’s own interest in making the visit a turning point in improving inter-Korean relations. Those expectations were also hinted at in Park’s relatively generous appraisal of the event. “I hope we can make this visit the first step in a process of South-North dialogue to open the door wide to peace,” Park said of the visit. The North Korean delegation did indeed send signals that it is very interested in resuming dialogue, as when it unexpectedly accepted Seoul’s proposal for a second round of senior-level talks. Particularly noteworthy were remarks made by Hwang to Prime Minister Chung Hong-won that hinted at the possibility of an inter-Korean summit. “We’ve cut a narrow path this time; let’s turn it into wide passage going ahead,” Hwang told Chung while preparing to depart from Incheon. (Park Byong-su, “Pres. Park Offers Surprisingly Positive Assessment of N.K. Officials’ Visit,” Hankyore, October 7, 2014)

A close aide to Prime Minister Abe Shinzo hinted that the government may issue a statement next year that will effectively emasculate a landmark 1993 apology to former comfort women. “We do not intend to review the Kono statement as it has already finished its role,” Lower House member Hagiuda Koichi said in a TV news program.
Hagiuda, who serves as Abe’s special adviser within the LDP, said a new government statement will pull teeth from the apology issued in the name of Kono Yohei, chief Cabinet secretary. “Next year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. By issuing a new statement, we would let (the Kono statement) be emasculated,” Hagiuda said. During a Lower House plenary session on October 1, Abe once again said his administration has no plans to rewrite the Kono statement. (Asahi Shimbun, “Abe Aide Suggests New Paper Will Nullify Kono Statement on ‘Comfort Women,’” October 8, 2014)

South and North Korean patrol boats briefly exchanged fire Tuesday after a North Korean naval vessel violated the western maritime border, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The clash came three days after a high-powered North Korean delegation made a rare visit to South Korea and agreed to hold another round of high-level dialogue in the near future, raising hopes for a thaw in inter-Korean relations. The exchange of fire took place at around 9:50 a.m. in waters near Yeonpyeong Island in the Yellow Sea, after a North Korean patrol boat crossed the Northern Limit Line (NLL) into the South’s waters, the JCS said in a statement. "To force the vessel to retreat, our side issued warning messages and fired five warning shots. But the North Korean vessel fired back rather than backing down, which caused us to fire again. Then the ship made a retreat," it said, adding that the exchange of gunfire lasted some 10 minutes. Though the South Korean military fired some 90 shots, including 10 shots with 76 millimeter guns, most of the artillery did not have a long enough range to reach the North Korean patrol boat, a JCS officer said. North Korea shot dozens of rounds in return and not a single one fell near the South Korean vessel, he added. "The South Korean patrol boat did not sustain any damage, nor did the North Korean vessel appear to have been hit. Neither side aimed their shots," he said, noting that the two ships were some 8.8 kilometers apart. The two sides did exchange fire, but the Seoul government did not view the incident as "a battle as the two Koreas did not aim at each other, and they did not bear any intention to kill or hurt the opponent," according to the officer. "The North Korean patrol ship may have crossed the border into the South while trying to clamp down on its fishing boats around the border or in order to make good on its push to nullify the sea border," the JCS officer said. (Yonhap, “Koreas Exchange Fire Near Western Sea Border,” October 7, 2014) North Korea has lodged a complaint against South Korea over their recent exchange of fire near the tense western sea border, military sources here said October 8. South and North Korean patrol ships on Tuesday exchanged fire for about 10 minutes near the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the Yellow Sea, after a North Korean warship violated the de facto sea border to cross into the South. Undeterred by warning shots by the South Korean military to force its retreat, the North Korean ship opened fire, prompting the South to fire again, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff here. Although each side only fired warning shots, and no casualties were reported on either side, it was the first time in nearly five years that the two had clashed at sea. "Yesterday [October 7], North Korea sent us a message of complaint about the incident," a Seoul military source said, declining to say exactly who sent the message to whom. The message was not sent to the South via the bilateral communication channel at the border truce village of Panmunjom, another source said, indicating that Pyongyang’s defense commission used the military communication line to reach the South’s national security office under
the presidential office. "It is not unusual for the North to send such a notice of complaint in cases where we crack down on its boats illegally fishing in our territorial waters," he noted. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Lodges Complaint over Clash in Yellow Sea,” October 8, 2014) Military officers here believe North Korea violated the NLL in order to gauge the South Korean response and gain leverage in upcoming high-level meetings. One military source said, "North Korea is probably trying to pressure South Korea to become more active in pursuing high-level talks now that it’s taken the initiative in improving strained relations" with the visit of the top officials. The source added the North may also be trying to highlight the need to ease military tensions in upcoming talks. That would give it the opportunity to raise the issue of the NLL, which was unilaterally drawn by the Americans after the Korean War and is not recognized by the North. Pyongyang is forever trying to wrangle an end to joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises so close to its own coast and prevent activists in the South from floating propaganda leaflets across the border. Seoul does not wish to discuss those issues. But other experts believe the latest incursion was saber-rattling from hardliners in the unruly North Korean military, who resent signs of a thaw. One military analyst said, "If this was an act of defiance against Kim Jong-un’s wish to resume dialogue, there may be a problem with the command structure in the North." One officer said, "Judging by North Korea's past behavior, the most dangerous periods have always been when the two Koreas began to resume contact." A Unification Ministry official said the government is "looking into" an appropriate response. Another ministry official expressed concern. "The military responded according to their rules of engagement. I hope that the latest incident doesn't have a negative impact on upcoming high-level inter-Korean talks" scheduled for late October or early November. (Chosun Ilbo, “2 Koreas Exchange Fire at Sea,” October 8, 2014) Rodong Sinmun: "The south Korean puppet warmongers fired bullets and shells at a warship of the Navy of the Korean People's Army in the waters off the southwest part on the West Sea of Korea on October 7, sparking off a military clash." (KCNA, “S. Korean Warmongers Censured for Their Military Provocation to DPRK,” October 27, 2014)

Defense Minister Han Min-koo offered a positive view of Washington’s possible deployment of the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system to the peninsula, saying it would contribute greatly to the defense of South Korea. During a parliamentary audit in the ministry building in Seoul, Han said that he was looking at the deployment “from a standpoint of national security.” “While the assets that are available to cope with the North's nuclear and missile threats are limited, the deployment of the THAAD would help ensure South Korea's security and defense,” he said during the audit. “Given that the operational coverage of the THAAD is wide, should it be deployed here, it would help the defense of South Korea.” Seoul has been reluctant to openly talk about the issue of the THAAD deployment as it could cause diplomatic friction with Beijing and Moscow, which believe that the deployment could potentially target them in case of a crisis. The U.S. has conducted site surveys to see if it is feasible to deploy the THAAD to the peninsula. U.S. Forces Korea Commander Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti has said that Washington was considering the deployment to better deal with “evolving” missile threats from the North. To better tackle Pyongyang’s ballistic missile threats, the allies have been working to create a new operational concept. Under the concept, U.S. missile defense assets including high-tech radar and
interception systems are expected to be mobilized. The allies may make public their plan to create the concept during their defense ministers’ Security Consultative Meeting in Washington later this month, a government source said. “South Korea and the U.S. are developing comprehensive combined capabilities to deal with North Korea’s increasing missile threats. At the core of the efforts is creating the alliance’s operational anti-missile concept and principles,” said the source. “After the concept and principles are established, the allies would work on developing them into an operational plan.” Observers think that the antimissile concept will mobilize the U.S. Forces Korea’s monitoring and detection assets and the U.S. strategic missile defense assets that are placed outside the peninsula, but cover the security of the peninsula. Core U.S. MD assets include the X-band radar with an operational range of longer than 1,000 kilometers, the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system, the high-altitude surveillance drone Global Hawks, and the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System, the airborne battle management aircraft. The U.S. wants to bring in the THAAD and X-band radar to the peninsula. Analysts said that the allies may have tried to forge the antimissile concept through simulations during their annual exercises such as the Key Resolve and Ulchi-Freedom Guardian, and through consultations at their Extended Deterrence Policy Committee. The source noted that the development of the concept does not mean that South Korea would participate in the U.S. missile defense program. Seoul has remained reluctant to join the U.S. missile defense network as its participation could strain ties with China and Russia that believe the U.S. missile defense system could target them in case of a crisis. (Song Sang-ho, “Minister Upbeat on Bringing U.S. Missile Defense to Korea,” Korea Herald, October 7, 2014)

North Korea offered U.N. delegations its own lengthy report on its human rights record and repeated its dismissal of a United Nations investigation report released earlier this year as “wild rumors” peddled by “hostile forces.” “As we are a transition society, as we move forward, there might be some problems, for example in the economic and other areas, we may need to establish more houses and social facilities in order to provide people with better living conditions,” North Korean diplomat Choe Myong Nam, who represents the North Korean Association for Human Rights Studies, said. “That’s why in our constitution there is a provision that stipulates that after society develops, the enjoyment by the people of the human rights and fundamental freedoms will extend further,” he added. Choe said economic problems were also the fault of “external forces,” an apparent reference to international sanctions against North Korea over its multiple nuclear weapons tests and ballistic missile launches. A summary of the North Korean response to the U.N. report said “the hostile forces are persistently peddling the ‘human rights issue’ in the DPRK in a bid to tarnish its image and bring down the social system and ideology chosen by the Korean people.” “Wild rumours and fictions about the DPRK are afloat in the international community due to the hostile forces' despicable human rights racket to slander and hurt the DPRK,” it added. Choe also reiterated Pyongyang’s previous statements that there are no prison camps in North Korea. “We have time and again in the past stated about these so-called prison camps...that there is no prison camps in the DPRK,” he said. “In practice there’s no things like that.” Choe acknowledged that North Korea does have “detention centers, where people improve their mentality and look back on their wrongdoings and they’re
A draft U.N. resolution on North Korea's human rights problem calls for referring the totalitarian nation's leader, Kim Jong-un, to the International Criminal Court, a diplomatic source said. The draft resolution, written by the European Union, was circulated behind closed doors at the U.N., the source told Yonhap because he was not allowed to speak about the proposed resolution until it is adopted. "It marks the first time that a U.N. resolution on North Korea human rights includes a plan to bring the North Korean leadership to an international court over anti-human rights charges although this is a draft now," the source said. (Yonhap, "Draft U.N. Resolution Calls for Referring N.K. Leader to ICC for Human Rights Violations," October 8, 2014)

The government is taking an ambiguous stance on the United Nation's action to pursue legal action against North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. "We expect that the draft will require a lot of coordination in the negotiations process," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement Thursday. "At this stage, it is premature to talk about how the U.N. will come up with a final draft." (Kang Seung-woo, "Seoul Equivocal on UN Move against N.K. Leader," Korea Times, October 9, 2014)

South Korea’s unification minister said his government is willing to have discussions with North Korea on its economic sanctions against Pyongyang that block cross-border cooperation and exchanges. But Seoul has no immediate plans to consider lifting the so-called May 24th Measure as there is no sign of Pyongyang’s change in its attitude, Ryoo Kihl-jae said at a parliamentary session. He was responding to calls for the government to reconsider the sanctions, imposed on Pyongyang for its 2010 deadly naval attack, in a bid to ride on last week’s landmark visit by the communist neighbor’s top-level delegation led by Hwang Pyong-so. "It’s important for South and North Korea to discuss the May 24th Measure and resolve the matter," he told lawmakers during an annual parliamentary audit of his ministry. All pending inter-Korean issues, Ryoo said, can be put on the negotiating table once high-level talks are resumed. (Yonhap, "Minister Says Seoul Is Open to Talks on Pyongyang Sanctions," October 8, 2014)

Japan and the United States released an interim report on revising their bilateral defense cooperation guidelines by the year's end, in which they call for more global military cooperation between the two countries that will “benefit the (Asia-Pacific) region and beyond.” The defense guidelines, which were last revised in 1997, set forth general roles for the U.S. military and the Self-Defense Forces to engage in joint operations. The interim report indicates that U.S.-Japan military cooperation under the new guidelines will not be confined by geography, a major departure from the 1997 guidelines, and will emphasize the “global nature” of the Japan-U.S. military alliance. Specifically, the two countries will implement steps to ensure Japan’s peace and security “seamlessly” in such areas as intelligence-gathering, logistics support, anti-ballistic missile defense, civilian evacuation plans and measures to cope with refugees, the report says. It also says the overhauled guidelines will elaborate on cooperative efforts in cases where Japan can resort to force based on the July 1 decision by the Cabinet to reinterpret war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution. That decision paves the way for Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defense, or aiding an ally.
under military attack. Defense Minister Eto Akinori said the report was released to build understanding of the revision at home and abroad. The foreign affairs and defense chiefs of both countries agreed at a “two-plus-two” meeting in Tokyo last October to revise the defense cooperation guidelines. (Kameda Masaaki, “New Japan-U.S. Defense Guidelines Will Stress Global Reach,” Japan Times, October 8, 2014) The Interim Report on the Revision of the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation “I. Introduction At the “2+2” Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee (SCC) meeting in Tokyo on October 3, 2013, the Ministers of the two countries set forth a strategic vision for a more robust Alliance in a complex regional environment and a dynamic world. The Ministers reconfirmed our Alliance’s unwavering commitment to Japan’s security and reaffirmed the indispensable role our two countries play in the maintenance of peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. The Ministers also recognized the Alliance as a platform for international cooperation that would continue to make positive contributions to the region and beyond. As this strategic vision for a more expansive partnership would require enhanced capabilities and greater shared responsibilities, the Ministers called for the revision of the 1997 Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation. The revision of the Guidelines fully accords with both countries’ strategic goals and interests, and will benefit the region and beyond. For the United States, the Guidelines revision aligns with the U.S. whole-of-government rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region. For Japan, the Guidelines revision corresponds to its efforts for the defense of its territory and people and the policy of "Proactive Contribution to Peace" based on the principle of international cooperation. The cabinet decision by the Government of Japan on July 1, 2014, for developing seamless security legislation, envisions the expansion of the Self-Defense Forces activities consistent with the Constitution of Japan. The revision of the Guidelines will reflect this cabinet decision appropriately and will strengthen the Alliance and enhance deterrence. The revised Guidelines will also enable the two countries to make expanded contributions to international peace and security. (1) Description of the Revision Process At the SCC meeting on October 3, 2013, the Ministers of the two countries directed the Subcommittee for Defense Cooperation (SDC) to draft recommended changes to the 1997 Guidelines to address the evolving security environment surrounding Japan. Discussions have ranged from operational-level deliberations to consider appropriate roles and missions for the respective forces, to policy-level dialogues focusing on defense cooperation. (2) Interim Report Overview The SDC has summarized the work which has been conducted under the direction of the SCC and issues this interim report with a view to promoting understanding of the revision both domestically and internationally. Further work may result in modifications or additions. …This interim report does not create legal rights or obligations for either government. II. Aim of the Guidelines and Bilateral Defense Cooperation Recognizing that emerging and future security challenges require a more balanced and effective Alliance, the SDC has been discussing appropriate roles and missions of the two countries based on the enhancement of capabilities and interoperability, to ensure the peace and security of Japan under any circumstances, from peacetime to contingencies, and to promote a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Asia-Pacific and beyond. Future bilateral defense cooperation will emphasize: seamless, robust, flexible, and effective bilateral responses; the global nature of the Japan-U.S. Alliance; cooperation with other regional partners; synergy across the two
governments’ national security policies; and a whole-of-government Alliance approach. IV. Strengthened Alliance Coordination The two governments will ensure seamless and effective whole-of-government Alliance coordination that involves all relevant agencies, in order to address any situation that affects the peace and security of Japan, threatens regional or global stability, or other situations that may require an Alliance response. For this purpose, the two governments will improve the Alliance coordination framework, enabling timely information sharing and policy and operational coordination. The two governments will enhance bilateral planning relevant to Japan’s peace and security, through a strengthened planning mechanism which ensures the involvement of all relevant agencies of the respective governments. V. Seamlessly Ensuring Japan’s Peace and Security In the current security environment, persistent and emerging international threats can have a serious and immediate impact on the peace and security of Japan. There are also cases where swift and robust responses are required to secure the peace and security of Japan even when an armed attack against Japan is not involved. In view of such a complex security environment, the two governments will take measures to prevent the deterioration of Japan’s security in all phases, seamlessly, from peacetime to contingencies. …VI. Cooperation for Regional and Global Peace and Security Recognizing the implications of the evolving regional and global security environment, the two governments will expand the scope of cooperation to reflect the global nature of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. The two governments will enhance bilateral cooperation in various areas to generate a more peaceful and stable international security environment. For greater effectiveness of bilateral cooperation, the two governments will promote trilateral and multilateral security and defense cooperation with regional allies and partners. The revised Guidelines will lay out how the two governments will work together to promote security and defense cooperation based on international law and internationally accepted norms. Areas of cooperation to be described may include, but are not limited to, the following: Peacekeeping Operations; International Humanitarian Assistance /Disaster Relief; Maritime Security; Capacity Building; Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance; Logistics Support; and Noncombatant Evacuation Operations. VII. Bilateral Responses in New Strategic Domains In recent years, risks that can impede the use of and free access to space and cyberspace are spreading and becoming more serious. The two governments share a commitment to strengthen stability and security in space and cyberspace by addressing these emerging security challenges seamlessly, effectively, and in a timely manner. In particular, the Self-Defense Forces and the United States armed forces will work to ensure the resiliency of relevant space assets and their networks and systems, while contributing to whole-of-government efforts to secure the safe and stable use of space and cyberspace including improving the cybersecurity of critical infrastructure upon which they depend to accomplish their missions. The revised Guidelines will describe cooperation in space and cyberspace. Cooperation on space will include sharing information about actions and events that might impede the safe and stable use of space and cooperative ways to build space resiliency. Cooperation on cyberspace will include sharing information from peacetime to contingencies about cyber threats and vulnerabilities as well as strengthening cybersecurity for mission assurance. …"
Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea Secretariat information bulletin No. 1075” in connection with the fact that the riff-raffs of the “Alliance for the Movement of Free North” in south Korea are mulling conducting on Friday [October 10] another leaflet-scattering operation hurting the dignity and social system of the DPRK. This operation projected by the disgusting human scum is no more than the last-ditch effort to chill the hard-won atmosphere of improving the north-south relations. … We cannot but be stunned by this reckless action projected in the wake of the visit to Inchon by the director of the General Political Bureau of the Korean People’s Army and his party. The leaflet-scattering operation, part of the psychological warfare targeting the DPRK, can never be overlooked as it is a deliberate and premeditated provocation against it. The south Korean authorities’ intention to allow those human scum to conduct such operation slandering the dialogue partner, while paying lip-service to dialogue and settlement of relations, goes to prove that they have no true will to improve the north-south relations and that what they told us was an empty talk. Even the Lee Myung Bak regime did not allow human scum to scatter leaflets as now in the past. **We declared more than once that the act of scattering leaflets against the DPRK is little short of a declaration of a war. If the south Korean authorities allow or connive at the projected leaflet-scattering operation, the north-south relations will again be pushed to an uncontrollable catastrophe** and the provokers will be wholly accountable for it. (KCNA, “CPRK Secretariat Urges S. Korean Regime to Stop Anti-DPRK Leaflet-Scattering Operation,” October 9, 2014)

In most countries, footage showing the leader with a limp might have generated some curiosity. But in tightly controlled North Korea, those images – coupled with the disappearance of the country’s ruler, Kim Jong-un, from public view for five weeks – have generated endless debate among foreign officials and analysts always on the lookout for upheaval in one of the world’s most dangerous police states. The disappearance is especially notable because Kim, like his father and grandfather before him, has used public appearances accompanied by fawning subjects as a key tool of the propaganda machine that has long held the state together. For now, American and South Korean officials say that while they think the young leader might be ailing, there is no sign of a coup. After three generations of Kims, any shift away from dynastic rule would probably involve unusual movements of the country’s million-plus military or its people, and none have been detected by the South. And the fact that North Korea sent three officials widely seen as the Nos. 2, 3 and 4 in the country’s hierarchy to attend the closing ceremony of the Asian Games in South Korea, and that during their visit they agreed to resume official dialogue with Seoul, suggests that Kim remains in control, according to official and analysts in South Korea. In Washington, officials have waved off coup rumors as the wishful thinking of people who have spent years looking for signs of regime collapse and been serially disappointed. “The last time was when everyone was predicting that Kim Jong-un would be pushed aside by his more experienced uncle,” said one senior official. “And look what happened to him.” (Choe Sang-hun, “In Leader’s Absence, Rumors of a Coup Fly in North Korea,” *New York Times*. October 9, 2014, p. A-8) North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is recovering following an operation to remove a cyst from his right ankle, though there is a chance that the condition could recur, lawmakers said October 28, citing South Korea’s spy agency. Kim received the operation between September and October by
inviting a foreign doctor into the communist country, according to Lee Cheol-woo of the ruling Saenuri Party and Shin Kyong-min of the main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Says N. Korean Leader on Recovery after Ankle Operation,” October 28, 2014)

10/10/14 North Korea fired heavy machine guns [anti-aircraft guns, according to Lee Kwang-ho, “Seeking Turnaround from Inter-Korean Impasse,” Vantage Point, November 2014, p. 3] at South Korean propaganda balloons with some rounds landing in Yeoncheon, an inland county located just south of the inter-Korean border. The ROK Army returned fire as a warning. No casualties were reported. According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the North fired about 10 rounds from 14.5-millimeter anti-aircraft machine guns. The South fired about 40 rounds from K-6 machine guns in the direction from which the North had fired. "The North fired at 3:55 p.m., after a group of South Korean activists launched balloons filled with anti-North Korean leaflets from the border village of Paju at 2 p.m.,” said a JCS officer. “Some rounds were discovered to have landed in an Army outpost and inside an administrative office near the Civilian Control Line at 4:50 p.m." ROK forces broadcast a warning message at 5:30 p.m. and began firing back at 5:40 p.m. toward the North’s guard post, the officer said. The two sides exchanged fire again, and the firing came to a stop about 7 p.m. The exchange of fire took place on the 69th anniversary of the founding of Pyongyang’s ruling Workers’ Party. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un was not present at the anniversary party held in the North, extending to 37 days his absence from public appearances. The reclusive state warned through KCNA that Seoul would face an "uncontrollable catastrophe" unless the leaflet campaign was stopped. The South’s government dismissed the warning, saying it could not interfere with civilians’ activities. Some 30 North Korean-born activists launched 200,000 anti-North Korean leaflets into the reclusive state from the border town of Paju, Gyeonggi Province. The members of the non-profit Fighters for a Free North Korea said they had sent the leaflets to mark the fourth anniversary of the death of Hwang Jang-yop, the highest-ranking North Korean ever to have defected to the South. Hwang defected in 1997. "We were determined to go ahead with sending the leaflets, despite the threat from North Korea, because we wanted to better inform North Korean residents about Hwang," said Park Sang-hak, president of the group. Park said North Korea was attempting to brainwash its people to believe that Hwang had been treated badly here and that his life had come to a tragic end. "This is not true," Park said. "As North Korean defectors, we know that the South Korean government respected him and treated him nicely until he died. We wanted the North Koreans to learn of this fact from the leaflets." (Jun Ji-hye, “Two Koreas Trade Fire on Central Border,” Korea Times, October 10, 2014)

National Reconciliation Council spokesman’s statement “blasting the reckless remarks” of “Park Geun Hye, chief executive of south Korea, [who] when meeting the secretary general of ASEAN Wednesday [October 8], let loose such invectives as "double-attitude of provocation and appeasement" and "call for abandonment of nuclear program," again pulling up the DPRK over its "nuclear issue." This is an unpardonable politically-motivated provocation against the DPRK and indecorum chilling the hard-won atmosphere of improving the north-south relations. ... It is most important for mending the north-south relations to create a good atmosphere and both sides should
work hard to do so. The north and the south have already agreed to have the second round of high-level contact. However, Park made such coarse invectives against the DPRK before having the contact. This is the behavior bereft of elementary courtesy and common sense towards the dialogue partner. No matter what pressure her U.S. master may put on Park, she should learn how to recognize and respect the dialogue partner before reading his face. Vitriol against the dialogue partner would only hurt mutual feelings and bring nothing good to both. By letting loose again such reckless remarks against the DPRK Park brought to light the fact that “improvement of the north-south relations” and “unification” touted by her a lot were not utterances made out of her concern for them but to improve her image. In the past too, she let loose a string of invectives rattling the nerves of the DPRK irrespective of time and place, bedeviling the north-south relations. She would be well advised to behave herself, bearing in mind that a golden chance of improving the strained north-south relations may be missed.” (KCNA, “Park Guen-hye Urged Not Chill Atmosphere of Improving Inter-Korean Relations,” October 10, 2014)

Seoul is liely to join the United Nations' anticipated move to try Kim Jong-un for alleged human rights abuses in an international court. A foreign ministry official confirmed the government’s position of supporting punitive action against Pyongyang's violation of human rights “as long as it is based on the U.N. Committee of Inquiry report this year.” (Yi Whan-woo, “Seoul Likely to Support ICC Trial of N.K. Leader,” Korea Times, October 11, 2014)

President Park Guen-hye hinted that Seoul could consider lifting sanctions if North Korea shows a willingness to end the standoff through proposed high-level talks. “South and North Koreans officials should resolve matters including the May 24 [sanctions], which is a red-hot issue now, by holding sincere talks with a responsible attitude,” park told a meeting with members of the presidential committee for unification preparation. (Cho Chung-un, “Park: Seoul Open to Discussion on N.K. Sanctions,” Korea Herald, October 14, 2014)

North Korea claimed the United States is fully responsible for the suspension of work to unearth the remains of American troops killed in the 1950-53 Korean War. "Lots of remains" of U.S. soldiers are left in North Korea and "uncared and carried away en masse" due to construction of hydropower stations and other development projects, the Panmunjom Mission of the Korean People’s Army said in a statement. Panmunjom is the truce village inside the Demilitarized Zone.

It stressed the remains recovery work has been suspended due to Washington's "unilateral attitude" of labeling Pyongyang’s satellite launch for peaceful purposes as "a provocation." It was countering U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel’s remarks last month that the recalcitrant communist nation was to blame for the failure to restart the unearthing of the remains of the U.S. soldiers in its territory. The U.S. launched such a recovery work in North Korea in 1996, but it was halted in 2005 amid security concerns to its unearthing team. The project resumed in 2011, but it was suspended again a year later as Pyongyang fired a long-range rocket. "It is long since the organization for surveying and unearthing remains operating in the DPRK was disbanded due to the unilateral measure of suspending the work, pursuant to the U.S.
administration’s unreasonable hostile policy towards the DPRK,” the North said in the statement translated and carried by KCNA. (Yonhap, “N.K. Blames Washington for Halt to Remains Recovery Work,” Korea Times, October 13, 2014)

10/14/14

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has appeared with a puffy face and cane in a photo in today’s edition of Rodong Shinmun. The state run newspaper’s photos of Kim’s “field guidance” trip marked his first public appearance since he was last seen at a concert on September 3, ending a wild run of speculation ranging from a coup against him to his untimely death. Experts say the 31-year-old dictator does not appear to be fully recovered, but seems to be still very much in charge of the world’s most reclusive state. “He looks puffy and pale, but that doesn’t dispute the fact he is still in charge of North Korea,” said Paik Hak-soon, director of the Center for North Korean Studies at the Sejong Institute, a policy think tank. “He may have had surgery, as several observers have speculated, but the photos show Kim is still healthy enough.” Yang Moo-jin, professor at the University of North Korean Studies, voiced a similar view. “It’s pointless to argue over his appearance in the photos. He may have been ill, and he may still be sick, but the fact he showed himself in public means he is still the commander-in-chief of the military state,” he said. Yang cited the report made by KCNA, which said that Kim visited a new apartment complex for satellite scientists in the nation’s capital. It added that Kim “showed admiration for the apartment houses and buildings that were decorated with diverse colored tiles.” “The military state has been increasing efforts to enhance is satellite technology, and it looks like Kim intended to show publicly that he cares about his scientists and the people.” TV footage on September 3 triggered much speculation that Kim was suffering from physical ailments, including a possible case of gout. Rumors also spread that he was in coma, or that a military coup was underway in the Stalinist state as he missed routine public activities. The young ruler was absent during the second session of the 13th Supreme People’s Assembly (SPA) – the country’s rubber-stamp parliament – on September 25. He also skipped a celebration on Friday to mark the 69th anniversary of the founding of the Workers’ Party. “If such a coup was underway, Kim’s number two man, Hwang Pyong-so, would have been busy taking care of it and would not have visited South Korea on October 4,” Paik said. (Yi Whan-woo, “He’s Back,” Korea Times, October 15, 2014)

10/15/14

The two Koreas sat down for a military meeting to discuss the recent gunfire exchanges on land and near the maritime border, the first time since December 2007 that the Koreas held a general-level military meeting. According to Kim Min-seok, spokesman for South Korea’s Ministry of National Defense, the meeting at Panmunjom lasted from 10 a.m. until 3:10 p.m., but ended without any agreement. Lt. Gen. Ryu Je-seung, head of the Defense Ministry’s National Defense Policy Office, was the South’s chief negotiator. Two other officials, including a policy director of the Ministry of Unification, accompanied Ryu. Gen. Kim Yong-chol, director of the Reconnaissance General Bureau, was the North’s chief representative. A key manager of the North’s intelligence community for two decades, Kim is known to have orchestrated the North’s sinking of the Cheonan - which it denies - and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island. “The two sides had a serious consultation with intentions to improve relations, but they failed to narrow down their differences and ended the talks,” Kim said.
Pyongyang proposed the meeting on October 7 after an inter-Korean sea skirmish earlier in the day and Seoul accepted, Kim said. Vice Marshal Hwang Pyong-so, director of the General Political Bureau of the North’s army and the second most powerful official in Pyongyang, sent the proposal to Kim Kwan-jin, head of the Blue House’s National Security Council, Kim said. At the meeting, the North reiterated its usual demands that South Korean vessels must stay out of its western waters, civic groups must stop sending anti-Pyongyang propaganda via balloons over the demilitarized zone, and the media should stop slandering the North Korean regime, Kim said. “We made clear our positions that the North must respect the Northern Limit Line and, because we are a liberal democracy, the government cannot control civic groups and the media,” Kim said. The Defense Ministry said yesterday’s meeting was separate from the two Koreas’ earlier agreement to hold high-level government negotiations later this month. The Unification Ministry said yesterday afternoon that the government sent a proposal to the North on Monday to hold the meeting on October 30 at Tongilgak, on the North Korean side of Panmunjom. Lim Byeong-cheol, a ministry spokesman, said the North has yet to respond to the proposal. The Park government has been secretive about inter-Korean contacts, refusing to brief the media about the latest developments. The military talks in the morning were only made public after a senior opposition lawmaker commented on them. “The two Koreas are reportedly meeting at Panmunjom at 10 a.m. this morning,” Rep. Park Jie-won, a senior member of the main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy, said at the party’s leadership meeting. “The agenda of the discussion will be the Northern Limit Line and the civic groups sending of anti-Pyongyang leaflets to the North.” Throughout yesterday, officials of both the Unification and Defense ministries adamantly refused to confirm whether the meeting was taking place or not. Only after the general-level military contact ended without an agreement in the afternoon did the Defense Ministry admit that the talks took place. (Ser Myoja, “North, South Hold Military Talks, But Fail to Agree,” JoongAng Ilbo, October 16, 2014) North Korea has held onto its earlier position of not admitting to its responsibility for the 2010 deadly attacks against a South Korean warship and a sea border island at the latest inter-Korean military talks, Seoul’s defense ministry said October 17. “During the military talks, the two Koreas discussed (pending issues) very seriously and prudently,” said a South Korean defense ministry official, asking not to be named. “We reminded the North of its accountability for the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong cases ... But the North Korean side did not show any changes.” Noting that Pyongyang neither acknowledged their responsibility nor expressed regrets or apology, he said the communist country “simply explained its principled position, indicating that it has much to say on the matter,” without elaborating further. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Denies Attacks on S. Korea at Military Talks: Seoul Govt.” October 17, 2014)

KCNA “open report”: “The talks between north-south high-ranking officials in Inchon on October 4 made a great contribution to creating an atmosphere favorable for improving the north-south relations. But there occurred an undesirable incident at 10 a.m. on October 7 in which both sides opened fire at the warships of the other side in the hotspot waters in the West Sea of Korea. Out of the sincere mind that we can no longer tolerate the repetition of such a case as chilling the hard-won atmosphere, the north side immediately sent a notice to the chief of the "security office" of
Chongwadae proposing holding an emergency one-to-one contact. But the south Korean authorities in the reply message declined the offer for the emergency contact, being keen on shifting the blame onto the north side while claiming the recent case was an unavoidable counteraction against the act of “trespassing on the line” by someone. Despite its irrepressible disappointment at the uncouth and insincere attitude of the south side to the good faith and magnanimity, the north side, by exercising utmost patience and magnanimity, sent another notice advising the south side to think twice and respond to the proposal for the emergency contact at 1:23 a.m. on October 8. The south Korean authorities, however, began to take an extremely insolent attitude, while keeping mum about the DPRK’s sincere offer. Although the situation developed beyond imagination, the north side, still holding out the hope, sent the third notice at around 7:10 a.m. on October 10 in order to settle the situation through an emergency contact. In the notice the north side urged the south side to clarify its stand on choosing between the two options: Whether it is willing to keep the atmosphere for improving the north-south ties alive by responding to the north side's request for emergency contact or it will see the content of the notice sent by the north side opened to public to arouse nationwide response. The north side declared that it would be compelled to disclose before the world all the measures it has taken with sincerity so far including the content of the notices unless the south side clarifies its stand till 10 a.m. on October 11. Much upset by this, the chief of the "security office" of Chongwadae hurriedly sent a reply message to the effect that he complies with the north side's request for an emergency contact at 8:25 a.m., just one hour after the notice was sent. The "security office" asserted that the south Korean authorities have called for paving a road for closer cooperation. While clarifying the stand to hold the second round of the high-level contact as agreed upon between the north and the south in Inchon, it didn’t forget to stress the need to defend the "northern limit line." While responding to the proposed contact, it noted that the south side would send to the contact the chief of the policy room of the "Ministry of Defense" who has no mandate, instead of the chief of the "security office" expected by the north side. Lurking behind this was a sly ulterior design to delay the emergency contact or completely abort it by forcing the north side to lower the level of its special envoy and find fault with the south side over the "level" or "status" of its special envoy. However, the north side made a bold decision. As a result, the north-south emergency contact was finally possible 9 days later. The contact began in Panmunjom at 10:00 on October 15. First, the north side proposed the south side to open the contact to public as it was arranged, true to the noble intention of Marshal Kim Jong Un to turn the narrow path for the improvement of the north-south relations into a wide avenue and to make a new history of north-south relations. However, those from the south side hesitated to respond to this proposal but whispered to each other for a while before calling for keeping the contact under wraps. As the north side appreciated that any substantial result was more important than the modality of the contact, it agreed to the south side's proposal. The north side, to begin with, said it is the present situation that the hard-won atmosphere for the improvement of the north-south relations has been chilled by the frequent exchange of fire in the hotspot waters of the West Sea of Korea, such dishonest behavior as spreading false rumors about it and uninterrupted leaflet-scattering operations conducted against the DPRK. It solemnly stated that the south Korean authorities are obliged to clarify its responsible attitude towards the issues of
whether they seek to keep the present north-south relations frozen or to rev up the atmosphere of their improvement. First of all, it made the following proposals to defuse the tension in southwestern waters to keep the atmosphere for improving the inter-Korean relations: **First, both sides shall take measures not to trespass on the sensitive waters and line in the southwestern part of the West Sea of Korea under any circumstances. Second, they shall not preempt firing unless the other side perpetrates a deliberate hostile act. Third, to do so, they shall modify their present belligerency rules which may trigger off a clash. Fourth, both sides shall settle unexpected and complicated situation through dialogue and contact.** And the north side proposed that **warships of both sides sailing to "intercept illegal fishing boats" should display promised markings to prevent accidental firing beforehand.** If the issue of reckless anti-DPRK leaflet-scattering is not strictly checked at the authorities, unexpected happenings may occur, the north side said, strongly urging the south side authorities to take necessary steps. Contrary to such efforts of the north side to settle the issue raised, the south side behaved arrogantly from the outset of the contact. Far from understanding the sincerity of the north side’s proposal in the long run, the south side refused to discuss the proposal for no reason, misjudging it as the north side’s intention to ignore the "northern limit line" like a psychopath seized with persecution mania. The north side held that there should be an official stand on the part of the south side in order to hold the second round of high-level contact without fail by keeping the atmosphere for improving the north-south relations. Unable to reject such just assertion of the north side, the south side proposed recess to examine the north side’s proposal and receive the instruction from the superior at 11:05. At 12:00 the south side proposed resuming the contact at 2 p.m., saying that its internal discussion had not yet ended. At the afternoon contact the south side proposed opening to media that both sides dealt with the exchange of fire in the West Sea and the issue of "scattering leaflets," claiming that the north-south emergency contact being held in camera today had already been opened to some media. This was a volte-face in the attitude of the south side which called for holding the north-south emergency contact in camera in opposition to the north side’s proposal for totally opening it to public. The north side said that the issue of report should be decided after the contact, and urged the south side to specify its stand on the proposals made by the north side at the morning contact. The south side’s attitude discouraged the north side and lashed it into fury. Very insolent was the attitude of the south side toward the north side’s call for stopping at once the anti-DPRK leaflet-scattering. It can be said that it is a sort of mockery and insult to the north-south dialogue that the south side sent the chief of the policy room of the "Ministry of Defense" without any right to conclude to the emergency contact. The north side solemnly clarified that all efforts for keeping the atmosphere for improving the north-south relations alive and holding the 2nd round of high-ranking contact should be open to public to put the prevailing situation under control amid the response of all Koreans. The south side, however, did not hide its uneasiness about the north side’s intention to open the contents of the emergency contact to public, repeating such words as "crucial case" and "serious concern." The south Korean authorities' attitude made people have serious suspicion that they intend to spend with ease the remaining tenure of their office with their hypocritical talk about dialogue and call for unification, the report said, and went on: The south Korean authorities should give a clear-cut
answer to the question put by the Koreans as to whether they would make positive efforts for the improvement of the inter-Korean relations with sincerity or while away time with farces for alluring and deceiving the nation. They should not misjudge the sincere efforts of the DPKR to make a new history of improving the north-south relations. It is the undeniable reality that the prospect for holding the north-south high-level contact high on agenda is gloomy. The south Korean authorities should bear in mind that all Koreans are watching their future movement with vigilance. (KCNA, “KCNA Discloses S. Korean Authorities’ Acts of Chilling Atmosphere for Improving Ties,” October 16, 2014)

South and North Korean forces exchanged fire near the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) in Paju, Gyeonggi province, for about 10 minutes at 5:50 p.m. Sunday, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. There were no reports of any casualties. A defense ministry official said the incident occurred when a South Korean border patrol spotted North Korean troops approaching close to the MDL. “Verbal warnings were issued by loudspeaker and then warning shots were fired,” the official said. “The North Koreans then opened fire on our troops who returned fire,” he said, adding that the exchange lasted no longer than 10 minutes. (AFP, “North, South Korea Exchange Border Fire,” October 19, 2014)

Even with inter-Korean relations are tense following a recent clash in the West Sea and an exchange of shots at the DMZ near Yeoncheon County, the Blue House announced that it expects the second round of high-level talks between North and South Korean officials that are supposed to take place as early as the end of October will occur as planned. “Since the agreement about the second round of high-level talks was reached during the luncheon that was held at the conclusion of the Asian Games, I think that they could take place as planned,” said Joo Cheol-gi, Blue House senior secretary for security and foreign affairs, during today’s press briefing. (Seok Jin-hwan, “Gov’t Says Planned Inter-Korean Talks to Go ahead,” Hankyore, October 20, 2014)

One of North Korea’s most senior diplomats warned that if any effort was made to charge the country’s leader, Kim Jong-un, with crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court, the North would take unspecified “countermeasures.” The United Nations envoy, Jang Il-hun, also denied that the country had political prisoners. The statements by Jang came in a rare and sometimes heated hourlong discussion of the country’s reaction to a United Nations report in February – which included satellite photographs of a network of prison camps, and interviews with dissidents who had escaped from them – as well as North Korea’s nuclear policies. While he hewed to Pyongyang’s official talking points about the report, he did not rule out allowing outside inspectors to visit the sites in the future. Asked why North Korea conducted a nuclear test just months into President Obama’s presidency, in 2009, rather than seek to engage in talks with the new administration, Jang said the North was “compelled” to show its capabilities, including “the miniaturization of nuclear warheads,” because of the “hostile policies” of the new administration. The test, however, did not prove, at least to anyone other than the country’s own scientists, that the North had managed the difficult science of compressing a nuclear weapon into a size that could fit atop one of the country’s missiles. But it did show that the North was capable of detonating a
crude nuclear explosion. Jang was also asked what led to the execution late last year of Mr. Kim’s uncle Jang Song-thaek after a brief trial. The fall of Jang appeared to have its origins in a clash over who would profit from North Korea’s most lucrative exports: coal, clams and crabs. Jang said that the uncle had “committed a treason crime” and “illegally amassed foreign currency and broke the law by having dirty and illegal relations with so many women. He deserved his own execution.” (David E. Sanger, “North Korea Challenges U.N. Report on Violations,” New York Times, October 21, 2014, p. A-10)

10/21/14 Rodong Sinmun: “It is two decades since the DPRK-U.S. agreed framework was adopted, but their relations are at the lowest ebb. This is entirely because the U.S. has persisted in its deep-rooted hostile policy toward the DPRK. … The U.S. approached the DPRK-U.S. agreed framework with a black-hearted intention from the outset and has blocked the way of settling the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula peacefully. … The U.S. is staging madcap nuclear war maneuvers against the DPRK in south Korea and its vicinity every year with lots of nuclear weapons involved. This is an open nuclear threat and blackmail against the DPRK. The DPRK has made every possible sincere effort to defuse the ever-growing nuclear threat of the U.S. The DPRK put forth a proposal for building a nuclear-free zone through peaceful dialogue and negotiations and combined it with the method of removing the U.S. nuclear threat by relying on international law. The U.S., however, made the situation complicated, persistently circulating a suspicion about nuclear development in the DPRK. It imposed “special inspection” on the DPRK and openly posed nuclear threat to it while resuming nuclear war drills. The U.S. used the NPT as a lever for stifling the DPRK. The situation will remain unchanged as long as the U.S. persists in its hostile acts against the DPRK, not abandoning its ambition to stifle the social system in the DPRK. This is the lesson and conclusion drawn by the DPRK once again, looking back on the past history at present, 20 years since the adoption of the DPRK-U.S. agreed framework to settle the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. Instead of taking issue with the DPRK over its nuclear deterrence, the U.S. should reflect on its acts of creating the present situation and take a proper attitude, though belatedly. This is the only way of making a breakthrough towards settling the nuclear issue on the peninsula.” (KCNA, “U.S. Can Never Evade Blame for Blocking Solution to Nuclear Issue: Rodong Sinmun,” October 21, 2014)

A senior North Korean official has indicated that the Stalinist state could allow a visit by an outside investigator to inspect human rights conditions there. VOA reported that Jang Il-hun, North Korea’s deputy U.N. ambassador in New York, said regarding the issue that “it is a subject for discussion as long as the matter is handled in a positive manner.” During a rare interview, Jang made an accusation that Washington is attempting to mastermind international criticism of the military regime’s human rights record in order to launch a smear campaign against its political system. Jang, who serves as Pyongyang’s point man for talks with Washington, warned that the North could review its policy toward the United States completely and will continue with its nuclear program, if the U.S. continues to press it on the issue of human rights. Jang was quoted as saying that the North has already declared itself to be nuclear-armed state in its constitution and adopted a new policy to expand nuclear weapons. “If
America continues to press us on the human rights issue, we have no option but to review our policy toward America completely," Jang told the interview. (Jun Ji-hye, “N.K. Could Allow Inspections of Human Rights Conditions,” October 22, 2014) Jang said his country has constantly called for "dialogue and cooperation" with the international community on the human rights issue. The North, he added, may discuss whether to allow an on-site probe into human rights conditions if it receives a positive response to the offer. "It is a subject for discussion as long as the matter is handled in a positive manner," Jang was quoted as saying. He strongly condemned the U.S. and some other nations for seeking to bring the North’s leaders to the International Criminal Court. Jang questioned the need for restarting the six-party talks on the North’s nuclear weapons program. "I do not see the point of having the six-party talks at this point," he said. "In view of the current situation, I have doubts about what we can get from the six-way talks." He argued Washington has continued "nuclear blackmail and military pressure" on Pyongyang without acknowledging its sovereignty. At a time when the U.S. is ratcheting up pressure on North Korea over its human rights situation, North Korea "has no option but to review our policy toward America completely," he added. (Korea Herald, “N. Korea to Review U.S. Policy If Human Rights Pressure Persists: Official,” October 22, 2014)

Sydney Seiler, U.S. special envoy on the six-party talks with North Korea, said that Washington could consider resuming the stalled six-party talks on the North’s nuclear program if Pyongyang postpones its nuclear and missile launch tests and suspends its nuclear program. Asked about precondition for the resumption of the six-nation talks, during a seminar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which marked that the 20th anniversary of the 1994 U.S.-North Korea Geneva Agreement, Seiler said, "In terms of what the other countries would do, imagine a scenario in which the DPRK announces its returning to six-party talks, it agrees to a moratorium on nuclear tests, on missiles launches, halt to its nuclear programs. The entire world would see that as a fundamental change in North Korea’s orientation toward denuclearization." He also said that while the U.S. aims to achieve “complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement (CVID)” of the North’s nuclear program, it views that there a realistic course for denuclearization. (Dong-A Ilbo, “Six-Party Talks Can Resume If N.K. Halts Nuclear Activities,” October 23, 2014)

Jeffrey E. Fowle, one of three Americans imprisoned by North Korea, has been released and is on his way home after nearly six months in captivity, the White House said, easing but not ending the acute tensions with the hermetic Asian country that still considers the United States a bitter enemy. A State Department spokeswoman, Marie Harf, who announced Fowle’s release in Washington, said American officials were still trying to secure the release of the other two prisoners, Matthew Todd Miller and Kenneth Bae. Fowle, 56, an Ohio municipal worker, entered North Korea on a tourist visa in April and was arrested after he left a Bible in a hotel. Experts on North Korea have said that he may have been suspected of proselytizing his Christian faith, which is interpreted as a crime in a country that sees religion as a threat to the authoritarian government. In interviews with American news organizations permitted by North Korea in September, Fowle said that he had been allowed to contact his wife and three small children in Miamisburg, Ohio, outside Dayton, but that he had not spoken with them at
that point for three weeks. “I’m desperate to get back to them,” he told the
interviewers. His family had previously offered a public “heartfelt apology” on his
behalf for any offense he might have committed. The White House remains hopeful for
the release of the other two Americans. “We certainly welcome the decision from the
D.P.R.K. to release him,” said Josh Earnest, the White House press secretary, using the
initials of North Korea’s formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.
“While this was a positive decision by the D.P.R.K., we remain focused on the
continued detention of Kenneth Bae and Matthew Miller and again call on the D.P.R.K.
to immediately release them.” Earnest said Sweden, which represents American
interests in Pyongyang, had played an important role in seeking the release of the
three Americans. He also said North Korea had made it a condition of Fowle’s release
that the United States transport him out of the country. The Pentagon provided a plane
to fly him out. North Korea in the past has released Americans held in captivity after
high-profile visits by envoys from the United States, including former President Bill
Clinton, who traveled to Pyongyang in 2009 to secure the freedom of two journalists.
Experts on North Korea said the release of Fowle without such a visit represented a
conciliatory sign. “Clearly, the North Koreans want to start a dialogue with the U.S.,”
said Bill Richardson, the former governor of New Mexico, who has traveled to North
Korea more than half a dozen times on diplomatic missions. “With this positive gesture,
by not demanding a special envoy, they are signaling a slight warming in a very cold
and still hostile U.S.-North Korean relationship,” Richardson said in an email. (Peter
Baker and Rick Gladstone, “Jeffrey Fowle, American Citizen, Released by North Korea,”
October 22 there had been no deal with North Korea in the release of one of three
detained Americans but that Washington was willing to resume talks if the reclusive
country took steps towards denuclearization. Jeffrey Fowle, 56, was arrested in May for
leaving a Bible at a sailor’s club in the North Korean city of Chongjin. “There was no
quid pro quo and we are very concerned about the remaining American citizens who
are in North Korea and we have great hopes that North Korea will see the benefits of
releasing them also as soon as possible,” Kerry said, referring to Kenneth Bae and
Matthew Miller. KCNA said Kim Jong Un, the country’s leader, released the “criminal"
Fowle, taking into consideration “repeated requests” from President Barack Obama.
Kerry, speaking in Berlin, expressed hope that stop-start denuclearization talks with
North Korea, already under wide-ranging U.N. sanctions, could start again soon, again
holding out the prospect that the United States could eventually begin reducing its
regional military presence. “We’ve said from day one that if North Korea wants to
rejoin the community of nations, it knows how to do it – it can come to the talks
prepared to discuss denuclearization,” Kerry said. “The United States is fully prepared,
if they do that and begin that process, we are prepared to begin the process of
reducing the need for American force and presence in the region because the threat
itself will then be reduced.” “We need some indication from Kim Jong Un and the
regime that they are in fact prepared to talk seriously about the central topics of the
talks, which is the issue of denuclearisation. We do not want to return to talks just for
the sake of talks – we’ve been there before,” Kerry said. Kerry noted that North Korea
had stepped up its nuclear efforts and a senior State Department official ruled out any
near-term plan to cut down the U.S. military presence. “We are absolutely not
considering reducing our presence in the region,” the official said. “There is a long way
to go in the process of denuclearisation before the question of future security arrangements on the Korean peninsula would be an issue." (Reuters, “Kerry Says No Deal Made with North Korea in Release of American,” October 22, 2014) Although North Korea has released Jeffrey Fowle, an American who had been held in the country since May, it is unlikely to improve diplomatic relations between the U.S. and North Korea, analysts say. The release was confirmed by State Department Spokeswoman Marie Harf, who said Fowle was flown to Guam on a Defense Department plane. His release was brokered by Sweden because Washington does not have diplomatic relations with Pyongyang. The State Department declined to give specifics of the release and would not confirm whether there were active talks to free other Americans imprisoned in North Korea. “We work very hard in a variety of ways we don’t publicly outline to get these Americans home,” Harf said. Leon Sigal, director of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Project at the Social Science Research Council, called Fowle’s release “a serious attempt at diplomatic engagement” from the North Koreans. He says it was up to the Pyongyang to move diplomatic relations, and Fowle’s release is that move. “Why do they want to improve relations with us? Because, sitting where they are, a rising China is more of a concern to them than almost anybody else. Their entire existence they’ve never wanted to be dependent on any one neighbor,” Sigal says. But, he adds, “We don’t even want to talk to them…I don’t think we’re going to get talks any time soon.” Relations with neighbors South Korea and Japan are also key for North Korea, but it has long had strained diplomatic ties with both countries. North Korea has recently indicated a willingness to increase engagement, however, as its leaders traveled to South Korea for military-to-military talks. The North has also engaged in talks with the Japanese, centering around the fate of Japanese citizens abducted from within the country’s borders who continue to be held in North Korea. Sigal says China is commonly cited as a key broker in negotiations between North Korea and the rest of the world, but it’s not in China’s interest to bring North Korea to its knees over the issue of nuclear weapons. China has encouraged the U.S. to engage in dialogue with North Korea. (Teresa Walsh, “Release of Jeffrey Fowle Won’t Improve Relations with U.S.,” U.S. News & World Report, October 21, 2014)

The South Korean government is not using the existing laws it has at its disposal to prevent private groups from launching balloons carrying propaganda leaflets to North Korea. This could be evidence that Seoul is sitting on its hands while residents near the border continue to fret over the deepening conflict over the leaflets, which has sparked at least one gun battle in recent weeks. Unified Progressive Party lawmaker Kim Jae-yeon said on Oct. 12 that the Imjingak resort in Paju, Gyeonggi Province, which some groups have announced as the site of an upcoming balloon launch on October 25, is classified as a no-fly zone (P-513), with the Aviation Act prohibiting all flights for military reasons. Anyone wishing to use a large balloon to send leaflets to North Korea would need permission from the Minister of National Defense or Commander of the ROK-US Combined Forces Command, with violators subject to up to six years in prison or a fine of up to 5 million won (US$4,740). “On October 20, a civic group that was attempting to launch a balloon carrying leaflets on the Sewol ferry disaster from Gwanghwamun in downtown Seoul was stopped by police citing a no-fly zone (P-73),” Kim noted. “Police should apply the same standard to stop the leaflet launch event scheduled to take place in another no-fly zone (P-518) near the armistice
line,” she added. Indeed, Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency commissioner Gu Eun-su said at a National Assembly audit on October 20 that “if a launch is suspected, and it is in violation of Aviation Act, it should be stopped.” The Aviation Act isn’t the only legal grounds for punishing the launches. Perhaps the strongest case lies with Article 5 of the Act on the Performance of Duties by Police Officers, which states that police can take measures that they deem necessary when damage to human lives or bodies or property damage is predicted. In October 2012, the administration of then-President Lee Myung-bak used this law as a basis for preventing a leaflet launch, citing provocative moves by North Korea and the possibility of a clash with local residents. Another law that could be invoked against the launches is the Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation Act. This law requires the Unification Minister’s approval for any items transported into North Korea. The groups behind the launches have not received approval for using the balloons to take items such as dollar bills and radios into North Korea. But a Unification Ministry official said on condition of anonymity that there “must be a clear recipient for something to qualify as ‘transporting items into North Korea’ according to the Exchange and Cooperation Act.” “It’s not really a strong basis for punishment,” the official added. Seoul punished the actual making of large-scale balloons once in 2008, citing the High-Pressure Gas Safety Control Act. But it hasn’t proven effective at blocking launches since then, as the groups responsible have sidestepped punishment by earning gas safety certification and using smaller balloons. Some are saying a more fundamental solution would be for the National Assembly to enact new legislation specifically barring leaflet distribution. New Politics Alliance for Democracy lawmaker Kim Seung-nam said he and others were working on an amendment to the Exchange and Cooperation Act that would require prior Unification Ministry notice for leaflet launches, with the minister’s approval required even for cases using large advertising balloons. The ministry official dismissed the notion that it had any plans for establishing a legal basis for blocking the launches. “We have no plans for that,” the official said. Attorney Kim Kyung-jin said Seoul could apply legal prohibitions on the leaflet distributions “if the political will was there.” “Instead of trying to exploit the leaflet issue for political ends, they need to take clear steps to punish it,” Kim said, citing resident concerns about practical damages. (Choi Hyun-june, “North Korea: Seoul Has Legal Basis to Stop Leaflet Balloon Launches,” Hankyore, October 22, 2014) The South Korean government has concluded that it can’t stop the scattering of anti-North Korea leaflets with the Aviation Act, an official said October 23. Those opposed to the spread of leaflets via balloons have argued that the legislation may provide a legal ground to tackle the civilian campaign, which they say hampers inter-Korean ties. The law bans any unauthorized flight in the Demilitarized Zone and other controlled areas. The transpiration ministry, which is in charge of the matter, concluded that the legislation can’t be applied to the activists’ actions, according to the unification ministry official. “The large-sized balloons used to scatter the leaflets don’t have any device for land-based control, meaning they are not considered ultra-small flight apparatuses,” the official told reporters on background. He added there is no change in the government’s stance that it has no legal grounds to block the spread of the leaflets across the heavily armed border. A group of conservative activists here revealed plans to send leaflets critical of the North’s leadership and system into the North from Imjingak, a park on the border, on October 25. In a statement issued last night, the North demanded the South first take measures against the leaflet scattering
and possible military clashes along the sea and land border. The unification ministry, which handles daily inter-Korean affairs, dismissed the North's call. "We reaffirm our position that all issues between the South and the North should be resolved through dialogue," the official said. The North should stop its unilateral claim aimed at justifying its recent provocative acts near the border and abide by bilateral agreements, he added. (Yonhap, “Aviation Law Cannot Stop Leaflet Campaign: Official,” October 23, 2014)

North Korea has begun a joint venture with Russia to renovate its key railway network, according to Pyongyang’s media, amid growing signs of closer ties between the former communist allies. The North held a ground-breaking ceremony Tuesday for rebuilding a railroad linking the logistical hub of Nampho and several areas rich in coal, cement and other natural resources, KCNA reported. The project is designed to modernize the aged Jaedong-Kangdong-Nampho railway, a key industrial transportation route running through the capital, Pyongyang. Nampho is the North’s largest port city along the west and Jaedong is home to a number of coal mines. Participants in the event, held at the East Pyongyang Railway Station, included the North’s external economy minister Ri Ryong-nam and Russia’s minister of Far East development Alexander Galushka. They chair the Inter-Governmental Committee for Cooperation in Trade, Economy, Science and Technology between the sides. (Yonhap, “N. Korea Modernizing Railway Lines with Russia’s Support,” October 22, 2014)

South Korea has demolished a Christmas tree tower at the tensely-guarded border, a defense official said, removing a recurring source of inter-Korean conflict amid hopes of a thaw in ties. In an annual Christmas ritual, South Korea used to cover the metal tower on Aegibong hill near the western front-line border area with colorful lights as part of propaganda efforts against North Korea. The tower could be seen as far away as the North Korean border town of Kaesong. The practice has been a recurring source of diplomatic and military tension with the North, which once threatened to shell the tower. But the removal of the tower last week was carried out purely in consideration of the rising risk of collapse, the defense official said. "The maintenance team of the defense ministry conducted a safety check on major military facilities last November and the Aegibong light tower was given a D grade," the official said, refuting any speculation that the demolition had anything to do with inter-Korean relations. The official said that the tower was at risk of collapse in case of strong winds or other physical pressure. But some experts speculated the government may have considered the reconciliatory mood between the rival Koreas. (Yonhap, “Seoul Tears down Controversial Christmas Tree Tower at Border,” October 22, 2014)
hopes that China, as a great pal, will act as a great pal should," he added. But Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China did not believe taking the issue to the ICC would help. "We have always supported dealing with human rights differences through dialogue and cooperation," Hua told a daily news briefing in Beijing. "We believe that for the issue of human rights, referring a case to the ICC is not helpful to improving a country's human rights situation." (Miriam Donath, “At U.N., China Asked to Back Rights Case against North Korea,” Reuters, October 23, 2014)

CPRK Secretariat information bulletin 1076 “denouncing the south Korean authorities for conniving at and fostering human scum's anti-DPRK leaflet scattering operation. Despicable human scum are making desperate efforts to scatter leaflets on October 25. The U.S. and ultra-right conservative forces are zealously prodding them into such operation. The south Korean authorities are, in fact, encouraging such racket, claiming that "they have no legal ground to halt it" and trumpeting about "voluntary action" and "freedom of expression." ...They are feigning ignorance of human scum's anti-DPRK leaflet scattering operations, patronizing, fostering and conniving at them though they are mobilizing the riot police to mercilessly stop civilians or anyone from scattering leaflets courting their displeasure. This self-contradictory action is absolutely intolerable. As proven by the recent situation, leaflet scattering is a very dangerous act which may not only drive the north-south relations into catastrophe but spark off even a war. If the south Korean authorities do not want to suffer tremendous misfortune due to the racket of a handful of human scum, they should take a proper step to halt it. Whether to halt it or connive at it is a touchstone showing the stand and attitude of the south Korean authorities: Dialogue or confrontation, improvement of inter-Korean relations or their catastrophe. If another leaflet scattering operation is conducted despite the repeated warnings of the DPRK and opposition and rejection of the public at home and abroad, the inter-Korean relations will be pushed to an uncontrollable catastrophe and the situation will reach an alarming phase. We are watching with vigilance what is going on in south Korea.” (KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities Warned against Disastrous Consequences of Anti-DPRK Leaflet-Scattering Operations,” October 23, 2014)

For weeks, American intelligence agencies puzzled over the mysterious disappearance of Kim Jong-un, the North Korean dictator. Now Kim is back on the public stage – a walking stick in his left hand – and it is the State Department’s turn to puzzle. A series of gestures by the North Korean leader, most dramatically the release this week of an imprisoned American tourist, Jeffrey E. Fowle, has raised hopes that after two and a half years of bellicose rhetoric, punctuated by periodic missile tests, Kim is groping for some kind of rapprochement with the United States and its allies. It has been a multifront charm offensive: North Korea unexpectedly sent a high-level delegation to South Korea to attend the closing ceremonies of the Asian Games. It dispatched a senior envoy to the European Union to voice an interest in dialogue, and another to the wood-paneled confines of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, where he sparred with an establishment crowd over North Korea’s human rights record. Yesterday, North Korea said Kim had personally ordered Fowle’s release after considering requests from President Obama. With Mr. Obama traveling to Beijing next month for a meeting of Pacific Rim leaders, that could be interpreted as an olive
branch to both the United States and China, which is fed up with Pyongyang’s provocations but weary of American demands to pressure its hermetic neighbor. “This is either Kim Jong-un on his own, or the people around him saying, ‘We’ve got to change this paradigm, because it is not working,’” said Joseph R. DeTrani, a longtime C.I.A. official who specialized in North Korea and is now the president of the Intelligence and National Security Alliance, an industry group. Secretary of State John Kerry took note of the shift in the diplomatic winds. On a visit this week to Germany, where he was marking the 25th anniversary of the fall of another Cold War relic, the Berlin Wall, he said, “We hope that the dynamics can develop in the next weeks, months perhaps, where we could get back to talks.” “The United States is absolutely prepared to do that,” he added. “We’ve said from Day 1 that if North Korea wants to rejoin the community of nations, it knows how to do it.” Divining North Korea’s intentions, of course, is a fool’s game. Nobody is even sure why its supreme leader vanished from the public eye for 40 days. The prevailing theory is that he had some kind of surgery on his ankle or leg. Reports that he was injured in a car accident briefly circulated in South Korea, though DeTrani said he had his doubts. “I’ve been to Pyongyang, and there aren’t a lot of cars on the road,” he said. Guessing whether Kim is trying another in a series of charm offensives that eventually burn out, or seeking a genuine shift in North Korea’s relations with the world, is all but impossible. Still, his actions could revive a debate over North Korea policy inside the White House that has been dormant since 2012, when the United States made a brief, ill-fated bid for a deal with Pyongyang. The administration has returned to its policy, known as “strategic patience,” which can be summed up as trying to outlast the regime by granting it no concessions upfront and staying in sync with North Korea’s neighbors. The trouble is, those countries may be softening their stances, too. South Korea warily welcomed North Korea’s No. 2 official, Hwang Pyong-so, when he turned up at the Asian Games. Japan’s prime minister, Abe Shinzo, is exploring direct talks with Pyongyang on the fraught issue of Japanese citizens who were abducted by North Korea in the 1970s and ’80s. China has long encouraged the United States to keep talking to North Korea, even as President Xi Jinping has grown deeply restless with the young dictator next door, snubbing him in July by visiting South Korea on his first presidential visit to the Korean Peninsula. For Xi, a return to diplomacy with North Korea would be a tangible accomplishment of his meeting with Obama at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Beijing. “The American missionary is a pawn in a larger game,” said Michael J. Green, who served as a senior adviser on Asia during the George W. Bush administration. Mr. Fowle’s release, he said, “may have been done in that context to ease the Americans and others back to a less-conditional resumption of the talks, which Pyongyang will argue is de facto acceptance of their new nuclear weapons status.” Like many North Korea watchers, Mr. Green said he was dubious that Mr. Kim would ever give up his nuclear weapons. If the administration shifted to a policy of engagement, he said, that could provoke Republicans in Congress, who are already worried that the United States will offer too many concessions to seal a nuclear agreement with Iran. “It’s a tricky game for the administration,” he said. Given how little anyone knows about the cane-wielding Mr. Kim, the only sensible response may be to wait – not that this will stop the theories from the opinionated fraternity of North Korea watchers. “It’s amazing how all these people who talk about how mysterious North Korea is seem so sure about what they are doing,” said Joel S. Wit, the founder of
The United States has moved to ease jitters among conservative South Koreans by agreeing to delay the return of wartime control of the South Korean military to Seoul until its forces are better prepared to deter North Korea’s nuclear and missile threats or fight it in a war. The delay, agreed to at the Pentagon, means that the main American military command will stay in Yongsan, central Seoul, for the time being. The United States military’s presence in the heart of Seoul, the South Korean capital, has increasingly become an eyesore, especially among younger South Koreans. The American military had been scheduled to vacate 653 acres of prime real estate in Yongsan by 2016, relocating most of its personnel there to a new base being built south of Seoul. If the main command post stays on, it will significantly reduce the size of land to be vacated, complicating the city’s plan to build a badly needed municipal park in Yongsan. “We must deal with this issue in a realistic and coolheaded manner, considering national security,” Min Kyung-wook, the spokesman for President Park Geun-hye, said. Min’s comment came as the political opposition denounced Park for breaking her election promise to retake wartime control by 2015. The United States assumed operational control of South Korea’s military in 1950 after it rushed American troops to the Korean Peninsula during the Korean War. It returned peacetime control to Seoul in 1994, but it was still obligated to command combined American-South Korean forces in the event of war. That pledge has been a central fixture of the United States-South Korean military alliance, but many South Koreans, especially the postwar generations, began seeing it as a slight to their national pride. At Seoul’s request, the United States agreed in 2007 to return that power to the South by 2012. The plan was for the South Korean military to build its capabilities to play a lead role in the country’s defense. But the date was pushed back to 2015, after the South accused North Korea of torpedoing a South Korean warship in 2010 and fears of military conflict rose. Conservative South Koreans demanded that Seoul ask the United States for another delay as a sense of vulnerability increased after the North’s successful launching of a long-range rocket in late 2012 and its third nuclear test in February last year. Park, reversing her campaign pledge, formally asked President Obama during a summit meeting in April to consider another delay. After months of negotiations, the United States accepted South Korea’s request during the annual Security Consultative Meeting at the Pentagon today. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Han Min-koo, the South Korean defense minister, agreed to put in effect Seoul’s proposal for a “conditions-based approach” to transferring control “to ensure the combined defense posture remains strong and seamless.” Rather than setting a new target date for the transfer, the allies will now “focus on South Korea achieving critical defensive capabilities against an intensifying North Korean threat,” according to statements from both sides. Their joint communiqué issued after talks today stated that they would let South Korea take wartime control of allied forces when “the security environment on the Korean Peninsula and in the region is conducive to a stable operational control transition.” That phrase left the South Korean news media wondering whether the transfer was postponed indefinitely – a theory South Korea’s Defense Ministry quickly rejected. The allies will negotiate details of the new transfer plan by next fall, they said. But South Korean officials said they now expected the transfer to take place in the mid-
2020s, by which time the South hopes to build an ability to detect and destroy any move by the North to launch its nuclear weapons or missiles, as well as its vast arrays of frontline artillery and rocket batteries. Until then, they said, the American military will also keep its 210th Field Artillery Brigade in Camp Casey in Dongducheon, north of Seoul. The brigade’s M270A1 Multiple Launch Rocket Systems are crucial to countering the North Korean rockets, which are amassed near the border, keeping Seoul within their range. The new delay triggered strong criticism from the political opposition in the South, which has been arguing that the transition was long overdue and that another postponement would only increase tensions on the peninsula by making North Korea more intent on building its weapons systems, including missile and nuclear capabilities. “President Park, as commander in chief of the nation’s armed forces, must apologize to the people for this wretched reality of giving up the country’s military sovereignty,” the New Politics Alliance for Democracy, the country’s main opposition party, said in a statement. (Choe Sang-hun, “South Korea Delays Shift in Control of Military,” New York Times, October 24, 2014, p. A-10)

South Korea has sent an invitation to North Korea for its October forum aimed at implementing President Park Geun-hye’s policy for promoting peace in Northeast Asia, government sources said. Seoul plans to hold a meeting of government and private experts to exchange views on such issues as energy security, nuclear safety and cyberspace, the main agenda items to be dealt with at the “Northeast Asia Peace Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI),” from Oct. 28 to 30, they noted. The vision calls for countries in the region to build trust through nonpolitical cooperation in areas before coping with political and security matters. “To my knowledge, Seoul has invited North Korea to the forum,” said a government official. (Yonhap, “Seoul Invites Pyongyang to Peace Forum,” October 23, 2014)

The government decided to send a delegation to North Korea in spite of opposition from family members of Japanese abductees due to the prime minister’s desire to directly convey his strong determination to resolve the issue to the Pyongyang officials in charge of the re-investigation and thereby break the impasse between Japan and North Korea. “I want to solve the abduction issue during the Abe administration by any means possible,” Prime Minister Abe Shinzo told the press, although it is uncertain that the decision will lead to any results. During their stay in Pyongyang from October 27 to 30, the delegation plans to meet with the Special Investigation Committee established by North Korea in July. In bilateral talks held in September, North Korea delayed its first report on the re-investigation into abductions, which was originally scheduled to be delivered around late summer or early autumn. The Japan delegation will ask the committee about the reasons for the delay. During the talks in September, North Korea proposed that Japan make an official visit to Pyongyang during which it would explain the progress of its re-investigation. Tokyo quickly decided to dispatch a delegation, but it has also made careful explanations to ruling and opposition parties, as well as abductedees’ families. The families oppose the visit because they believe North Korea will manipulate Tokyo if a delegation is sent at an intermediate stage. Lawmakers of ruling and opposition parties, including Hiranuma Takeo – a leader of the Party for Future Generations, who heads a suprapartisan group of lawmakers on the abduction issue – took part in a meeting on the issue yesterday. The prime minister regards
himself as performing a leading role on the abduction issue, and said in his introduction, “I will not read documents prepared by administrative staff.” “We will tell North Korea that other matters will not be discussed without progress on the abduction issue,” Abe said. (Yomiuri Shim bun, “Abe Goes out on a Limb to Solve Abduction Issue,” October 24, 2014)

It is too premature to talk about reducing American forces in the Korean Peninsula without “authentic and credible” negotiations with Pyongyang about ending its nuclear program, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said. Kerry said the United States was willing to restart denuclearization talks with North Korea although he emphasized “there is no value in talks just for the sake of talks.” The issue was discussed between Kerry and his South Korean counterpart Yun Byung-se at the State Department. “North Korea must demonstrate that it is serious about nuclearization,” Kerry said. “We need to be certain that it is prepared to live up to its international obligations and abide by international norms of behavior.” But Kerry said just entering into talks with Pyongyang was not enough and the U.S. would remain vigilant against the threat that North Korea posed. “The mere entering into talks is not an invitation to take any actions regarding troops or anything else,” Kerry said after meeting with Yun. “If anything, it would be way too premature to have any thought or even discussion of such thing. In a surprise move this week North Korea released Jeffrey Fowle, 56, one of three American prisoners imprisoned in the reclusive country. North Korea’s state news agency said Kim Jong Un, the country’s leader, personally ordered the release of Fowle. Kerry said the two remaining American prisoners in North Korea should be released “because they’re being held inappropriately.” “Our hope is they will recognize the goodwill that could be built and the gesture that it would offer to the world of their willingness to try to open up a different diplomatic track,” Kerry said. (Reuters, “No U.S. Troop Cuts without Credible North Korea Nuclear Deal, Says Kerry,” October 24, 2104)

Kerry: “So let me make it absolutely clear that the mere entering into talks is not an invitation to take any actions regarding troops or anything else at this point. It would be way too premature to have any thought or even discussion about such a thing. The only purpose of entering the talks is to come to an understanding regarding, first, the denuclearization, and then following the denuclearization, obviously, whatever relationship might be appropriate. But it is entirely premature to be talking about any troop reductions or anything else at this point in time, as it is also premature to have any thoughts about visits at this point in time. The first thing you have to do is come to a competent, real, authentic set of talks about denuclearization, and that is the prerequisite to any other possibilities thereafter.” (DoS, Secretary of State John Kerry, Remarks with ROK Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se after Their Meeting, October 24, 2104)

The top American military commander in South Korea said on Friday that he believed North Korea had most likely completed its yearslong quest to shrink a nuclear weapon to a size that could fit atop a ballistic missile. His assessment, if correct, could change American calculations about the vulnerability of the United States and its allies, and the North’s ability to sell nuclear weapons to others. At a Pentagon news conference, Gen. Curtis M. Scaparrotti cautioned that the North had not yet tested a miniaturized
weapon, and for a weapon “that complex, without it being tested, the probability of it being effective is pretty darn low.” But he made clear that based on all he had learned, “they have the capability to have miniaturized the device at this point.” That has long been a disputed question. But General Scaparrotti’s assessment seemed to suggest that the North had made progress since last year, when President Obama appeared to contradict a Defense Intelligence Agency finding about the country’s ability to put a warhead on a missile. At that time, the agency issued a report that it had “moderate confidence” that the North had mastered the technology of building a weapon that could fit into a missile warhead. That forced James R. Clapper Jr., the director of national intelligence, to issue a statement that the agency’s position was not the consensus view of 15 other intelligence agencies. Mr. Obama agreed, saying, “You know, based on our current intelligence assessment, we do not think that they have that capacity.” General Scaparrotti sided with the Defense Intelligence Agency. “I believe they have the capability to have miniaturized the device at this point, and they have the technology to potentially actually deliver what they say they have,” he told reporters. It was unclear if he was basing that on new intelligence. But even if General Scaparrotti is correct, it does not mean that the North is ready to threaten the United States with a nuclear-tipped missile. While the North has successfully tested its medium-range missiles, and equipped them with re-entry vehicles, it has not achieved its goal of successfully test-flying an intercontinental ballistic missile. Its biggest accomplishment has been popping a tiny satellite into space. And even if the North could mount a weapon on top of a missile, experts note, there would be no assurance it could deliver a warhead to a target. “Re-entry is a real challenge,” said Gary Samore, a Harvard scholar who served as Mr. Obama’s top adviser on weapons of mass destruction during his first term. “There is a lot of heat, and a lot of vibration” as a warhead re-enters the atmosphere, aimed at its target. “You have to do live testing to see if it works,” he said. “It’s not something you can do through simulation.” But for the North, the missile and nuclear technology may not be intended as much for military use as for a bargaining chip – the leaders presumably understand what would follow if they actually attacked the United States or one of its treaty allies in the Pacific. Each nuclear and missile test is meant to show that seven decades of sanctions and containment have failed. And each one amounts to an advertisement for the world’s most destructive weapons. While there is no evidence that the North has ever sold nuclear technology to the Tehran government, it supplied a nuclear reactor to Syria. A warhead, even an untested one, could become the ultimate export for a starving nation. But it would also be a huge risk for the North; President George W. Bush, soon after the North’s first nuclear test eight years ago, warned the country that it would be held responsible for any nuclear incident in which its weapons were used. Obama had Robert M. Gates, then the defense secretary, issue a similar warning. But the administration’s strategy has been to largely ignore the North, refusing to acknowledge it as a nuclear state or re-engage in negotiations that Gates warned could amount to “buying the same horse again,” meaning making concessions for another temporary halt in the nuclear program, or resumed inspections. “We remain open to dialogue with North Korea, but there is no value in talks just for the sake of talks,” Secretary of State John Kerry said today after meeting with South Korea’s foreign minister, Yun Byung-se, at the State Department. “North Korea must demonstrate that it is serious about denuclearization,” he said. The North, for its part,
has been by turns seeking new talks and issuing statements that its nuclear capabilities are here to stay, and will be steadily improved. In the past week alone, it has opened fire along the demilitarized zone and released one of three Americans being held on thin charges. “What they speak and what they do seem to be inconsistent,” Yun said. Kerry has suggested that the United States was looking for ways to re-engage with the country, though such efforts have always been treated with skepticism at the White House. That did not deter him today. “The mere entering into talks is not an invitation to take any actions regarding troops” that the North wants removed from South Korea, “or anything else at this point,” Kerry said. “The first thing you have to do is come to a competent, real, authentic set of talks about denuclearization,” he said, “and that is the prerequisite.” (David E. Sanger, “U.S. Commander Sees Key Nuclear Step by North Korea,” New York Times, October 25, 2014, p. A-4) “North Korea’s miniaturization capability is thought to be considerable, and it is right for our military to respond to the threat with this in mind,” South Korea’s Defense Minister Han Min-koo said on October 27 after a lawmaker asked whether the North was able to fit a nuclear warhead on its Scud missiles. The minister also said that the North might be capable of producing a uranium-based nuclear warhead. The North is thought to have facilities capable of producing 40 kg of highly enriched uranium per year, meaning that the North, in theory, could make two HEU warheads every year. (Song Sang-ho, “Han Warns of N.K. Nuclear Warhead Tech,” Korea Herald, October 27, 2014) North Korea threatened to reconsider an earlier agreement with South Korea to hold the high-level talks planned for later this month, according to the Unification Ministry. “This shows the South is overlooking the North’s request to keep the dialogue mood afloat,” the ministry cited the North as saying. Pyongyang alleged the Seoul government has failed to prevent a group of right-wing activists from flying anti-North Korea propaganda leaflets across the border. North Korea delivered the message in a fax through the military hotline to the Cheong Wa Dae. The message sent in the name of the North’s powerful National Defense Commission said the two Korea’s should “think about whether the high-level dialogue could be held under such a mood.” The NSC, the southern counterpart of the commission, renewed its stance that the Seoul government cannot stop such civilian activities without appropriate legal grounds. The ministry said North Korea claimed in the message that the government did nothing to prevent the activists from launching the leaflet balloons. Ministry spokesman Lim Byeong-cheol said in a briefing that it is not fair for North Korea to raise the issue of the leaflet campaign. "Freedom of expression is the core value guaranteed in our constitution. So the North should not attempt to use the matter as a precondition for the already agreed inter-Korean talks," he said. Regarding the government’s response to the leaflet campaign, he said the government has been doing what it should to guarantee the safety of the people in the event of possible conflicts between local residents and the civilian activists.” (Shim Jae-yun, “North Korea Threatens to Scrap High-Level Talks,” Korea Herald, October 27, 2014)“Rodong Sinmun: “The south Korean puppet warmongers fired bullets and shells at a warship of the Navy of the Korean People’s Army in the waters off the southwest part on the West Sea of Korea on October 7, sparking off a military clash. They fired at random at KPA soldiers on a routine patrol duty in the portion of the area of the north
side along the Military Demarcation Line on October 18 and 19. Commenting on this, Rodong Sinmun [October 27] terms these provocations deliberate actions to totally chill the hard-won atmosphere of dialogue and drive the north-south relations into a phase of war. The recent firing cases prove that the promise the south Korean authorities made to the north side to make positive efforts for dialogue between the north and the south and the improvement of the inter-Korean relations is hypocrisy and an empty talk and what they are seeking is only confrontation. ... Their firing provocations are very dangerous. No one can vouch that their deliberate military provocations would not lead to an all-out war against the DPRK under such tense situation as now. The inter-Korean relations are inching close to confrontation due to the anti-DPRK leaflet-scattering operations. The puppet group’s reckless actions to bring them to a total collapse through outrageous military provocations clearly prove how deceptive and shameless “dialogue" touted by them is. The south Korean authorities should stop acting rashly, clearly understanding that their repeated military provocations are treacherous acts of leading the situation to an uncontrollable catastrophe, missing an opportunity of mending the inter-Korean relations.” (KCNA, “S. Korean Warmongers Censured for Their Military Provocation to DPRK,” October 27, 2014)

*Rodong Sinmun*: “The south Korean authorities are talking a lot about dialogue while making much ado about the north-south high-level contact. ... This is a total distortion of the reality and a deceptive artifice to shift the responsibility for the situation onto the north. The south Korean puppet group is getting frantic in its moves to spoil the atmosphere of dialogue, dead-set against the improvement of the inter-Korean relations. Such confrontational maniacs' behavior of paying lip-service to "dialogue" and so on is like beating one on the back and caressing his chin. The DPRK will never tolerate the puppet group’s such double-dealing attitude as intensifying provocations to it while misleading the public opinion under the signboard of “dialogue." If the south Korean authorities truly want the dialogue and improved relations between the north and the south, they should stop all sorts of political and military hostile acts including the anti-DPRK leaflet scattering operations. The north-south relations are now standing at the crucial crossroads. The prevailing grave situation calls upon the responsible authorities to make a decision. If south Korea persistently makes provocative remarks to rattle the nerves of the dialogue partner and escalate the military tension, these practices will block even the lane of dialogue opened with much effort, much less paving a wide avenue for mending the inter-Korean relations. The fate of the north-south dialogue entirely hinges on the behavior of the south Korean authorities.” (KCNA, “*Rodong Sinmun* Blasts S. Korean Authorities’ Double-Dealing Attitude,” October 27, 2014)

North Korean officials said they met for the first time with the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights Marzuki Darusman and “envisage” him visiting their country. A U.N. official confirmed the meeting. A visit by a U.N. human rights official would be a breakthrough in international efforts to have a firsthand look at the way the deeply impoverished but nuclear-armed country treats its citizens. But the North’s offer likely is another attempt to stop a growing international call to refer its dismal human rights situation to the International Criminal Court. The U.N. special rapporteur is “very
optimistic” about the possibility of a visit, “and very happy to hear from our side,” Choe Myong-nam, a North Korean foreign ministry official in charge of human rights issues, told the Associated Press shortly after the meeting. Choe said no date had been fixed, but his country is looking for a “new and objective report” on North Korea’s human rights situation. “Previous reports he has prepared have been based on rumors and fabrications, as well as distortions,” he said. The meeting comes a day before Darusman presents his annual report on North Korea to the U.N. General Assembly’s human rights committee. An advance copy of his report, obtained by the Associated Press, “strongly urges” that the U.N. Security Council refer the country to the International Criminal Court over its human rights record. (Associated Press, “N.K., U.N. Investigator Meet on Visit,” October 28, 2014)

A Japanese government delegation arrived in Pyongyang on October 27 for a four-day visit aimed at assessing North Korea’s investigation into the fates of Japanese nationals abducted decades ago. In talks with North Korea’s special investigation committee on Tuesday and Wednesday in Pyongyang, the delegation will try to obtain information on 12 unaccounted for Japanese abductees recognized by Tokyo. The mission, led by Ihara Junichi, director general of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau of the Foreign Ministry, was greeted by Ryu Song Il, chief of the Japanese affairs section at the North Korean Foreign Ministry, upon arrival at Pyongyang airport. (Kyodo, “Japan Mission in N. Korea to Scrutinize Abduction Probe,” October 27, 2014)

Japan demanded October 28 that North Korea speed up its investigation into the fates of Japanese nationals it abducted decades ago and report the findings “as soon as possible.” Ihara, who is leading a 12-member delegation, lodged the demand during the first of two days of talks with North Korea’s special investigation committee led by So Tae Ha, vice minister of state security. “The abductions are the most important issue for Japan” in the all-inclusive and comprehensive investigation into all Japanese residing in North Korea that Pyongyang launched in July, Ihara told So, also counselor for security at the National Defense Commission, the top state organ headed by leader Kim Jong Un. (Kyodo, “Japan Presses N. Korea to Report on Abduction Probe Soon,” October 28, 2014) On the second and last day of talks on October 29, North Korean officials explained what had taken place in their investigation. But it was not the investigation that the Japanese government has been focusing on. “We conducted a thorough investigation of the cemeteries and burial grounds where the remains of Japanese are buried,” said Kim Hyon Chol, a department director at North Korea’s Ministry of Land and Environment Protection who was in charge of the investigation into the remains of Japanese troops who died around the end of World War II. “We will report on the contents of our activities as well as what we have learned as a result of the investigation,” Kim said. Attending the meeting was Kim Myong Chol, a councilor at the State Security Ministry who serves as a vice chairman of the special reinvestigation committee into the abduction issue. The two sides were also expected to discuss the fates of Japanese nationals who went to North Korea to be with their ethnic Korean spouses. (Matsui Nozomi, “In Abduction Issue Talks, N. Korea Vows to Report on Japanese Wartime Remains” Japan Times, October 30, 2014) “The purpose of the latest visit is to directly tell (Pyongyang) that we place our highest priority on the abduction issue and learn the progress of the investigation,” Ihara told reporters after the October 29 meeting. “North Korean officials offered an explanation that answers
our purpose.” During the five-hour meeting on October 29, North Korean officials reportedly presented the outcome of its investigation into the remains of Japanese who died around the end of World War II on the Korean Peninsula. Another official spoke about the issue of Japanese who moved to the isolated country after World War II to be with their Korean spouses. In the afternoon, So Tae Ha, chairman of the abduction issue reinvestigation committee, attended the meeting to comprehensively discuss various topics, including ones that had been taken up the previous day. The two sides talked about issues related to the abduction victims and missing Japanese nationals suspected of being abducted by North Korean agents. (Matsui Nozomi, “Japan, North Korea End Talks on Reinvestigation of Abduction Issue,” Japan Times, October 30, 2014) The latest Japan-North Korea talks were marked by a failure to see eye-to-eye on Pyongyang’s reinvestigation into the fate of Japanese nationals in that country. The gap was particularly evident in the update given to a Japanese government delegation by North Korea’s special investigative commission, regarding progress in its probe into the matter. Japanese officials heard a unilateral declaration by the fact-finding panel that its investigation into the remains of Japanese who died in North Korea around the end of World War II had been completed. The remains of Japanese are among four themes within the panel’s ongoing investigation. The issue is regarded by many as relatively straightforward for Pyongyang to address, thereby making it possible for the investigation commission to tell Tokyo that progress has been made in this respect. This is in stark contrast to the Japanese assertion that the investigative panel must explore the fate of the Japanese abductees, first and foremost. According to the Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry, the remains of an estimated 21,600 Japanese are buried in North Korea. Those Japanese died of starvation, diseases and other causes amid the confusion arising from the war’s end in many parts of that country. The bilateral talks, lasted for a total of about 10 and a half hours, and were attended by officials from the Foreign Ministry and elsewhere in Tokyo as well as senior officials of the commission. After today’s talks, Ihara told reporters his delegation had received a relatively favorable response from the investigation panel. “They offered us explanations in line with the objective [of the delegation’s visit to Pyongyang],” he said. “Japan-North Korea talks will continue in the future, too,” a Foreign Ministry official said immediately after the meeting. However, all members of the delegation remained silent about how North Korea reacted to Japan’s assertions and what was said during the series of bilateral talks. (Nakagawa Takashi, “Pyongyang Meet Highlights Gaps,” Yomiuri Shimbun, October 30, 2014)
decides to pursue such a capability, it is likely to take years to design, develop, manufacture, and deploy an operational submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) force.” (Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., “North Korea: Test Stand for Vertical Launch of Sea-Based Ballistic Missiles Spotted,” 38North, October 28, 2014) 38North: “A recent article in Yonhap citing unnamed ROK Ministry of Defense sources as well as articles in 38 North came to the conclusion that North Korea has built a submarine capable of carrying and launching ballistic missiles that may be operational in 1-2 years. This article has received widespread international attention. While we do not take responsibility for what unnamed sources in the Ministry of Defense have told Yonhap and the veracity of their claims, we do take responsibility for analysis that appears on our website. In that context, we would like to make a number of points clear: First, the new class of submarine we identified at the Sinpo naval shipyard is not a Cold War-era GOLF II-class Soviet ballistic missile submarine. Our analysis is that the submarine is significantly smaller and bears a close resemblance to the former Yugoslav SAVA and HEROJ-class patrol submarines, neither of which carried ballistic missiles. Second, based on the limited quality (e.g., 50-cm and 70-cm resolution) and quantity of commercial satellite imagery available to us we have not identified any hatches, missile launch tubes or other indications that this new class of submarine is configured for the vertical launch of ballistic missiles. However, due to the strategic significance and strong public interest in such a development we are working with our commercial satellite imagery partners to collect high-resolution (e.g., 40-cm and 30-cm resolution) imagery upon which to conduct further analysis. Third, in conducting a review of available commercial satellite imagery of North Korea’s submarine shipyards and bases since 2010 we did not identify a GOLF II-class Soviet ballistic missile submarine or any other submarine configured to carry and launch ballistic missiles. We would presume that government intelligence agencies have more information than 38 North. However, given the source of the Yonhap article—unnamed officials in the Defense Ministry—as well as the absence of any other open source information—we would prefer to keep an open mind on this issue. Fourth, 38 North did identify a newly constructed test stand at the Sinpo naval shipyard that could be used to test a vertical launch tube system that could be used to launch ballistic missiles. This facility began construction in 2013 and appears to have been completed by April 2014. How often it has been used since then and how far the DPRK may have progressed in an effort to develop a submarine launching system and associated ballistic missiles remains unclear based on our limited information. Finally, we would emphasize the great difficulties involved in developing both a functioning submarine vertical launch ballistic missile system and the submarine to carry it appear to be underestimated in the Yonhap article and other media reports. The challenges in developing such a system are great although it is quite possible that the North is exploring this possibility. As our analyst, Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., states in the piece, “While the potential threat from a future North Korean capability to launch ballistic missiles from submarines should not be ignored, it should also not be exaggerated.” (38North, “Media Busters: Is North Korea Building a Ballistic Missile Submarine?” November 4, 2014)
presidential office through a military hotline reiterating its protest against the scattering of propaganda leaflets across the border, according to Seoul’s unification ministry. The commission claimed that the South’s government is not interested in holding the dialogue and it is rather trying to abort the agreed-upon vice ministerial contact, said the ministry. The North said it’s fully up to the South whether to hold the talks or stick to the leaflet spread, the ministry added. The ministry, voiced disappointment over the North’s attitude. “We express regret that it has become difficult to open high-level talks on October 30, as we proposed, due to North Korea’s attitude,” the ministry’s spokesman, Lim Byeong-cheol, said at a press briefing. Lim questioned whether Pyongyang has the will to improve inter-Korean relations. The government, he reaffirmed, has no plans to control the scattering of leaflets by activists, which is associated with freedom of speech. He described the North’s call as an "unjust demand," which is not acceptable. Lim, however, said the agreement to hold high-level talks between late October and early November "still holds true." (Lee Chi-dong, “N. Korea Rejects S. Korea’s Offer of Talks This Week,” Yonhap, October 29, 2014)

Chung Chong-wook, vice chairman of the Presidential Committee for Unification Preparation, suggested in a recent interview that the outside world should “outwait” the Stalinist country before removing them in four steps. President Park Geun-hye heads the committee. “The North will eventually reach the moment," Chung said, referring to his call for patience to wait the North out until it comes to the negotiating table. Only then, he said, will the outside world and Pyongyang be able to implement a four-step approach to do away with the latter’s nuclear arsenal and its related weapons program. “The first step should be aimed at preventing Pyongyang from making any further progress in its nuclear program,” he said. “We then freeze the program and increase transparency in North Korea’s nuclear activities. One way to do this is having the reclusive state accept international inspections." He said that the third step will focus on scaling back the program gradually, which will be followed by full denuclearization of the North. “Getting it going is the difficult part,” he said. He added that the process should coincide with separate efforts to provide the North with humanitarian assistance, but didn’t mention tying any progress the North makes with corresponding incentives. Meanwhile, he also said the two Koreas could discuss ways to settle the Seoul-imposed May 24 sanctions, which, among other things, freeze all inter-Korean trade and other cooperative efforts, except in the Gaeseong Industrial Complex. The sanctions were imposed on May 24, 2010 by Park’s predecessor, Lee Myung-bak, after North Korea sank the South Korean frigate Cheonan in March of that year. "The measures were not imposed by the Park administration and they are not legally binding," Chung said. “There are signs that the May 24 sanctions can be eased under the current government." He also pointed out that South Korean enterprises have shown interest in participation in the "Najin-Khasan project" established by North Korea and Russia in 2008. For instance, POSCO, Hyundai Merchant Marine and the Korea Railroad Corporation conducted an on-site feasibility study in July for possible investment into RasonKonTrans, the Russian-North Korean joint venture carrying out rail and port renovation. This was launched to modernize the 54-kilometer railway between Rajin, a port city in North Korea, and Khasan, a town in the fast eastern part of Russia. “It’s likely that the May 24 measures can be eased if Pyongyang engages in
inter-Korean talks sincerely,” Chung said. He stressed, however, that the repressive regime should improve its human rights conditions if it wants to attract international investment. (Yi Whan-woo, “Four-Step N.K. Nuke Dismantling Revealed,” Korea Times, October 29, 2014)

Chinese state media reported that the opening of the New Yalu River Bridge, which would link China and North Korea, has been postponed indefinitely. “The New Yalu River Bridge had initially been scheduled to open yesterday, but the opening has been delayed indefinitely,” Global Times reported. “A survey of the bridge location showed that the south side of the bridge - Shinuiju in North Korea - remained undeveloped, without any sign of roads or customs facilities. Even worse, North Korea has not even done any of the basic construction work,” the newspaper said. The joke in Dandong, the city on the Chinese side of the river, is that the bridge, which cost 1.98 billion yuan (US$324 million), leads to North Korean vegetable gardens. Global Times also criticized the North Koreans for not making a serious effort to move forward with construction. “North Korea is completely absorbed in construction projects in Pyongyang and other major cities, without making any mention of the New Yalu River Bridge,” the paper said.

“Property values seem unlikely to increase for the time being,” said a Chinese individual named Liu, expressing his disappointment. Liu invested in real estate around Dandong.

Construction began on the New Yalu River Bridge on December 31, 2010. The structure is intended to replace the Yalu River Bridge, which was built in 1937. The current Yalu River Bridge supports both railroad tracks and a road. However, the older bridge is limited in the amount of traffic it can handle, since it can only support trucks with a capacity of 20 tons and below. Located 10km west of the old bridge, near the mouth of the river, the New Yalu River Bridge is 3,026m long and will carry four lanes of traffic moving in both directions. “When the New Yalu River Bridge is completed, it will be able to handle 80% of the trade moving between North Korea and China, which will resolve a logistical logjam. It will also position Dandong to become the biggest base inside China for trade with North Korea,” the metropolitan government of Dandong has said. “China paid the cost of building the New Yalu River Bridge, and North Korea said it would take care of the construction of the customs buildings and the roads on the Shinuiju side of the river. However, North Korea has yet to do this,” said a source in Beijing who recently visited Dandong. “As things stand at present, vehicles and goods could not pass over the bridge even if it were opened up. China appears to have decided that, given this situation, there is no point in opening the bridge,” the source said. Reportedly, North Korea hopes that China will cover the cost of building the customs facilities and the roads as well. The indefinite postponement of the opening of the New Yalu River Bridge reflects the recent chill in North Korea-China relations. Since taking office, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and Chinese president Xi Jinping have not met face to face a single time. In addition, meetings between high-level officials have also been on hold since last year, with Choe Ryong-hae, Korean Workers’ Party Secretary, visiting China in May and Li Yuanchao, Vice President of China, traveling to North Korea in July. There has also been virtually no progress at the Hwanggumpyong Economic Zone, located near the New Yalu River Bridge. “In the present situation, both China and North Korea seem to think it is unlikely there would
be active trade or exchange even if the bridge were linked,” one diplomatic source said. (Seong Yeon-chel, “Report: China-North Korea Bridge Opening Postponed Indefinitely,” Hankyore, November 1, 2014)

Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea statement “assailing the south Korean puppet authorities for persistently shielding and encouraging the another leaflet scattering operation conducted by human scum in the area of Phochon of Kyonggi Province at midnight of [October 31]: 1. The south Korean authorities should know that there will be neither dialogue between the north and the south nor improvement of the inter-Korean relations unless they suspend the leaflet scattering operation malignantly hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK. It is the unshakable will and steadfast principled stand of the army and people of the DPRK not to pardon at any cost whoever defames the dignity of its supreme leadership. The south Korean authorities should not even dream of sitting at the negotiating table with us as long as a reckless leaflet scattering operation goes on. They should not forget that the revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK declared they would not only make sighting strikes at balloons but also blow up their base and strike the forces commanding their operations behind the scene if the leaflet scattering goes on. The KPA will sternly punish and finish off those criminals involved in those operations in the name of all Koreans. We have the right to punish the criminals who fled to the south after committing crimes against its social system and its law and the south Korean authorities are obliged to extradite the criminals to the north side in the light of international law and practice. If the south Korean authorities are not ready to do so, we will conduct an operation to decisively punish the human scum. 3. We will file a suit in the international organizations including the UN and world community against the south Korean authorities’ leaflet scattering operation against the DPRK in an effort to build strong public opinion. The above-said operations for defaming the dignity of the supreme leadership and the social system of the DPRK and its people being perpetrated in south Korea under the patronage of the puppet authorities are hideous crimes against humanity and human rights as they are a grave violation of international law. It is none other than the south Korean puppet group which should be brought to an international court. We will file a complaint in the international organizations and the world community against the puppet group’s hostile act of seriously infringing upon the universally accepted international norms and order and strongly censure and condemn it. The statement warned that the Park Geun Hye group will have to pay a dear price for scuppering the hard-won opportunity of improving the north-south relations and trampling down the compatriots’ desire for reunification by making a mockery of the DPRK’s good faith and challenging it.” (KCNA, “CPRK Condemns Leaflet-Scattering Operation in S. Korea,” November 1, 2014)

China is working harder to pressure North Korea over its nuclear program, reducing fuel oil supplies to the impoverished neighbor and putting restrictions on trade, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said in an interview on the “Charlie Rose” show. “The Chinese are being helpful. They’ve taken measures way beyond where they were a year ago. When I went to visit last spring, we engaged in a discussion where they
agreed to step up their efforts with the North, and they have," Kerry said. "They’ve actually reduced the amount of jet fuel going into the country. They’ve put limitations on trade going into the country," he said, according to a transcript provided by the State Department website. (Yonhap, “Kerry: China Is Helpful in Dealing with North Korea,” November 3, 2014)

North Korea is moving to extend the mandatory military service term for male draftees and recruit more female conscripts in efforts to address its worsening troop shortage, sources said Monday. Pyongyang has recently been encouraging male soldiers to serve at least one more year beyond their 10-year service term to help maintain its 1.19-million-strong military, and more stably mobilize troops for various state construction projects, the sources said. “The North has yet to officially announce its policy to extend the term, but I heard that the ruling party has been encouraging soldiers to voluntarily serve one or more years beyond their service period,” Jang Se-yul, a North Korean defector who served in the North’s military from 1984 through 1996, told The Korea Herald. The North is promoting the “voluntary” extension of the service term in light of the troops’ loyalty to the dynastic ruler Kim Jong-un, he added.

Analysts said that the troop shortage was mainly caused by the deaths of many children during a severe famine in the mid-1990s and a growing reluctance to join the military due to the lengthy service term. “The primary reason for the extension appears to be the troop shortage rather than a campaign to strengthen its armed forces,” said Chang Yong-seok, an analyst at the Institute of Peace and Unification Studies at Seoul National University. “The shortage might have resulted from the so-called ‘Arduous March,’ a devastating famine in the mid-1990s. The number of children, who were born during the period and now around 20 years, might be very small, affecting the current troop level.” (Song Sang-ho, “N. Korea Struggles with Troop Shortage,” Korea Herald, November 3, 2014)

North Korea has started operating a new plant to produce weapons-grade uranium, doubling its capability to make fuel for atomic bombs, a senior South Korean official told the JoongAng Ilbo. “In 2012, the North started building a new facility next to its old uranium plant, about 120 meters long and 15 meters wide,” the official in charge of handling North Korean intelligence said. “The new facility is about the same size as the old one. It recently completed construction and has started operation.” The new plant to produce highly enriched uranium is in the Yongbyon nuclear complex, the center of the country’s nuclear arms program. It was built next to a uranium facility that was shown to a Los Alamos National Laboratory director, Siegfried S. Hecker. Infrared cameras used by Korean and U.S. intelligence authorities have detected heat that was emitted when the centrifuges in the new plant began operating, the source said. “We have to monitor a little longer to see if the new plant actually started producing weapons-grade materials, but it is our assessment that it is in operation,” he said. The newly built facility is about the same size as the old one, according to the source, leading to the estimate that it is also equipped with about 2,000 centrifuges. “If the North operates all 4,000 centrifuges year-round, it can produce about 80 kilograms [176 pounds] of highly enriched uranium annually,” said a nuclear engineer from a state-run institute who requested anonymity. “That is enough to build four to five nuclear bombs.” The operation of the new facility is expected to worsen fears about
Pyongyang’s nuclear program. “Although warheads using highly enriched uranium are less powerful than plutonium-based bombs, they are relatively easier to build,” said Lee Choon-geun, a research fellow at the Science and Technology Policy Institute. “They can be built without a nuclear test.” Lee said the North can also produce highly enriched uranium at other clandestine facilities outside of Yongbyon. With the progress, the last remaining hurdle in the North’s nuclear arms program will be acquiring the technology to miniaturize nuclear warheads so they can be fitted onto ballistic missiles. Defense Minister Han Min-koo testified at the National Assembly on October 27 that the North has technology capable of building a bomb using its uranium enrichment program. He also said it is believed that the North’s miniaturization of its nuclear technology has improved considerably, although there was no confirmation on how far. A nuclear expert in Washington said the time has come for the South to assume that the North is a nuclear-armed state, saying it takes a minimum of two years or a maximum of seven years for a country to succeed in miniaturization of nuclear warheads after a nuclear test. “We continuously monitored the Punggye-ri nuclear test site of the North and the amount of earth detected before last year’s nuclear test was just a little more than half of what was observed at the time of the first test,” said a South Korean intelligence official who exchanged information with U.S. authorities. “That shows that the space for the place where the nuclear explosive device was installed was reduced.”

For a nuclear-tipped missile, it is required to miniaturize an atomic warhead to smaller than 90 centimeters (35 inches) in diameter and less than one ton in weight. Detonation technology for the highly enriched uranium inside the warhead is also key. The Korean government believes that the North has tested detonation devices since the early 1990s and the frequency of the tests rapidly increased recently. Intelligence analysts, therefore, suspect that the North is in the last stage of miniaturization. “If the North uses the ‘gun’ method, like the Little Boy for which the United States used 64.1 kilograms of highly enriched uranium, the North can create nuclear bombs without tests,” said a South Korean government official. “If the North attempts to create nuclear arms by secretly using the gun-type bombs, it is hard to detect and stop the program.”

Jeon Yong-soo and Ser Myo-ja, “North Operates New Uranium Plant,” JoongAng Ilbo, November 5, 2014)

DPRK FoMin spokesman “blasting the U.S. for politicizing its accusation against the DPRK over its human rights issue:U.S. authorities including the secretary of State and the special envoy for six-party talks of the Department of State let loose a spate of politically motivated malignant invectives to tarnish the image of the DPRK politically and morally and justify its moves to isolate and stifle it over its non-existent ‘human rights issue.’ It is a trite method of the U.S. to fake up “human rights issues” of those countries which incur its displeasure, cause internal instability, split and destabilization and thus seek regime changes through “coloring revolution” and “peaceful transition” in the long-run. There is a big difference between the discussion on genuine human rights and “human rights issue” used as a political lever for making something like ‘coloring revolution.’ The U.S. does not recognize the state sovereignty which comprehensively reflects the human rights of the Korean people. It is, therefore, nonsensical for the U.S. to take issue with their human rights this or that way. The present U.S. administration, the present U.S. secretary of State, in particular, unlike
Opposition lawmakers claimed that the government should restrain some conservative groups from distributing propaganda flyers. However, Prime Minister Jung said, "We do not have any applicable law to restrain them," and added, "The South Korean government has never slandered or provoked the North." New Politics Alliance for Democracy lawmaker Shim Jae-kwon said, “There are many legal grounds to restrain the distribution of flyers, such as the Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation Act, the Act on the Performance of Duties by Police Officers, the Assembly and Demonstration Act, and the Criminal Act which mentions criminal acts that benefit the enemy, as well as the Constitution,” and presented the legal grounds to restrain the distribution of propaganda flyers. He also pointed out the problem of fairness mentioning how the police had restrained a group in Gwanghwamun from distributing flyers on a special bill on the ferry accident in Jindo. Lawmaker Yoon Hu-duk of the same party said, "We have to keep in mind the nervous thoughts and appeals of the people living, farming and operating shops in the border area when we discuss the issue of flyers.” Meanwhile, Saenuri Party lawmaker Lee Sang-il said, “North Korea is distorting the situation making it look like our government is supporting the distribution of flyers from behind and condemning President Park, but this raises suspicions that perhaps they are not sincere in wanting to improve inter-Korean relations," and urged the North to change. (Sim Hye-ri and Yu Jeong-in, “Opposition, ‘Why Isn’t the Government Stopping the Distribution of Flyers?’ Prime Minister Jung, ‘No Applicable Law,’” Kyunghyang Sinmun, November 4, 2014)

Secretary of State John Kerry said he hopes to work closely with China to get North Korea to realize that it is on a path to "a dead end" and that giving up its nuclear program is the only path to security and prosperity. Kerry made his remarks in a speech at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, stressing the importance of cooperation with China on nonproliferation, days before he visits Beijing. "Our cooperation also makes a difference when it comes to nuclear proliferation," he said, adding that the U.S. is very encouraged by China’s "serious engagement" on negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program as a full partner in the "P-5
plus one” talks. “And we’re very hopeful that, working more closely together, the United States and China will ultimately bring North Korea to the realization that its current approach is leading to a dead end, and the only path that will bring it security and prosperity is to make real progress towards denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula,” he said. (Yonhap, “Kerry Warns N. Korea of ‘Dead End,’” November 5, 2014)

11/5/14

The Supreme Court has let stand a lower court decision to permit the sale of the Tokyo headquarters building of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan to a real estate developer in western Japan, rejecting an appeal by the pro-Pyongyang group against the sale, officials said. A lawyer for Marunaka Holdings Co., which made a successful bid of 2.21 billion yen for the property, said it will urge the group called Chongryon to vacate the building, which has functioned as North Korea’s de facto embassy in Japan in the absence of diplomatic relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang. North Korea has expressed strong concerns over the sale of the building and the land in a prime location in Tokyo’s Chiyoda Ward, and confirmation of the property sale could affect ongoing bilateral talks on the thorny issue of North Korea’s abduction of Japanese nationals. (Kyodo, “Top Court Confirms Sale Permit of Pro-N. Korea Group Building in Tokyo,” November 5, 2014)

Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae said his government will continue efforts to put the shaky relations on the path of sustainable development from a long-term prospective. “I think it’s more important to lay the foundation for the South and the North to move forward together with stability and normality, rather than ostensibly taking a few steps forward at once,” he said in a speech to mark the opening of the Soongsil University’s unification institute in Moongyeong. (Yonhap, S. Korea Eyes Long-Term Progress in Inter-Korean Ties: Minister,” November 5, 2014)

11/6/14

Secretariat of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea information bulletin No. 1078 “assailing the south Korean puppet regime for staging a charade to institute ‘charter for reunification’: The regime is asserting that it will make sure that ‘charter for unification’ conforming with its ‘constitution’ and ‘liberal democracy’ will be instituted and published on the occasion of August 15 next year and arrangements for it will be zealously pushed forward by ‘a preparatory committee for unification.’ In the meantime, it is busy holding seminars, round-table talks and the like related to the institution of the ‘charter for unification.’ It is blustering that the charter will be worked out on the basis of ‘people’s agreement’ and ‘international support’ and it will make sure that it will be signed by the chief executive and get it passed through the ‘National Assembly.’ It is talking volumes about making the ‘charter’ ‘the best guidelines for unification’ which will remain unchanged despite regime change in the future. This is an unpardonable mockery and insult to the Koreans desirous of reunification. … As far as the issue of ‘charter for unification’ is concerned, the coteries of the ruling party proposed it during the Lee Myung Bak regime only to be thrown into a dumping ground as no one paid heed to it. Korea still remains divided not because of the lack of ‘charter for unification.’ As everybody knows, the north and the south of Korea have the three charters for national reunification the keynote of which is the three principles of national reunification, the ten-point programme for the great unity of the whole nation and the proposal for founding the Democratic Federal Republic of Koryo which reflect
the will and desire common to the nation, and such excellent great programme for reunification as the historic June 15 joint declaration and the October 4 declaration provided by the top leaders of the north and the south. Not only all Koreans in the north, the south and abroad but the whole world are unanimously recognizing the three charters for national reunification and the above-said declarations as the charter for reunification and great programmes for reunification common to the nation. Nevertheless, the south Korean puppet regime is busy with a farce aimed to institute the 'charter for unification.' This is a revelation of its sinister attempt to set the most fair and aboveboard and reasonable three charters for national reunification and the declarations which reaffirmed them and put them into practice against its criminal "charter for unification" and thus play down their historic meaning and ward off domestic and foreign concern and support for them. It is also aimed to conceal its true colors as anti-reunification confrontation maniacs, mislead public opinion, create impression that it is concerned for unification, advertise the charter as a feat of the chief executive and realize its daydream of 'achieving the unification of the social systems.' All Koreans will never allow the farce of the puppet regime to institute the 'charter for unification.'” (KCNA, “S. Korean Puppet Regime Censured for Working to Institute 'Charter for Unification,'” November 6, 2014)

Secretary of State John Kerry named Sung Kim as special envoy for North Korea policy, succeeding Glyn Davies, who held the post since January 2012. Kim will also serve as deputy assistant secretary for Korea and Japan. Kim was the first Korean-American to become U.S. ambassador to South Korea, a post he has held for the past three years. Before that, he was special envoy to six-party talks. (Associated Press, “U.S. Appoints New Envoy for North Korea Policy,” November 6, 2014)

Seoul will purchase some W1.5 trillion worth of PAC-3 interceptor missiles from the U.S. (US$1=W1,094). The U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency last Thursday said that the State Department approved the sale of 136 PAC-3 missiles, including equipment, components, training, and support. The major contractors are Lockheed Martin and Raytheon. The PAC-3 is to form the core of Korea's air and missile defense system and intercepts incoming ballistic missiles at an altitude of 30-40 km. The entire project will cost an estimated W17 trillion. (Chosun Ilbo, “Seoul to Buy W1 Trillion Worth of U.S. Interceptor Missiles,” November 10, 2014)

South Korea is facing a tricky decision over whether to consent to the U.S. deployment of the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system, a key element of the multilayered U.S. missile defense program, to counter North Korea’s evolving missile and nuclear threats. But the move has triggered strong resistance from opponents. They argue that the deployment would turn South Korea into the U.S. front-line missile defense base and cause diplomatic friction with China, forcing Seoul to bear the brunt of an intensifying Sino-U.S. rivalry. Experts called on Seoul not to waver, stressing that Seoul should prioritize its security interests based on the accurate analysis of North Korea's escalating threats. “The Seoul government should confidently respond to the controversy rather than wincing back for fear of public criticism. It should present its clear position about the THAAD and dispel the rumors,” said Park Hwee-rhak, political science professor at Kookmin University in Seoul. Before the apparent changes in the
security landscape here, Seoul remained reluctant to bring in any U.S. missile defense assets due to strong objections, including some anti-American campaigners. “South Korea has been reluctant to participate in the THAAD or other alternative TMD (theater missile defense) programs on the basis that a more serious threat stems from North Korea’s long-range artillery deployed along the Demilitarized Zone,” said Michael Raska, research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. “Seoul has for many years argued that South Korea’s mountainous terrain, the proximity of Seoul to the DMZ, and diplomatic concerns would make its participation in TMD/THAAD architectures imprudent.” A slew of speculations about the U.S. intentions behind the THAAD deployment have made it difficult for Seoul to make considerations based wholly on its strategic security interests. Apparently for fear that it could be embroiled in more political wrangling, Seoul has so far kept a low profile over the issue, which critics say has even contributed to the spread of conspiracy theories behind the THAAD. “The government should not leave an impression that it is holding something back from the public,” said Nam Chang-hee, a security expert at Inha University. “It should reach out to civil society and help them better understand what’s going on to garner their support in its efforts to improve national security.” In efforts to fend off additional arguments over the U.S. missile defense system, Seoul has been pushing to establish its own Korean Air and Missile Defense system, a low-tier, multiple-interception program that destroys incoming missiles at altitudes of around 40 km. Amid rising calls for a more enhanced missile shield, Seoul also plans to develop L-SAM surface-to-air missiles, which would shoot down hostile missiles at altitudes of above 40 km. This indicates that Seoul also recognizes the need to possess a missile defense system equivalent to the THAAD.

Most speculations about the THAAD’s introduction revolve around whether it would be used to shoot down Chinese missiles. Military experts argue that such speculations originate from a lack of understanding about the THAAD system. The THAAD is a defensive system to intercept incoming hostile missiles at altitudes of 40-150 km after detecting the missiles with land-based radar that has a maximum range of about 1,800 km. Experts say the THAAD could not be used to hit China’s intercontinental ballistic missiles headed for the U.S. mainland as they would travel far above the altitudes that the THAAD could reach. On top of this, the THAAD is designed to intercept missiles falling toward the Earth in a so-called terminal phase, not missiles flying far beyond the peninsula. Apart from the altitude, the operational range of the THAAD is also only 200 km — too short to intercept Chinese or Russian missiles. The experts also say that should it have to fire ICBMs at U.S. targets, China might fly the missiles over the Arctic, rather than over the Korean Peninsula and Pacific Ocean, given that the ranges of Chinese missiles — placed in China’s central inland areas rather than in the vulnerable coastal regions — were not yet long enough to reach the U.S. over the Pacific route.

Another major bone of contention is the coverage of the radar that is embedded with the THAAD system. The AN/TPY-2 radar can cover areas of China and Russia — the reason why the two powers think that the radar could be used to glean intelligence about their militaries. Some experts say that the radar could gather intelligence about Chinese military activities, but it is mainly designed to trace the trajectories of missiles. Nam of Inha University said that should the radar be deployed here, it should focus only on North Korean missile sites — the pressing concern for the U.S. and South Korea. “The purpose of the THAAD radar is to monitor North Korean missiles, not
Chinese missiles. With this purpose in mind, the radar would be used solely for peninsular defense,” said Nam. “Chinese concerns may be somewhat exaggerated as the most urgent thing for the allies is to counter the North Korean threats until the threats are removed.” Addressing the concerns over the radar, Park of Kookmin University noted that it was inappropriate to highlight only the capability of the THAAD radar when China and Russia are already under the scrutiny of a host of U.S. intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets. “China and Russia have also put the Korean Peninsula under scrutiny through various monitoring activities. Since when did South Korea start caring so much about their security concerns on their behalf?” he said. Before talking about the deployment of the missile defense system, Seoul should think about the Chinese missiles that are capable of hitting targets in South Korea, some observers said. “If China decided to launch missiles at the South, the THAAD could help shoot some of them down, and therefore help to deter China from taking such action,” said Bruce Bennett, a senior analyst at the RAND Corporation think tank. “Of course, few people in either South Korea or the U.S. expect China to launch missiles at South Korea, but having the THAAD would hedge against that low-probability kind of threat.” Bennett added, “Telling China that it cannot freely launch missiles at the South would not ‘keep China in check’ — the THAAD would have a small contribution to overall security in the South relative to potential Chinese threats.” Kim Tae-hyung, a security expert at Soongsil University, said that the U.S. may want to link its core Asian allies of South Korea and Japan to strengthen the trilateral missile defense cooperation to keep China in check. Raska noted that in addition to countering the North Korean threats, the U.S. is also eyeing China’s growing missile arsenal, particularly in the context of China’s “counterintervention” strategies designed in the long term to deny U.S. freedom of action in the region. Professor Nam said the USFK might be seeking the deployment to better protect its personnel and bases in the South. (Song Sang-ho, “S. Korea Faces Tough Decision on THAAD,” Korea Herald, November 6, 2014)

State Councilor Yang Jiechi held talks with visiting National Security Advisor of Japan Yachi Shotaro at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. Japan and China already have different interpretations of their document released today ahead of a meeting next week between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping. The document contained four points of agreement, indicating compromises from both Japan and China. But it was vague enough to allow the two sides to interpret it in an advantageous manner. The document was considered necessary to pave the way for Abe and Xi to hold talks on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in Beijing. The two leaders have not had a formal meeting even though close to two years have passed since Abe started his second stint as prime minister. The document acknowledges that the two nations “recognized that they had different views as to the emergence of tense situations in recent years” in waters near the Senkaku Islands. The Japanese government’s stance regarding the Senkakus is that the islands are Japanese territory from both a historical and international law perspective. For that reason, Japan has argued that no territorial dispute exists. Appearing on a TV program after the document was released, Abe said: “(Japan’s) posture has not changed. We have secured effective control over the islands.” Japanese officials also insisted the “different views” refers to the emergence of tense situations. “It is certainly
not the case that Japan’s position has retreated or been eroded,” a senior Foreign Ministry official said. Beijing likely pushed hard for inclusion of the Senkaku Islands in the document because just mentioning the isles could be seen as a major concession by Japan. Despite Abe’s denials, Chinese officials were taking the wording as a change in the Japanese government’s stance. They said the wording means that Japan recognizes that a difference exists over territorial claims to the islands, which China refers to as the Diaoyu Islands. “Acknowledging the existence of an objective dispute is the first step toward resolving the issue,” a high-ranking Chinese Foreign Ministry official has said. The two sides also agreed on the need to establish a crisis management mechanism that would prevent an unexpected military encounter in those waters. Abe said on the TV program: “Chinese government ships have entered Japanese territorial waters. Both I and the Chinese side have a responsibility to deal with the actual problems that exist.” China also would like to establish such a mechanism because of concerns about heightened tensions in those waters. While Chinese officials imply that Japan compromised on the Senkaku issue, Japan could view Beijing as having made a concession on the historical understanding issue. Although the Senkaku Islands issue was clearly mentioned in the document, it contained no specific reference to Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. Abe’s visit to the Shinto shrine, which memorializes 14 Class-A war criminals among Japan’s war dead, is a major reason for Chinese distrust of the prime minister. Beijing had sought an assurance from Abe that he would not visit Yasukuni again. However, Abe had said he would not accept any preconditions for a meeting with Xi. The document did mention China’s concern about facing the past, but it also focused on the importance of looking to the future. The document states the need for “squarely facing history and advancing toward the future.” However, without mentioning Yasukuni, the document says Japan and China “shared some recognition that ... they would overcome political difficulties that affect their bilateral relations.” Although Abe insisted on the TV program that the document was not referring to any specific issue, a high-ranking Foreign Ministry official acknowledged that “political difficulties” included the Yasukuni issue. Publicly, China is not admitting to any concession on the historical understanding issue. “Historical issues between Japan and China cover a wide range of topics from Yasukuni Shrine, ‘comfort women’ and forcible taking away (of Chinese laborers),” a high-ranking official of a government-affiliated think tank in China said. “It is not appropriate to focus only on the Yasukuni issue.” However, a former diplomat said China compromised because it appraised the clear mention of the Senkakus issue in the document as a concession by Japan. The document was welcomed by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry who was in Beijing to attend an APEC meeting. In a meeting with Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio, Kerry said the Japan-China document was a constructive and positive measure by the two nations to improve relations. (Hayashi Nozomu, Saito Tokuhiko, Funakoshi Takashi, Yamada Akihiro, and Matsui Nozomi, “Japan, China Both Claim Advantage in Pre-Summit Document,” Asahi Shimbun, November 8, 2014) According to several sources knowledgeable about Japan-China relations, Beijing on the night of Nov. 7 released its English translation of the document without prior consultation with Japanese officials. Japanese officials lodged a protest through diplomatic channels about not being informed and hurriedly released their own English version. The different terminology used in the two English versions highlights the aims of the two sides to a much greater degree than the
documents written in Japanese and Chinese. In particular, China used the English version to expand on its position regarding sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands, which Beijing refers to as the Diaoyu Islands, in the East China Sea. Regarding the Senkakus, Japan’s English version said the two nations “recognized that they had different views as to the emergence of tense situations in recent years.” China’s English version used “different positions” instead of “different views.” In referring to the location where the tense situations have emerged, Japan’s English translation said “in the waters of the East China Sea, including those around the Senkaku Islands.” The Chinese version said “over the Diaoyu Islands and some waters in the East China Sea.” The Chinese version gives the impression that the tense situation specifically is over the islands. China’s choice of English words clearly shows that Beijing wanted to highlight the existence of a territorial dispute and avoid giving the public the impression that China had in any way compromised its position to reach the agreement. Japan has argued that no territorial dispute exists because the Senkakus have long been Japanese territory. There are also signs of diplomatic bargaining involved in the Japanese and Chinese versions of the document, which officials of the two nations conferred on before their release. Chinese officials point to the inclusion of the term “Senkaku Islands (Diaoyu Islands)” as a major gain. However, Japanese officials have stressed that the inclusion of the phrase “in recent years” regarding the tense situation separates that issue from China’s argument that a territorial dispute has existed for centuries. Although the agreement has been described as a piece of “diplomatic artwork” produced through difficult negotiations on both sides, the difference in wording also displays the deep-rooted confrontation that still exists despite the document. (Hayashi Nozomu, “Even on Agreement Document, Japan, China Quarreled over English Phrasing,” Japan Times, November 22, 2014)

PRC: “On 7 November 2014, State Councilor Yang Jiechi held talks with visiting National Security Advisor of Japan Yachi Shotaro at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. Yang said that a long-term, healthy and stable growth of China-Japan relations serves the fundamental interests of both countries and their people, and it is China’s consistent position to grow China-Japan relations on the basis of the four political documents between the two sides and in the spirit of “taking history as a mirror and looking forward to the future.” For reasons known to all, China-Japan relations have encountered persistent and serious difficulty. In recent months, the two sides have conducted rounds of consultations through the diplomatic channel to overcome political obstacles in the bilateral relations. The Chinese side has reiterated its solemn position, urging the Japanese side to face up to and properly handle such issues of great sensitivity as history and the Diaoyu Islands and work with the Chinese side for the improvement and growth of the bilateral relations. Yachi said that the Japanese side attaches great importance to the strategic relationship of mutual benefit between Japan and China. Japan stands ready to proceed from the overall interests, conduct dialogue and consultation with the Chinese side to enhance common understanding and mutual trust, and properly handle disagreement and sensitive issues, with a view to advancing the process of improvement of Japan-China relations. The two sides reached a four-point principled agreement on handling and improving the bilateral relations: First, the two sides have affirmed that they will follow the principles and spirit of the four political documents between China and Japan and continue to develop the
China-Japan strategic relationship of mutual benefit. Second, in the spirit of “facing history squarely and looking forward to the future,” the two sides have reached some agreement on overcoming political obstacles in the bilateral relations. Third, the two sides have acknowledged that different positions exist between them regarding the tensions which have emerged in recent years over the Diaoyu Islands and some waters in the East China Sea, and agreed to prevent the situation from aggravating through dialogue and consultation and establish crisis management mechanisms to avoid contingencies. Fourth, the two sides have agreed to gradually resume political, diplomatic and security dialogue through various multilateral and bilateral channels and to make efforts to build political mutual trust. Yang stressed that the two sides need to uphold the political foundation for China-Japan relations in strict accordance with the spirit of the above-mentioned agreement, ensure the right direction for the growth of bilateral relations, properly handle sensitive issues in a timely fashion, take concrete action to build political mutual trust and gradually put bilateral relations on a track of sound development. Yachi said that the four-point principled agreement is of great importance. The Japanese side will work with the Chinese side in the same direction.” (PRC Foreign Ministry, Yang Jiechi Meets National Security Adviser of Japan,” November 7, 2014) Japan: “Toward the improvement of the Japan-China relations, quiet discussions have been held between the Governments of Japan and China. Both sides have come to share views on the following points: 1. Both sides confirmed that they would observe the principles and spirit of the four basic documents between Japan and China and that they would continue to develop a mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests. 2. Both sides shared some recognition that, following the spirit of squarely facing history and advancing toward the future, they would overcome political difficulties that affect their bilateral relations. 3. Both sides recognized that they had different views as to the emergence of tense situations in recent years in the waters of the East China Sea, including those around the Senkaku Islands, and shared the view that, through dialogue and consultation, they would prevent the deterioration of the situation, establish a crisis management mechanism and avert the rise of unforeseen circumstances. 4. Both sides shared the view that, by utilizing various multilateral and bilateral channels, they would gradually resume dialogue in political, diplomatic and security fields and make an effort to build a political relationship of mutual trust.” (Japan, MOFA, Regarding Diiscussions toward Improving Japan-China Relations,” November 7, 2014)

Yokota Megumi, kidnapped by North Korean agents in the 1970s when she was 13, had died in 1994 at a psychiatric ward, North Korean defectors said. Choi Sung-yong, who represents an organization of families of abductees here, said he has helped the Japanese government’s probe into the whereabouts of Japanese forcibly taken to North Korea decades ago. “We have confirmed how Megumi died through testimonies from two defectors who worked at the mental hospital where Megumi was hospitalized,” Choi told Yonhap by phone. She died in April 1994, while receiving drug treatment at the No. 49 Hospital in Pyongyang, and her body was buried on a nearby hill, according to Choi. (Yonhap, “Megumi Died in 1994 at Mental Hospital in Pyongyang: Defectors,” November 7, 2014) Japan denied a report providing evidence that a Japanese woman abducted by North Korea at the age of 13, who became a
symbol of a four-decade campaign to recover kidnapping victims, died in 1994 of an
overdose. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide said there was “absolutely no
credibility” to a report in South Dong-A confirming Megumi Yokota’s death at a North
Korean psychiatric hospital 20 years ago. [??] “There’s much speculation about the
survivors, but the government is doing its utmost on the assumption that all the
abduction victims are alive,” Suga said at a press conference today in Tokyo. (Andrew
Sharp and Sam Kim, “Japan Denies Report That North Korean Kidnap Victim Died in
1994,” Bloomberg, November 6, 2014)

Russia and North Korea signed an agreement in September on the deportation of
individuals found to have illegally entered or been living in either country’s
territory. The document also includes provisions that would allow a state to deny the
request of repatriation if it believe that the individual in question would be “subjected
to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the death penalty or
persecution” upon their return. Separated into 13 articles, the agreement details the
requirements of proving lawful entry as well as the process of investigation, detention
and return of those who do not satisfy those requirements. According to the
agreement, if an individual is discovered without the correct documentation, they will
be detained, interviewed and – if found to have entered illegally - deported within 30-
days of a request for their return. The cost of which would be settled in U.S. dollars.
(Hamish Macdonald, “Russia, North Korea Sign Illegal Immigration Agreement,”
NKNews, November 17, 2014)

Detainees held until recently at North Korea’s notorious political prison camp in
Yodeok County have been moved to two alternate camps, an inside source from North
Hamkyung Province has alleged to Daily NK. “That political prison camp that used to
be in Yodeok County in South Hamkyung has already been broken up. There’s not a
trace of it left,” the source, who is with the military in the northerly province, claimed in
conversation with Daily NK on the 7th. However, the disbanding of Camp 15 does not
seem to have brought liberty for many of its inmates. According to the same source,
“The political prisoners who were there have been divided up and moved to camps 14
and 16.” Camp 16 is in northerly Myeonggan (formerly Hwasong) County, North
Hamkyung Province. Camp 14 (Kaecheon), which is further west in South Pyongan
Province, is infamous for having been the home of defector-activist Shin Dong Hyuk. “It
seems that closing Camp 15 was the next step after they closed Camp 22 at Hoeryong
in June 2012,” the source went on to propose. “The majority of the buildings and
facilities they used have been razed.” However, he was not able to say exactly when the
closure may have taken place, or when the process of moving the prisoners was
completed. “The transportation up to Camp 15 is in a remote mountainous region so it
is totally cut off from ordinary residents,” he offered by way of explanation. Unlike
North Korea’s other political prison camps, the camp at Yodeok was divided into
“Revolutionizing” and “Completely Controlled” zones. Persons charged with relatively
minor offenses were imprisoned in the former area, wherein whole families were able
to live together. Those accused of grave offenses were detained in the latter area of
the camp. However, the source said that it was also possible for inmates to be sent out
of the Completely Controlled Zone to serve time in the Revolutionizing Zone, while
there were also some cases of prisoners being released after finishing their sentences.
“The residents of the Revolutionizing Zone are mostly the families of minor criminals, and right now they appear to be right where they were before,” he said. Since they don’t have freedom of movement without the express permission of the State Security Department, such families can’t even move to different regions, much less visit distant relatives. “When they closed down Camp 22 two years ago, there was word of mouth among locals and some collective farms moved in there, so in the end word about it spread pretty quickly,” the source explained. “However, all the buildings and facilities over at Yodeok have been demolished and the whole area is still under the control of State Security, so nobody really knows when the prisoners were moved.” It is widely believed that the goal of the North Korean authorities in closing down Yodeok is to allow international observers to visit the site in order to popularize the notion that “North Korea doesn’t have any political prison camps.” In keeping with this hypothesis, Pyongyang recently granted permission for the UN’s Marzuki Darusman to visit the country, and made a video casting doubt upon the testimony of Shin Dong Hyuk through his father. Meanwhile, on October 28th the NIS, South Korea’s state intelligence agency, reported to the National Assembly that a prison camp at Mt. Mantap in Kilju County, the area of North Hamkyung Province that houses North Korea’s underground nuclear test site, has recently been substantially expanded. The NIS reported that North Korea were planning to move the residents of Yodeok to the expanded camp. The expansion has not been independently verified. (Choi Song-min, “Camp 15 Gone But No Liberty for Prisoners,” Daily NK, November 8, 2014)

The last two Americans being held prisoner by North Korea have been released and allowed to return home after an extraordinary trip to that isolated nation’s capital by the United States’ top intelligence official, U.S. officials said Saturday. Matthew Miller and Kenneth Bae, both serving multi-year sentences in North Korean labor camps, arrived at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state shortly after 9 p.m. local time Saturday accompanied by Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper. Brian Hale, a spokesman for Clapper’s office, said in a written statement earlier Saturday that, “We can confirm that [Bae and Miller] have been allowed to depart the DPRK and are on their way home,” using the initials for North Korea. Hale declined to offer any additional details on the terms of the Americans’ release or Clapper’s role in the mission to retrieve them. President Obama applauded the action, telling reporters at the White House: “It’s a wonderful day for them and their families. We’re grateful for their safe return.” He also thanked Clapper for his unusual role in negotiating the prisoners’ freedom, saying it “was obviously a challenging mission.” The surprise release is in many ways the latest bewildering move by North Korea, a nuclear-armed country that is among the most insular in the world and a long-standing adversary of the United States. But there have been some recent indications that the men’s departure was possible. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has seemed increasingly eager to get rid of the prisoners amid growing scrutiny of his country’s human rights record by the United Nations, a process that in theory could lead to indictments of him and other senior officials in the International Criminal Court. (Greg Miller and Anna Fifield, “2 Americans Freed by North Korea back in U.S.,” Washington Post, November 9, 2014) President Barack Obama delivered a personal letter to Kim Jong-un via his national intelligence director sent to the communist nation to win the release of two American citizens, a senior U.S. official said. The “brief letter” stated that Director of
National Intelligence James Clapper was sent in his capacity as Obama’s personal envoy to obtain the release of the two Americans, the senior official told reporters aboard Air Force One before they took off for Asia. Clapper held talks with senior North Korean officials, but did not meet with Kim, the official said. According to the official, the North Koreans had requested that a senior American official to visit the country when they called the United States several weeks ago to float the possibility of releasing the two. The White House chose Clapper for the mission because of his background in Korean issues and because he was a national security official, not a diplomat, which kept it out of the realm of diplomacy, the official said. Clapper went with the “sole purpose” of obtaining the release of the two, the official said. “It was not to pursue any diplomatic opening.” (Yonhap, “Obama Sends Personal Letter to N.K. Leader to Win Release of 2 Americans: Official,” Korea Times, November 10, 2014) The director of national intelligence, James R. Clapper Jr., described on November 16 his secret mission to seek the release of two Americans held in North Korea as a series of grim encounters with officials who expressed disappointment that he had not come bearing a “breakthrough” in relations. “I was quite apprehensive because we weren’t sure how this was going to play out,” Clapper said on the CBS News program “Face the Nation,” offering a detailed description of the visit to Pyongyang, North Korea’s capital, this month. He said he had no certainty that the two Americans – Kenneth Bae and Matthew Todd Miller – would be freed until hours before he left North Korean soil. Clapper, a blunt-spoken retired general, had seemed an unusual choice for the mission, which would more commonly be handled by diplomats or even former presidents, like Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter. But he said the North Koreans wanted someone currently in government, and with national security credentials. Also, he noted, he knows South Korea well as a former director of intelligence for American forces there. The intelligence chief said he was greeted at the state guesthouse in central Pyongyang by the minister of state security – the highest-ranking official with whom he would meet – and an interpreter. It quickly became clear, he said, that “they were disappointed, frankly, that I didn’t have some breakthrough.” The release of the two men was seen as a sign that the young and unpredictable North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, hoped to ease the deep chill in the countries’ relationship. Clapper said that he did take a letter from President Obama, but that it was a short missive describing North Korea’s “willingness to release our two citizens as a positive gesture.” On his first evening in Pyongyang, Clapper attended a dinner hosted by the head of North Korea’s Reconnaissance Guidance Bureau, which he described as “kind of a combination of intelligence and special operations force.” “It wasn’t exactly a pleasant dinner,” he said. The North Koreans expressed “a certain institutional paranoia,” and Clapper found himself fending off criticism of “our interventionist policies.” The next day brought a prolonged and tense wait, under a cloud of uncertainty. Then an official came to announce that Clapper’s group had 20 minutes to pack. They were taken to another hotel for a ceremony at which Bae and Miller were given amnesty. “We shook hands. I said thank you. We walked out,” he said. The American detainees changed clothes and prepared for their unexpected homecoming. Asked whether the visit had changed anything, Mr. Clapper said that was unclear. “Will this, perhaps, serve as a catalyst, or stimulus for more dialogue? I hope so, but I don’t know,” he said. But Clapper said he found a “ray of optimism” in his dealings with younger North Koreans, who seemed more ready to engage than their older colleagues. A younger official who
accompanied him back to the airport, he said, “asked me if I’d be willing to come back to Pyongyang – which I certainly would.” (Brian Knowlton, “North Korea Sought More in Release of Prisoners,” New York Times, November 17, 2014, p. A-4) Clapper gave details of his trip, made at the behest of President Barack Obama, for the first time during a forum on March 2 at the Council on Foreign relations. He said that after his arrival in the isolated country’s capital, a North Korean four-star general hosted what Clapper called a “marvellous” 12-course meal at a restaurant above a bowling alley. The next day, Clapper said, a representative of the state security ministry came to his guest house and told him the government no longer considered him a presidential envoy and could not guarantee his security and that of his party. Clapper said they packed their bags and were taken to a room at a Pyongyang hotel where a delegation of Korean officials, led by state prosecutors, was waiting with the Americans, Kenneth Bae and Matthew Miller, who were still dressed in prison uniforms. (Reuters, “U.S. Intelligence Chief Reveals Details of Secret Mission to North Korea,” March 2, 2015)

South Korean soldiers fired warning shots at a patrol from North Korea to turn it back from the two sides’ border, a South Korean Defense Ministry official said. About 10 North Korean soldiers approached the Military Demarcation Line around 9:40 a.m. today, said the official. “After a warning broadcast, the South Korean side fired about 20 rounds of warning shots,” the official said. The North Koreans didn’t fire any shots back and retreated from the heavily fortified area -- near Paju City, northwest of Seoul - - around three hours after the initial confrontation, the official said. (K.J. Kwan and Jethro Mullen, “South Korea Fires Warning Shots at North Korean Patrol Near Border,” CNN, November 10, 2014)

President Barack Obama said North Korea’s release of two detained Americans is no solution to a “core problem” between the two countries, and urged Pyongyang to demonstrate seriousness about giving up its nuclear program. Obama made his remarks to reporters in Beijing, stressing that Director for National Intelligence James Clapper conducted no “high-level policy discussions” with North Korean officials when he visited the communist nation to win the release of the two U.S. citizens, according to a transcript provided by the White House. “We have been consistent in saying that when and if North Korea becomes serious about denuclearization on the peninsula and is prepared to have a conversation around that topic, then the United States is going to be very open to try to arrive at a solution that over the long term could lead to greater prosperity and security for North Korea,” Obama said. “Until that time, there’s going to be a core problem between us,” he said. It takes more than “small gestures” like the release of the two -- Kenneth Bae and Matthew Todd Miller -- for the two countries to resolve “a broader fundamental conflict,” he said, adding that the U.S. has so far not seen “serious engagement on the part of Pyongyang to deal with that problem.” (Yonhap, “Obama: Release of 2 Americans No Solution to ‘Core Problem,’” Korea Herald, November 11, 2014)

Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed, in their first meeting since both came to power two years ago, to repair bilateral relations badly damaged by rows over wartime history and territorial sovereignty. “I believe Japan and China made the first step in improving relations by going back to the
original point of a strategic relationship of mutual benefit," Abe told reporters after the meeting at Beijing’s Great Hall of the People, which lasted about 25 minutes. (Kyodo, “Japan’s Abe, China’s Xi Agree to Ease Tensions in First Meeting,” November 10, 2014) The leaders of China and Japan finally broke the ice Monday in a first official meeting that was examined more for its style than its substance: starting with an uncomfortable handshake and including more stiffness than smiles. (Simon Denver and Anna Fifield, “China and Japan Leaders Break Ice with First Meeting, But No Sign of Warmth,” Washington Post, November 10, 2014). “By going back to the original point of a strategic relationship of mutual benefit, the first step was taken in improving relations,” Abe told reporters in Beijing shortly after their first meeting since either leader took office. On the standoff over the sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands, which has heightened regional security concerns, Abe said he proposed the early establishment of a crisis management mechanism to avoid accidents or miscalculations that could precipitate a wider conflict. Abe said senior officials from the two countries will start working on the mechanism soon. (Kyodo, Reuters, AP, “Abe Meets Xi for First China-Japan Summit in More Than Two Years,” Japan Times, November 10, 2014)

North Korea has halted talks with the European Union, the main sponsor of a U.N. resolution urging the country’s referral to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity, following months of attempts to win over key supporters of the draft. In a statement dated October 30 and given to U.N. states, North Korea’s U.N. mission said that as of October 31 it suspended “overall consultations” with the EU on the resolution, which has some 50 co-sponsors, and warned that those supporting the move “will have to take full responsibilities for all the consequences.” A U.N. inquiry concluded in a February 17 report that North Korean security chiefs and possibly even Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un himself should face international justice for ordering systematic torture, starvation and killings. “Although we are not opposed to the dialogue and cooperation for promotion and protection of genuine human rights, we will strongly respond to any attempt to continuously abuse the human rights issues in sabotaging our system, to the last ditch,” North Korea’s U.N. mission said in its statement, which was obtained by Reuters today. The resolution drafted by the EU and Japan, which does not single Kim out by name, is likely to be adopted by a U.N. General Assembly committee that deals with human rights as early as next week. (Michelle Nichols and Jack Kim, “North Korea Halts Talks with EU over U.N. Draft on International Court Referral,” Reuters, November 11, 2014)

KCNA: “These days the United States is working hard to build up public opinion on the DPRK’s submarines capable of launching missiles through media. A U.S. medium specializing in political and military affairs said that a north Korean submarine equipped with a missile launcher was spotted by a U.S. intelligence organ, sparking a fresh concern about the nuclear and missile threat from the north Korean regime. Intelligence services of the U.S. are distributing even satellite photos published by the Johns Hopkins Institute in a bid to make the story plausible in the wake of the floating of it. In addition to this, media of south Korea and the West are getting serious about the story and hyping their assertion that the DPRK has already introduced the technology of launching missiles under water and it is expected to massively build submarines capable of launching missiles and deploy them in the near future. This is a
crafty artifice of the U.S. to justify the extension of the transfer of the wartime operation control (OPCON) to south Korea and deploy THAAD by calming down the opposition of the neighboring countries under the pretext of “threat” from the DPRK. The U.S. has long schemed to build a missile shield targeting the big powers in the region since it faked up the fiction about “threat from north Korea” in an effort to carry out its strategy for dominating the Asia-Pacific. It is, at the same time, working hard to deploy THAAD in south Korea and get it deeply involved in the building of the missile shield. If the transfer of OPCON is extended beyond the period after the middle of the 2020s and THAAD is deployed in south Korea, it will be reduced to a bridgehead for implementing the U.S. strategy for invading the DPRK and dominating Northeast Asia. The U.S. military strategy centered on the missile shield has reached a graver phase. It seeks to round off the defense system by developing such defense means as interceptor missiles and such new means as high energy laser weapons that can replace them. Recently it completed a huge strategic system which it claims capable of promptly striking any target on the earth within an hour. This system calls for singling out the DPRK, China, Iran and various other countries as enemy states and making primary strikes at missile launchers, commanding posts, nuclear facilities, etc. of those countries by IBMs, ultra-supersonic missiles, ballistic missiles launched from submarines and so on. It also calls for finally destroying them by mobilizing ultra-supersonic fighter bombers in case the desired goal is not attained with those weapons. Lurking behind the U.S. scenario to bolster up its military muscle under the pretext of “coping with the threat” from the DPRK is a military adventure to ignite a war on the Korean Peninsula at any cost. The U.S. is sadly mistaken if it calculates that its spread of the story about the DPRK’s submarine missile will help ratchet up its pressure on the latter in the international arena. It will only invite stronger retaliatory measures of its own style. The DPRK’s declaration of the strongest new counter-action of its own style will be backed by the fully prepared powerful nuclear force and different type latest strike means operating on the ground and in the seas, under water and in the air. The world will soon witness the shining victory of the DPRK’s line of simultaneously developing the two fronts.” (KCNA, “KCNA Commentary Slams U.S. for Floating Story about DPRK’s Submarines Capable of Launching Missiles,” November 14, 2014)

11/15/14

NDC Policy Department statement: “The north-south high-level contact has failed to take place though it had been high on the agenda amid great expectation and concern of all Koreans. This being a stark reality, the south Korean authorities are obliged to buckle down to putting the situation under control, feeling heavy remorse for it, though belatedly. Nevertheless, they are misleading the public opinion at home and abroad by creating the impression that the prevailing situation was created by the north’s act of reneging on the bilateral agreement, bereft of elementary face. They are behaving so ridiculously as to urge the north to retract "unreasonable preconditions" and "change its attitude." What merits a more serious attention is the fact that they are pushing the overall inter-Korean relations to a more uncontrollable phase of catastrophe, getting more frantic in their anti-DPRK confrontation racket. In this connection, the Policy Department of the National Defense Commission of the DPRK was authorized to clarify the truth about the prevailing situation and issue a statement reiterating its principled stand internally and externally [today]. The north-south high-level contact was another patriotic step taken and whose preparations were made
progress thanks to the noble intention of the sagacious supreme leadership of the DPRK to turn a lane for mending the inter-Korean relations into a wide avenue and make a new history of the relations. ... It was thanks to this step taken into consideration of not only the present destiny of all Koreans but their future hope that the sports team of the DPRK took part in the Asian Games and a highest-level delegation of the DPRK visited Inchon on October 4, reaching a historic agreement. In the consequent period, too, the DPRK made every sincere effort to rev up the hard-won precious atmosphere of mending the relations. The south Korean authorities, however, opted for pushing the inter-Korean relations to a more deplorable phase. On October 25 they began scattering leaflets hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK and insulting its inviolable social system in all areas along the Military Demarcation Line including the western and central sectors of the front. They escalated the intrusion of their naval warships into the territorial waters of the DPRK under the pretext of defending the "northern limit line" in the waters of the West Sea of Korea. From mid-October they began airing vulgar warning programs and recklessly firing bullets at servicepersons of the Korean People’s Army on their routine patrol duty in the north’s side area north of the Military Demarcation Line. The south Korean authorities who vociferated about the mending of the inter-Korean relations and high-level contact started the large-scale Hoguk-14 drills on November 10, making a total war against the north an established fact. The reality goes to prove that they are aborting the north-south high-level contact, denying any process to mend the relations and kicking up reckless political and military confrontation rackets. This is the truth of the present bedeviled north-south relations for which the south Korean authorities are wholly to blame. The Policy Department of the NDC of the DPRK once again clarified a series of its principled stand in reflection of the will of its army and people enraged by the truth about the south Korean authorities’ reckless behavior. Firstly, it is our stand that the south Korean authorities can never expect any improvement of the north-south relations and any dialogue and contact as long as they persist in their vicious anti-DPRK confrontation rackets. The present chief executive of south Korea uttered there is a dialogue even in the battle field. It is sheer sophism as she revealed her shameless intention to negotiate with the north while inciting distrust, hostility and confrontation. Nothing is more foolish than knocking at the door of dialogue and calling for contact while escalating the nuclear blackmail against the north by frequently introducing nuclear strike means from the U.S. into south Korea by land, sea and air. The DPRK has so far stressed more than once that war maneuvers cannot go with dialogue. If the south Korean authorities truly want improved relations and dialogue, they should make a policy decision to halt the anti-DPRK leaflet scattering operations, to begin with. If they do not pursue a sinister aim in their lip-service to improved relations and dialogue, they should not resort to all sorts of unjustifiable provocations on the ground and in the seas and the air. It is the DPRK’s assertion that if they are to opt for improved relations and dialogue, they should create a corresponding atmosphere and take an attitude as a dialogue partner. Secondly, it is our stand that they should boldly discard all bad habits of having reneged on the inter-Korean agreements for several generations before talking about someone’s “observation of the agreements.” The inter-Korean agreements are the gains common to the nation attained irrespective of ideology, social system, ideal and religious belief without exception and the historic tasks of the nation to be fulfilled without fail.
Accordingly, no one is entitled to breach all agreements of the north and the south, big and small, which they pledged to implement before the nation. However, the south Korean authorities have bedeviled the inter-Korean relations by deliberately trampling down and scrapping the hard-won bilateral agreements. At the north-south high-level contact made at the outset of the year the present south Korean chief executive let her confidants agree with the north to halt slandering each other. They were so crafty as to request it to “believe in the will of the president” and claim that “it would be clear if it followed the development.” The south Korean authorities had better learn the habit of honestly fulfilling the agreements reached before paying lip-service to “improved relations” and “confidence-building.” *If they truly want improved relations and dialogue, they should make such bold decision as abandoning the bad habit of deliberately reneging on the hard-won national agreements.* This is our stance. Thirdly, the south Korean authorities including the present chief executive should behave in such a manner as to be helpful to the national reconciliation and unity if they truly want improved relations. This is our stand. A wicked chief executive is bound to pursue an evil policy as an adage says muddy spring will have muddy streams. It is the unanimous comment of the world people that they know no such wicked lady as the present south Korean chief executive. She knows nothing but letting loose reckless remarks escalating confrontation with fellow countrymen in the north wherever she goes without thinking over the consequences to be entailed by them. Her confrontation hysteria is accompanied by evildoings of authorities under her. This is evidenced by the behavior of Jong Hong Won who held the post of “prime minister” again after being forsaken by the angered public for his ill-fame. Ryu Kil Jae, “minister of Unification,” is also laying bare his true colors as a despicable confrontation maniac though he uttered so many good words at the negotiating table before us. The present chief executive of Chongwadae, before anyone else, had better stop recklessly wagging her tongue and all the south Korean authorities should halt their reckless confrontation rows if they have even an iota of sincerity for improving the north-south ties. This is our principled stand and assertion. *The south Korean authorities would be well advised to bear deep in mind the noble intention of the supreme leadership of the DPRK to make a new history of improving the relations between the north and the south so that they may not regret later,* the statement stressed.” (KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities Accused of Pushing Inter-Korean Relations to Uncontrollable Phase of Catastrophe,” November 15, 2014)

KPA Front Command report: “Recently the south Korean puppet military warmongers have gone extremely reckless in making provocations in the area of the Military Demarcation Line, timing to coincide with the Hoguk-14 war maneuvers kicked off in south Korea to invade the DPRK. From mid-October they began warning broadcast with vulgar words while firing bullets toward our servicepersons on their routine patrol duty in our side’s area north of the MDL. Even, they let armed rascals occupy positions and take firing posture to intentionally get on our servicepersons’ nerves. On November 14 alone, they made rough warning broadcast for scores of times toward our soldiers patrolling the north’s area along the MDL in the western and central fronts. Earlier, they did not hesitate to fire 12.7mm machineguns and 5.56mm automatic rifles in the eastern front. The patrolling in the north’s area of the MDL belongs to our legitimate right. The south Korean puppet military warmongers should
be mindful that such reckless military provocations in the area of MDL may invite unforeseeable retaliation strikes, which will immediately lead to a great war of justice for national reunification. The KPA Front Command, upon authorization, gravely warns the south Korean puppet military warmongers to stop the reckless military provocations in the whole front at once. If they continue the military provocation despite our warning, they will have to pay at the cost of their blood.” (KCNA, “KPA Front Command Gives Warning to S, Korean Military,” November 15, 2014)

11/16/14 North Korean soldiers have increased their reconnaissance activities near the tensely guarded land border in 2014 from a year ago, prompting more warning broadcasts and shots from South Korea, a government source here said. The source said South Korea has broadcast warning messages toward the North on "about 60 occasions" this year, a marked increase from a year ago. South Korea never had to fire warning shots across the border last year but has done so "five to six times" in 2014, according to the source. Most recently, about 10 North Korean soldiers apparently came a few feet south of the military demarcation line (MDL) while taking pictures of signposts set up there. In response, South Korea launched warning shots, but there was no exchange of fire, as the North Koreans moved away from the MDL without firing back. Last month, the two Koreas exchanged fire after troops from the communist country drew near the MDL. No casualties were reported. "North Korea has increased its reconnaissance in the demilitarized zone since last month," the source said. "The South Korean military is analyzing the North's intention behind it." (Yonhap, “N. Korea Shows Jump in Activities near Border: Source,” November 16, 2014)

Dealing a new blow to plans by Japan and the United States to relocate a busy Marine air base on Okinawa, the island's voters handed a landslide victory to an anti-base candidate for governor, rejecting the Tokyo-backed incumbent. Minutes after the polls closed, Onaga Takeshi, the former mayor of Naha, Okinawa's capital, was declared the winner over Nakaima Hirokazu, the current governor, who was backed by Japan's governing Liberal Democratic Party. Waving to jubilant supporters, Onaga, 64, said that as governor he would resist construction of a new American airfield. "The new military base will not be built," Onaga said in comments carried by the Japanese national broadcaster NHK. "I will convey the will of the Okinawan people to the governments of Japan and the United States." (Martin Fackler, “Okinawan Voters Replace Governor with Opponent of U.S. Base,” New York Times, November 17, 2014, p. A-4)

11/17/14 KCNA: “Choe Ryong Hae, member of the Presidium of the Political Bureau and secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), left here Monday by a special plane to visit the Russian Federation as a special envoy of supreme leader Kim Jong Un. Also leaving here together with the special envoy were Kim Kye Gwan, first vice-minister of Foreign Affairs, No Kwang Chol, vice-chief of the General Staff of the Korean People's Army, Ri Yong Chol, vice department director of the C.C., the WPK, Ri Kwang Gun, vice-minister of External Economic Relations, and officials concerned. They were seen off at the Pyongyang International Airport by KPA Vice Marshal Hwang Pyong So, director of the General Political Bureau of the KPA, Kim Ki Nam, secretary of the C.C., the WPK, Ri Su Yong, minister of Foreign Affairs, Ri
Ryong Nam, minister of External Economic Relations, Kim Song Nam, vice department director of the C.C., the WPK, and Alexandr Timonin, Russian ambassador to the DPRK. “(KCNA, “Special Envoy of Kim Jong-un Leaves for Russia,” November 17, 2014)

PM Abe Shinzo announced a snap election after its economy tipped into a technical recession, increasing the odds that he will delay plans to raise the sales tax next year. Preliminary July-September data were far worse than the markets expected, showing the economy shrank 1.6 per cent quarter-on-quarter on an annualized basis after a 7.3 percent decline the previous quarter. (Ben McLannahan and Chris Giles, “Japan Slips into Recession and Heads toward Snap Election,” November 18, 2014)

United Nations members voted 111-to-19 vote, with 55 abstentions, for a groundbreaking resolution that condemns North Korea for human rights abuses and for the first time recommends the prosecution of its leaders for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court. Outraged and humiliated in a vote that was shown live on the United Nations website, North Korea’s representative called the resolution an insidious plot to destabilize the country by its enemies, notably the United States. The representative, Choe Myong-nam, said the North might conduct more nuclear weapons tests in response. Choe, a Foreign Ministry adviser on United Nations and human rights issues, also said the resolution, written by the European Union and Japan and co-sponsored by 62 members, including the United States, was based on a “compilation of groundless political accusations and contradictions.” The resolution still faces enormous obstacles because only the Security Council can refer cases to the International Criminal Court. China and Russia, which have veto power on the Council, were among those that opposed the resolution, foreshadowing further diplomatic confrontations. The issue presents a particular quandary for China, which has long been North Korea’s most important benefactor, even while becoming increasingly exasperated with its behavior. Theoretically, the resolution means that North Korean leaders could one day be hauled as defendants before the International Criminal Court at The Hague, which was created to provide justice for victims of atrocities, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Approval of the resolution came after committee members defeated an amendment presented by Cuba, a North Korea ally, seeking to delete the provision on accountability. Cuba’s delegation said that the provision had been concocted by North Korea’s adversaries, that it would set a dangerous precedent, and that it was a “tool to sanction and condemn developing countries. (Rick Gladstone, “United Nations Urges North Korea Prosecutions,” New York Times, November 19, 2014, p. A-12)

Hansen: “Recent commercial satellite imagery indicates that the 5 MWe plutonium production reactor at North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center remains shutdown after 10 weeks, longer than what is required for routine maintenance. While it is too soon to reach a definitive conclusion, new evidence is accumulating that suggests: 1) the shutdown may have allowed the North to remove a limited number of fuel rods, possibly failed, from the reactor; and 2) Pyongyang may be preparing to restart the Radiochemical Laboratory, which separates weapons-grade plutonium from waste products in spent nuclear fuel rods. This assessment is based on three observations: 1) steam coming from a large cooling tower located at buildings
associated with the Radiochemical Laboratory is consistent with maintenance, testing and other activities before commencing operations; 2) truck activity near the vehicle door to the building that receives the spent fuel at the reprocessing complex before it is moved to the reprocessing building; and 3) piles of gray material outside the old pilot fuel fabrication facility, now believed to manufacture fuel rods for the 5 MWe Reactor, that may indicate that a chemical process is taking place possibly related to the production of new rods. In another important development, construction has started on a possible new pipeline that would divert hot water/steam from the reactor cooling system currently dumped in the nearby river to another location, potentially complicating future efforts to monitor operations.” (Nick Hansen, “North Korea’s Yongbyon Nuclear Facility: Reactor Shutdown Continues: Activity at Reprocessing Facility,” 38North, November 19, 2014)

11/20/14 DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman’s statement: “The United States perpetrated such grave politically-motivated provocation as railroading the “resolution on human rights” against the DPRK through the meeting of the Third Committee of the 69th UN General Assembly on November 18 by instigating the EU and Japan and setting in motion hand-raising machines through highhanded practice and political and economic pressure. The “resolution” is peppered with malignant accusations based on such conspiratorial document as the "report of the Commission of Inquiry" on human rights situation in the DPRK, a collection of lies and fabrications called "testimonies" made by a handful of "defectors from the north" who fled or were lured after committing crimes in the DPRK. The history of the UN does not know such precedence as adopting a “resolution” of its General Assembly based on a "report" hastily worked out without any dialogue with the country concerned and any visit to it. The U.S. barely managed to garner votes necessary for adopting the “resolution” by whipping together hand-raising machines but not a few countries confessed that they voted for it under the threat of the U.S. and Japan to halt economic aid, not because of human rights issue. This clearly proves that the "resolution" was a political fraud. Some countries of the EU and Japan acted servants for adopting the “resolution,” disclosing themselves that their much touted "efforts for human rights" were not for a genuine improvement of human rights but for the pursuance of the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK and sycophancy towards it. This time the DPRK clarified its will to have wide-ranging cooperation in the field of human rights and readiness to actively promote human rights dialogue and exchange. However, the hostile forces finally denied cooperation and chose the way of confrontation. This behavior revealed that the call of the followers of the U.S. for human rights dialogue was hypocritical and closed themselves the door of not only human rights dialogue but other dialogues and exchange and cooperation. The U.S. kicked off its "human rights" offensive against the DPRK in real earnest in a bid to invent a pretext for armed intervention by terming the DPRK a “tundra of human rights abuses” in the international arena. History vividly remembers the Yugoslav War unleashed by the U.S. in 1999 under the pretext of “protecting human rights and a minority.” A dangerous precedent is in the making to politicize and internationalize the human rights issue of an individual country and use it for toppling its social system. The prevailing serious situation in which international law is violated by high-handed practices goes to more clearly prove the DPRK’s constant view that human rights precisely mean national sovereignty. The DPRK bitterly denounces and
categorically rejects the railroading of the recent “resolution” manipulated by the U.S. in an attempt to topple the socialist system centered on the popular masses, the system chosen by the Korean people and which they regard as dearer than their own lives, as the most striking manifestation of the hostile policy towards the DPRK. Now that the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK compels the latter not to exercise restraint any longer in conducting a new nuclear test, its war deterrence will grow stronger unlimitedly to cope with the armed intervention of the U.S. The principal architect of the above-said “resolution” and its servants will be held wholly responsible for all the consequences to be entailed by its adoption.” (KCNA, “FM Spokesman Categorically Rejects U.S.-Manipulated U.N. ‘Human Rights Resolution’ against DPRK,” November 20, 2014)

KPA southwestern front command report “as regards the fact that the south Korean puppet military warmongers are getting evermore pronounced in confrontation and provocation moves against the DPRK though four years have passed after the Yonphyong Island shelling incident: The south Korean puppet military warmongers are mulling concluding the Hoguk joint military exercises with madcap live-shelling drills on Paekryong and Yonphyong islands with the backing of the U.S. imperialist aggressor forces present in south Korea. They are planning to hold even a military parade as well as “memorial service”, “awarding ceremony”, “floral visit”, etc. for those provocators who met a miserable end on the occasion of November 23, the day of the Yonphyong Island shelling incident. The world knows no one but the puppet military warmongers who go so brazen as to hold even such “ceremony” by painting the defeat as “victory.”...The KPA officers and men on the southwestern front sharply watch with high vigilance the warmongers keen only on driving the situation to an extreme phase through provocations in the acute hotspot waters, still without discretion. Ridiculous is such behavior of those defeated provocators, who ardently asked the KPA to stop shelling at that time when the island was turned into a “hell of death” and “everything there was being reduced into ashes” by its shower of fire for justice. It is the retaliatory will of the stalwart fighters on the southwestern front greeting the fourth anniversary of their victory in the Yonphyong Island shelling to bury the provocators at the bottom of sea for good so that they may not say even about “retrieval of defeat.” The mad provocators are bound to be beaten or killed by the KPA. It is their inevitable and miserable fate. The sound of gunfire by the KPA in the Yonphyong Island shelling will remain an echo of victory forever, but it will always remain a dirge of defeat for the provocators. The south Korean military warmongers should never forget the lesson from the bitter defeat in the Yonphyong Island shelling all the time, the report warned.” (KCNA, “KPA Southwestern Front Command Issues Warning to S. Korean Military,” November 21, 2014)

Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK) spokesman’s statement “assailing the south Korean puppet group for pushing its campaign of hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK to an extreme pitch: Betes noires of the puppet ultra-right conservative organizations including the Phohang branch of the “Association of Those with Special Mission” held a rally for inciting the confrontation with the DPRK at the plaza before the Phohang City Office in North Kyongsang Province [yesterday] afternoon on the 4th anniversary of the Yonphyong Island shelling
incident and staged a farce of hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK. This farce timed to coincide with the largest-ever combined landing drill in Pohang for a sudden attack on the north was a carefully-worked-out deliberate politically motivated provocation of the south Korean authorities from A to Z. The reality goes to prove that the Park Geun Hye group is talking volumes about "confidence," "dialogue" and "peace" but is dreaming of achieving its ambition for "unification of the social systems" with the sinister intention to escalate the confrontation. The DPRK has declared more than once that it would never pardon any act of hurting the dignity of its supreme leadership but mercilessly punish it. Under the situation where the puppet group openly revealed its real intention not to rule out even a war by malignantly hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK, the life and soul of the Korean people, the DPRK will more significantly bolster up the striking power corresponding to it and mercilessly punish the provokers by unimaginable means and methods. The south Korean puppet forces will be held wholly responsible for all catastrophic consequences to be entailed in the north-south relations in the future.” (KCNA, “CPRK Raps S. Korean Authorities’ Politically Motivated Provocation,” November 21, 2014)

Top North Korean and Russian military officials held talks in Moscow on ways to improve defense ties between the former communist allies, Pyongyang’s state media reported. No Kwang-chol, vice chief of the General Staff of the North’s Army, met with his Russian counterpart, as No is accompanying Choe Ryong-hae, a special envoy of the North’s leader Kim Jong-un, on his Russia trip, according to KCNA. "Both sides had a wide-ranging exchange of views on putting the friendship and cooperation between the armies of the two countries on a new higher stage,” it said in a dispatch from Moscow. KCNA gave no date of the meeting, but it was apparently held yesterday. The two nations also held a separate meeting between senior economic officials, added KCNA. North Korean Vice Economy Minister Ri Kwang-gun had talks with Alexander Galushka, minister for the development of the Russian Far East. They "discussed measures for further boosting cooperation between the two countries in economy and trade for more substantial results," KCNA said. Meanwhile, Choe Ryong-hae, the Workers’ Party of Korea secretary, held talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov yesterday, two days after a meeting with President Vladimir Putin. Lavrov was quoted as telling Choe that Moscow is ready for the "highest-level contact" with Pyongyang, indicating the possibility of summit talks between Putin and the North’s leader Kim. (Yonhap, “N. Korea, Russia Seek to Improve Military Ties,” November 21, 2014) KCNA: “Choe Ryong Hae, member of the Presidium of the Political Bureau and secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, visited the Russian Federation from Nov. 17 to 24 as a special envoy of Kim Jong Un, first chairman of the National Defence Commission of the DPRK. Choe met Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, president of the Russian Federation, at Kremlin, Moscow on November 18. Choe courteously conveyed greetings and a personal letter of Kim Jong Un to Putin. Choe and Putin reaffirmed the will of both sides to boost reciprocal cooperation and further deepen exchanges and contacts in political, economic, military and all other fields in the significant year 2015. Choe held talks with Sergei Lavrov, Russian foreign minister, in Moscow on November 20. At the talks, they had an in-depth discussion on the matters arising in developing the DPRK-Russia friendly relations onto a higher stage.
such as the issues of promoting bilateral cooperation in economic, trade and humanitarian fields and boosting cooperation in the international arena. Both sides reached a consensus of views on organizing grand joint celebrations and reenergizing visits and cooperation between the two countries, including exchange of delegations, next year marking the 70th anniversary of Korea’s liberation and the 70th anniversary of Russia’s victory in the Great Patriotic War. They reaffirmed the joint understanding that all sorts of joint military drills and arms buildup should be halted and the danger of a nuclear war be defused on the Korean Peninsula and in its vicinity and the issue of the peninsula be settled in a peaceful manner. Also discussed at the talks were the issues of making sustained efforts to resume the six-party talks without any precondition and creating atmosphere and environment favorable for the resumption of the talks. During the visit No Kwang Chol, vice-chief of the General Staff of the Korean People’s Army, met with Andrei Kartapolov, deputy chief of the General Staff and director of its General Operation Bureau of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, and Ri Kwang Gun, vice-minister of External Economic Relations, with Alexandr Galushka, minister of Development of Far East of Russia. Both sides had a wide-ranging exchange of views on substantial issues arising in further revitalizing exchange and cooperation in military, economic and trade fields. During their stay in Moscow the special envoy and his party visited the Lenin Mausoleum, the Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier by the side of the Kremlin Castle Wall, the Kremlin, etc. They toured Khabarovsky and Maritime Territories of the Russian Federation from November 21. The special envoy’s party separately met with Byacheslav Shport, governor of the Khabarovsky Territory Administration, and Vladimir Mikulushesviki, governor of the Maritime Territory Administration, and discussed issues of boosting the regional cooperation and exchange in the fields of industry, agriculture, forestry, transport service, sports and culture. The special envoy’s party visited St. Bishop Innokenty of Irkutsk Church, Russian Orthodox Church, and the Folk Museum in Khabarovsky, the Ignat Trade Center and the Vlad Bread Factory in Vladivostok visited by leader Kim Jong Il during his trip to the Russian Federation. They also visited the Command of Army No. 5 in the Eastern Military District of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, the Military History Museum of the Pacific Sea Fleet and various other places.” (KCNA. “Special Envoy of Kim Jong-un Visits Russia,” November 25, 2014)

Forty percent of voters do not support the Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe after he decided to dissolve the Lower House for a snap election, a November 19-20 Asahi Shimbun survey showed, the first time that the figure has dipped below the support rate. The nationwide telephone survey followed Abe’s November 18 announcement that he was dissolving the Lower House and postponing the consumption tax hike scheduled for October 2015. Of the responses received from voters, 1,116, or 53 percent, were valid. 40 percent of voters said they do not support the Cabinet, up from 36 percent in an Asahi Shimbun survey taken November 8-9. That figure compares with the 39 percent of respondents who voiced support for his administration, down from 42 percent in the previous survey. The most recent nonsupport rate is the highest since Abe returned to power in December 2012, while the rate for those who support the prime minister was the lowest, according to Asahi Shimbun surveys taken since his return. Although 18 percent said they approved of Abe’s decision to dissolve the
chamber to hold a snap election, 62 percent said they disagreed with the prime minister's decision. Asked about the two-year economic revival effort by Abe, known as "Abenomics," 39 percent said they view the policy as a failure, while 30 percent believe the prime minister's efforts have been successful. Another 31 percent had other or no comment. Thirty-three percent said they support the decision to delay the planned consumption tax hike from the current 8 percent to 10 percent until April 2017, while 49 percent said they do not. Thirty-nine percent said the sales tax should be raised in April 2017 compared with 49 percent who do not agree with the 2017 tax hike. Among those who disagree with the planned 2017 tax increase, nearly 70 percent said they do not approve of Abe's decision not to change the schedule again. In the November 8-9 survey, just 24 percent said the government should increase the tax rate in October 2015, while 67 percent disagreed with the scheduled tax rise next year. The previous poll also showed 71 percent believe the Japanese economic situation is in too dire a situation to increase the consumption tax. Asked which party they will vote for in the proportional representation portion in the upcoming Lower House election, 37 percent chose the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, while 13 percent said they will vote for the opposition Democratic Party of Japan. Six percent each selected the Japan Innovation Party and the Japanese Communist Party. The LDP's junior coalition partner, Komeito, was chosen by 4 percent, whereas 1 percent each said they will vote for the Social Democratic Party and the People's Life Party. (Asahi Shimbun, "Asahi Poll: Cabinet Support Falls below Nonsupport Rate after Abe Calls Snap Election," November 21, 2014)

Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea Secretariat information bulletin No. 1080 "condemning the south Korean puppet regime for joining those states which co-sponsored the railroading of the anti-DPRK "human rights resolution" through the UN session: It is the south Korean puppet regime which cried out for the adoption of the "resolution" with the information full of lies, fabrications and plots, while begging for the cooperation for the anti-DPRK "human rights" campaign. It is also the regime which, not content with arranging interview of human scum by riff raffs of the international community in south Korea, let them present "testimonies" in the international arenas. The puppet group took the lead in fabricating the "human rights resolution", pursuant to the U.S. It is aimed to defame the high authority and influence of the DPRK, justify the moves for confrontation with fellow countrymen and divert public opinion elsewhere in a bid to put the people's mindset under control, calm down the spirit of the south Korean people's anti-"government" struggle and thus tide over the ruling crisis. The puppet forces are the top-class sycophants and traitors without an equal in the world who leave south Korea to the tender mercy of the U.S. as its colony and offer even the military prerogative to foreign forces, and the biggest human rights abuser who turned south Korea into a tundra of human rights. It is, therefore, nonsensical for them to talk about someone's "human rights." It is a ridiculous daydream to try to use "human rights" racket for bringing down Korean socialism that displays its might by dint of Songun and wins victory after victory by dint of single-minded unity. The south Korean puppet group actively joined the U.S. manipulation of the provocative "human rights resolution" against the DPRK while kowtowing to the U.S. This is little short of a declaration of an all-out war against the social system and people of the DPRK. The DPRK will neither remain a passive onlooker
to the puppet forces' "human rights" racket nor pardon anyone who provokes its dignity, social system and people even a bit with the "human rights" as a pretext. All Koreans and the international community should see through the despicable nature and sinister scheme of the anti-DPRK "human rights" campaign kicked off by the U.S. and south Korean puppet group and categorically reject it." (KCNA, “S. Korean Puppet Regime Flayed for Taking Lead in Adoption of Anti-DPRK ‘Human Rights Resolution,’” November 22, 2014)

National Defense Commission (NDC) statement: “We have already seriously warned of the catastrophic consequences to be entailed by the reckless anti-DPRK "human rights" racket kicked up by the U.S. and its followers. This warning was aimed to help cool their heads overheated by confrontation and hostile policy, though belatedly, and refrain from committing another anachronistic criminal act of challenging justice after judging the gravity of the situation with reason. This measure taken by the DPRK aroused deep sympathy of the public at home and abroad and various righteous and upright countries made every possible effort to put the situation under control while voicing opposition to the U.S.-orchestrated "human rights" racket against the DPRK. We feel sincerely thankful for this and will always remember it. However, the U.S., steeped in brigandish bad habit, finally perpetrated such reckless action as fabricating the anti-DPRK "resolution on human rights" at the UN by manipulating riff-raffs bereft of elementary view and principle, instead of thinking twice. The U.S. let the EU and Japan draft the "resolution" and UN member states blindly following and obeying it voted for it. This hideous charade staged in the international arena is a shameless, politically-motivated farce to suppress justice with injustice and cover truth with lies and the height of impudent burlesque to deceive the world people with plots and fabrications. What happened there is lashing our service personnel and people into great fury and their determination to make retaliation against this is running high. The U.S. and its followers are now unable to escape merciless punishment for daring impair the prestige of the DPRK and foolishly trying to bring down the socialist system, the cradle of our people. They adopted the extremely unreasonable "resolution on human rights" against the DPRK and, not content with this, continue behaving impudently as if they had put it in an awkward position. The NDC of the DPRK solemnly declares the following principled stand in this regard: Firstly, our army and people categorically deny and reject the "resolution on human rights" fabricated by the U.S. and its allies by abusing the UN. We have never recognized any "resolution" worked out by the U.S.-led undesirable hostile forces to encroach upon our sovereignty and vital rights. The same is the case with the present "resolution." This is because the "resolution" is a fabrication made on the basis of misinformation provided by a handful of human scum who fled the country after committing unpardonable crimes before it and its people and abandoning their native places and parents and wives and children. It is also because the "resolution" is a product of political fraud as it was railroaded through h highhanded and arbitrary practices, allurement and bribery by hostile forces including the U.S., without expression of the free will of UN member states who sympathize with justice and value conscience. Worse still, the "resolution" was adopted under the manipulation of the U.S. which has sought the infringement upon our sovereignty in violation of the UN Charter which considers respect for the sovereignty of all countries and non-interference in their internal affairs as a basic
principle. This “resolution” may work on those poor guys who throw away human dignity like a pair of old shoes, steeped in sycophancy and submission. But it can never work on the DPRK, highly dignified with independence and demonstrating its might with self-defense and self-reliance. The U.S. and Japan are the worst human rights abusers as they have mercilessly trampled down the peoples’ rights to exist, live and develop and took countless human lives in Korea and other parts of the world for centuries. And such riff-raffs as the Park Geun Hyo group of South Korea kowtowing to them joined them in sponsoring the above-said “resolution” reminiscent of a thief crying “Stop the thief!” This cannot but be a tragicomedy unprecedented in history. Our army and people urge the Obama administration to make a formal apology by bending its knees before us for its crimes. This stand of ours is a warning served to Japan and riff-raffs of the EU as well as the Park Geun Hyo group that they can also never go scot-free. This stand of the DPRK is, at the same time, a warning served to the UN to make haste to take a fair measure to put the situation under control, though belatedly. The UN needs to seriously recollect the time when the DPRK declared a just nuclear thunder to defend its supreme interests 20 odd years back. Secondly, our army and people will take an unprecedented toughest measure for mercilessly smashing the heinous “human rights” campaign against the DPRK as it has already declared. The recent “resolution” is a full revelation of the hostile intention to stamp out everything dear to our army and people. Human rights precisely mean the right to independence and the sovereignty of a relevant country. Therefore, the brigandish “resolution” against the DPRK’s genuine human rights means the most undisguised war declaration to infringe upon its sovereignty. The recent “resolution” dared take issue with the dignity of our supreme leadership. This fact alone goes to prove that the sponsors of the “resolution” and all those involved in its adoption deserve a severe punishment. This is because the dignity of the supreme leadership means the destiny of the DPRK which cannot be bartered for anything. The U.S. is the primary target of our toughest countermeasure. The U.S. has run the whole gamut of hostile policies including the political isolation, economic blockade and military pressure upon the DPRK. As the U.S. found all this unworkable on the DPRK, it is making desperate efforts to use the “human rights issue” for creating a new theatre for invasion under the pretext of armed intervention. We will take toughest counteraction against the U.S. as already declared before the world, as long as its “human rights” racket and its hostile actions go on. Japan, too, can never escape this toughest counteraction of the DPRK. It is the sworn enemy of the Korean people as it committed thrice-cursed crimes, crudely violating their human rights from the beginning of the last century like the U.S. It is disgusting for Japan to pull up the DPRK over its genuine human rights just to please the U.S., far from repenting of its crime-woven past. Japan should bear in mind that if it continues behaving as now, it will disappear from the world map for good, not just remaining a near yet distant country. The Park Geun Hyo group is also the main target of the DPRK’s toughest counteraction as it has turned the whole of south Korea into the worst tundra of human rights. We warned it enough to understand that its improper tongue-lashing would end in cutting off its head. It, however, is still busy talking rubbish about somebody’s nukes and “human rights” and a sort of life. It would be well advised to realize itself what miserable end its heinous confrontation with compatriots will bring. Availing ourselves of this opportunity, we would like to urge the UN to come to its senses and awaken itself. If the UN allows the
The U.S. to turn the inviolable political arena into a mayhem under the sway of its highhanded and arbitrary practices, abandoning the principle of impartiality and equity and its original mission and role, it will be hard to maintain its existence amid the world people's condemnation. Our army and people can never overlook the insult to their genuine human rights and the infringement upon their right to independence and sovereignty. Time will prove what high price those who unreasonably violated the dignity of the DPRK despite its repeated warnings have to pay. Thirdly, the U.S. and its followers will be wholly accountable for the unimaginable and catastrophic consequences to be entailed by the frantic "human right" racket against the DPRK. We offered the U.S. a series of opportunities of redeeming its crimes by turning over a new leaf. Recently, the DPRK treated with magnanimity U.S. high-ranking officials who came here, bringing with them Obama's personal letter and showed such humanitarian leniency to several American criminals who were sentenced to heavy penalties for violating the law of the DPRK. Nevertheless, the U.S. responded to it with the frantic "human rights" racket against the DPRK. We would like to question the Park Geun Hye group busy billing the adoption of the above-said "resolution" as a sort of a significant event. Does she think Chongwadae will be safe if guns roar for aggression and a nuclear war breaks out on the Korean Peninsula? Can she prolong her remaining days in America after leaving south Korea? Japan, political pigmy, would be well advised to behave itself properly, cogitating about what miserable end it will meet. Once a sacred war is launched to protect the sovereignty of the DPRK, not only the U.S. but the Park Geun Hye group and Japan will have to be hit hard and sent to the bottom of the sea. The UN also can never evade the responsibility for the catastrophic consequences entailed by what happened there. All this is the DPRK's response to the "human rights" racket of the U.S.-led hostile forces. Nobody can infringe upon the DPRK's sacred and supreme interests. It is the firm stand of the army and people of the DPRK not to tolerate the U.S. and its followers' vicious "human rights" racket. The sponsors of the "resolution" and all those involved in its adoption will repent bitterly. (KCNA, “KPA and People Will Not Tolerate ‘Human Rights’ Racket of U.S. and Its Allies: NDC of DPRK,” November 23, 2014)

Prime Minister Chung Hong-won pledged strong retaliation against any North Korean attacks as Seoul commemorated the fourth anniversary of the deadly shelling of a front-line South Korean island. "The government and the military will preemptively block the possibility of North Korea's provocations through a water-tight defense posture, and if there is a provocation, we will sternly react to it," the prime minister said in a speech at a ceremony marking the anniversary of the 2010 attack on Yeonpyeong Island. Defense Minister Han Min-koo delivered the speech in lieu of the prime minister who is currently on a trip to Egypt. (Yonhap, “S. Korea Vows Stern Action on Future N. Korean Attacks on Anniversary of Deadly Shelling,” November 23, 2014)

Four years after North Korea shelled Yeonpyeongdo Island, tensions remain high on the frontline island. To better defend the border islands after the November 23 attack that killed two marines and two civilians, Seoul has established a new military command, and deployed new personnel and state-of-the-art weapons systems. Some nine months after the attack, the South established a command dedicated to defending the northwestern border island and dispatched an additional 1,200 to the
northern islands. In terms of military hardware, there has been a significant improvement. The number of K-9 self-propelled howitzers on the border islands including Baengnyeongdo has tripled. Other pieces of new equipment such as multiple rocket launchers, the Artillery Hunting Radar, Cobra attack helicopters and K-10 ammunition transport vehicles have also been deployed. Also notable is the deployment last May of Israeli-made Spike missiles, which are capable of launching precision strikes on the North’s coastal artillery hidden in mountain caves and tunnels. The military believes that the missiles, with a range of around 20 km, would help neutralize artillery forces within striking distance of its western coast. The communist state is known to have deployed some 1,000 artillery pieces in the coastal region including 76.2 mm-caliber coastal artillery guns and 122 mm multiple rocket launchers. Seoul has also pushed for the deployment of tactical surveillance airships to the border islands to better monitor the security situation on the islands. The deployment is expected to begin early next year. The unmanned airship is to fly thousands of meters up to monitor areas near the border islands 24 hours a day. To address concerns that North Korea’s special commandos could infiltrate the South Korean border islands aboard hovercrafts, the Marine Corps has made a basic plan to set up a unit equipped with hovercrafts and speed boats. (Song Sang-ho, “4 Years after Island Shelling, Tensions Still High on West Sea,” Korea Herald, November 21, 2014) Four years after the North’s shelling of Yeonpyeong Island, in which two Marines and two civilians of South Korea were killed, a new map of intensified arms deployments has developed on the western maritime border. The North said it suffered no military casualties from the South’s response, but the South’s military authorities claimed there appeared to be dozens of casualties. A rare military meeting took place in Wonsan, North Korea, on August 25, 2012, as Kim Jong-un, summoned top military officials, according South Korean intelligence sources, and ordered them to be ready by 2013 to fight an all-out war. “Heighten the level of exercises,” Kim was quoted as saying at the meeting. “Modernize weaponry and deploy new arms.” According to an analysis by Seoul intelligence officials, Kim’s experience of the Yeonpyeong shelling inspired him to beef up the military capabilities. “Kim, who was heir apparent at the time, witnessed the South’s responses to the North’s attack,” said an intelligence official. “He probably realized that an engagement could take place anytime at the western islands.” Following Kim’s orders, the North developed new missiles and replaced aging 122-millimeter and 240-millimeter multiple rocket launchers with new 300-millimeter ones. “The upgraded launchers have a longer range with faster launch speeds,” said a military official. “The North can load 12 to 30 launch tubes on a truck and fire 10 to 20 rockets per minute. They are menacing weapons.” The North also built a base for Murenas, air cushion amphibious assault landing craft from the former Soviet Union, at Goampo, only 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) from the South’s Baeknyeong Island. With the new base, the North is capable of transporting a large amount of soldiers. Drones also are frequently used to gather intelligence. Drones have crashed into Paju, northern Gyeonggi, and Baeknyeong Island in March and April, exposing the North’s reconnaissance operations. Military authorities of the South also said the North has nearly completed covering its artillery positions with concrete roofs. The South also has beefed up its military capabilities near the northwestern islands. The Northwestern Islands Defense Command was created and weaponry was upgraded. “We deployed AH-1 Cobra helicopters with special fire and water retardant systems so that they can
carry out missions in coastal areas,” said a military official. “We can effectively take out the North’s air cushion landing craft and infiltrating soldiers.” K-9 self-propelled howitzers with a range of more than 40 kilometers, Spike missiles and anti-artillery radar also have been deployed to Yeonpyeong and Baeknyeong islands. The military also deployed two Super Green Pine radar systems capable of monitoring all North Korean territory. “In the northwestern island region, the South’s firepower was relatively weaker than the North’s,” said the military official. “As we stepped up our capabilities, the North beefed up theirs.” (Jeong Yong-soo and Yoo Seoung-woon, “All’s Not Quiet on the Western Maritime Front,” JoongAng Ilbo, November 22, 2014)

South Korea is making a controversial approach toward its economic sanctions against North Korea in its steps to implement the Eurasia initiative, which inevitably requires Pyongyang’s cooperation. Under the government’s supervision, POSCO, the country’s largest steelmaker, will import Russian coal via North Korea this week as a part of its feasibility test for the “Rajin-Khasan project.” Embarked on in 2008, Pyongyang and Moscow have been refurbishing a railway between the two areas. Some 45,000 tons of bituminous coal produced from western Siberia will be transported from the Russian town of Khasan to the ice-free northeastern port of Rajin in North Korea along a 54-kilometer cross-border railway. By November 29, a China-flagged vessel will ship the coal to Pohang, a port city in North Gyeongsang Province where POSCO’s steel mills are located. Such import will take place amid the government’s stance that it will not lift the so-called May 24 measures which ban all inter-Korean trade and other cooperative efforts, except for those within the Gaesong Industrial Park (GIC). The Ministry of Unification said that the import of Russian coal via North Korea should be seen as “exceptional.” “The government is making an exception to its May 24 measures as it’s geared toward carrying out Park’s Eurasia initiative at the same time,” unification ministry spokesman Lim Byeong-cheol said. Lim said the deal this time does not "seriously violate" the May 24 measures because POSCO does not directly deal with North Korea. According to Lim, POSCO will pay the import cost worth $4 million to a Russian coal mine developer, which will deliver the coal to Rajin. He refused to give name of the company. Lim said the firm will pay port charges as well as partial fees for using the railroad to North Korea. A 13-member South Korean delegation is on a five-day visit to Rajin to monitor the transport process of the coal. The members include one unification ministry official and 12 representatives from POSCO, Hyundai Merchant Marine and the Korea Railroad Corporation. The three South Korean enterprises formed a consortium to take part in the “Rajin-Khasan project” by purchasing a share from the Russian side, which holds a 70-percent stake. Yoo Ho-yel, a North Korean studies professor at Korea University, said, “The Park government is taking a flexible approach toward the May 24 measures.” Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies, agreed. However, he said the direct deal between the two Koreas is a violation of the May 24 measures. “South Korea’s participation in the ‘Rajin-Kassan project’ can be controversial in several ways, especially if the two Koreas begin to deal with each other directly,” he said. (Yi Whan-woo, “Rajin-Khasan Project Raises Questions over Seoul’s ance on May 24 Measures,” Korea Times, November 24, 2014)

KCNA: “Choe Ryong Hae, member of the Presidium of the Political Bureau and secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea, visited the Russian
Federation from November 17 to 24 as a special envoy of Kim Jong Un, first chairman of the National Defence Commission of the DPRK. Choe met Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, president of the Russian Federation, at Kremlin, Moscow on November 18. Choe courteously conveyed greetings and a personal letter of Kim Jong Un to Putin. Choe and Putin reaffirmed the will of both sides to boost reciprocal cooperation and further deepen exchanges and contacts in political, economic, military and all other fields in the significant year 2015. Choe held talks with Sergei Lavrov, Russian foreign minister, in Moscow on November 20. At the talks, they had an in-depth discussion on the matters arising in developing the DPRK-Russia friendly relations onto a higher stage such as the issues of promoting bilateral cooperation in economic, trade and humanitarian fields and boosting cooperation in the international arena. Both sides reached a consensus of views on organizing grand joint celebrations and reenergizing visits and cooperation between the two countries, including exchange of delegations, next year marking the 70th anniversary of Korea's liberation and the 70th anniversary of Russia's victory in the Great Patriotic War. They reaffirmed the joint understanding that all sorts of joint military drills and arms buildup should be halted and the danger of a nuclear war be defused on the Korean Peninsula and in its vicinity and the issue of the peninsula be settled in a peaceful manner. Also discussed at the talks were the issues of making sustained efforts to resume the six-party talks without any precondition and creating atmosphere and environment favorable for the resumption of the talks. During the visit No Kwang Chol, vice-chief of the General Staff of the Korean People's Army, met with Andrei Kartapolov, deputy chief of the General Staff and director of its General Operation Bureau of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, and Ri Kwang Gun, vice-minister of External Economic Relations, with Alexandr Galushka, minister of Development of Far East of Russia. Both sides had a wide-ranging exchange of views on substantial issues arising in further revitalizing exchange and cooperation in military, economic and trade fields. During their stay in Moscow the special envoy and his party visited the Lenin Mausoleum, the Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier by the side of the Kremlin Castle Wall, the Kremlin, etc. They toured Khabarovsk and Maritime Territories of the Russian Federation from November 21. The special envoy's party separately met with Byacheslav Shport, governor of the Khabarovsk Territory Administration, and Vladimir Mikulushesvski, governor of the Maritime Territory Administration, and discussed issues of boosting the regional cooperation and exchange in the fields of industry, agriculture, forestry, transport service, sports and culture. The special envoy's party visited St. Bishop Innokenty of Irkutsk Church, Russian Orthodox Church, and the Folk Museum in Khabarovsk, the Ignat Trade Center and the Vlad Bread Factory in Vladivostok visited by leader Kim Jong Il during his trip to the Russian Federation. They also visited the Command of Army No. 5 in the Eastern Military District of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, the Military History Museum of the Pacific Sea Fleet and various other places. (KCNA, “Special Envoy of Kim Jong-un Visits Russia,” November 25, 2014) Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said November 20 that Russian President Vladimir Putin is ready to hold a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un after holding talks with Kim's special envoy. Further, Lavrov told a news conference: “We got assurances from the high representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea that Pyongyang is ready for the restart of six-party talks, without preconditions.” He said a special envoy of
North Korean leader Kim Jong-un met Russian President Vladimir Putin this week to deliver a letter promising “cooperation in solving problems that are now lingering on the Korean peninsula.” [commitment to September 2005 joint statement on denuclearization?] (Korea Herald, “Putin Ready for Summit with Kim,” November 21, 2014) Senior Russian officials and businessmen in Moscow after Choe’s visit showed that Russia also is enthusiastic about economic cooperation with the North, as well as trilateral economic cooperation with the two Koreas. Only the South is making excuses to stay out of it. A businessman who has visited the two Koreas more than 20 times complained the South had always said it would review trilateral economic cooperation proposals, but never replied. A senior official who met with 11 South Korean journalists who attended a discussion on the sidelines of Korea-Russia dialogue, on the condition of not quoting him directly, sharply complained about Seoul’s unwillingness. Seoul also made an unacceptable precondition to the resumption of six-party nuclear talks. While Russia and North Korea are ready for trilateral economic cooperation, the South has not taken any action, and that is a problem. The gap between the perceptions of Seoul and Moscow is seriously large. It is a crucial time to cooperate with Russia, but the complaints from Moscow were surprising and undesirable. The most optimistic remark from the Russian official was that a Helsinki Process for Northeast Asia is necessary. (Kim Young-hie, “Moscow and Pyongyang,” JoongAng Ilbo, December 8, 2014)

KCNA: “Kim Jong Un, supreme leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, gave field guidance to the Sinchon Museum, an epitome of history showing the brutality and cruelty of the U.S. imperialists and class enemies. He said he came to the museum to arouse the servicepersons and civilians of the country to an all-out anti-U.S. struggle by intensifying the anti-imperialist, anti-U.S. education and class education among them in keeping with the requirements of the prevailing situation and the developing revolution. Recalling the day in November 1998 when he visited the museum in company with Generalissimo Kim Jong Il, he went round its main building and tombs of 400 mothers and 102 children. The massacres committed by the U.S. imperialist aggressors in Sinchon evidently showed that they are cannibals and homicides seeking pleasure in slaughter, he said, adding that the Korean people would never forget the brutal atrocities committed by the U.S. murderers and class enemies in Sinchon and many other areas of the northern half of Korea. Kim Jong Un said that illusion about the enemy just means death and any slightest illusion about the enemy may lead to the renunciation of the revolution and eventually spoil it. U.S. imperialism is the arch-villain of aggression which came into being and got fattened with aggression and plundering, he pointed out. Its nature and brutality as an aggressor remain unchanged forever, and if there is any change today, it has got more insidious and crafty in the method to satisfy its greed for aggression, he said, stressing that to intensify the anti-imperialist, anti-U.S. education and class education at present is vital to the prospect of the Korean revolution and the destiny of the country. He further said: To intensify the class education is more urgent today when the younger generation, who experienced neither exploitation and oppression nor the stern trials of war, have emerged the driving force of the revolution. The class education should not be delayed or neglected for a moment though time passes and generations are replaced, but it should be intensified in depth and on a permanent basis. As fish
cannot live without water, it is impossible to think about sovereign life of people and dignity and value of human beings without anti-imperialist, anti-U.S. education and class education, he said, stressing that victory of the revolution and socialism mainly depends on how to conduct such education. He underscored the need to deeply implant the DPRK army and people with the strong anti-imperialist, anti-U.S. class consciousness and the outlook on the principal enemy so as to firmly defend the stronghold of the revolution and class position and achieve the final victory of the Korean revolution. He urged the party and working people’s organizations to intensify the class education among the party members and other working people, well aware of why the Workers’ Party of Korea attaches importance to the class education. He said if the class education is to be intensified, it is important to build up the Sinchon Museum and other class education centers across the country and deepen the education through them. The Sinchon Museum should be rebuilt into a model of class education centers and data and evidence pieces be displayed well in a scientific way there, he said, adding the museum should be equipped with all facilities for convenience of visitors to it. Visit to the museum should be organized under a meticulous plan and the efficacy of revenge-vowing meetings at the powder depot, tomb of 400 mothers and tomb of 102 children in Pamnamu (chestnut) Village, which testify to the enemy’s atrocities, should be raised to make the visitors nurse surging hatred and revenge upon the enemy, he said. The supreme leader stressed the need for lecturers at the museum to enhance their responsibility and role in ensuring the class education. Those lecturers are core of the WPK and career revolutionaries as they always stand at the outpost of class education, no matter whether they are recognized or not, implanting the class consciousness into the party members and other working people and servicepersons, he said, adding that deep attention should be paid to their living conditions. He met Ju Sang Won, who survived at the powder depot of Pamnamu Village, used as a killing place by the U.S. imperialist aggressors during the Korean War, and has served at the museum for decades, and Pak Yong Suk who has been active as a lecturer of the museum for 23 years, and gave pep talks to them. Kim Jong Un had a photo session with the officials and employees of the museum, expressing belief that they would creditably discharge their heavy yet honorable duty. Accompanying him were Kim Ki Nam, Han Kwang Sang, Ri Jae Il, Kim Yo Jong and Pak Myong Chol.” (KCNA, “Kim Jong Un Visits Sinchon Museum,” November 25, 2014)

North Korea revealed the job title of Kim Yo-jong, the younger sister of its leader Kim Jong-un, calling her a deputy director of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers’ Party, a post equivalent to vice minister. KCNA mentioned her specific title for the first time, while reporting that she had accompanied her brother on a visit to an animation film studio in Pyongyang. KCNA did not specify which department of the party she belongs to. Cheong Seong-chang, a North Korea expert at the think tank Sejong Institute, said that Yo-jong could also be a deputy director of the party’s organizational guidance department given that she used to appear in public alongside some senior officials of that department. Kim Yo-jong, thought to have been born between 1987 and 1989, is the youngest daughter of late strongman Kim Jong-il and was born to Ko Yong-hui, his third wife and the mother of the current third-generation ruler. Yo-jong and her brother went to the same school in Switzerland in the late 1990s. In March, the North Korean media first mentioned her name alongside other top elites such as
Hwang Pyong-so, the director of the North Korean military’s General Political Bureau. Observers have long speculated that she might have taken a vice minister post. Speculation has persisted that the North Korean ruler may be grooming his sister to take a supporting role in place of Kim Kyong-hui, who took up a deputy director position at age 30 in 1976 and later became a four-star general and party secretary. (Song Sang-ho, “N.K. Leader’s Sister Granted Official Post,” Korea Herald, November 27, 2014)

11/29/14 For the first time ever, Russian coal shipped through a North Korean port will reach South Korea this morning. According to the Ministry of Unification, 45,000 tons of Siberian bituminous coal, transported from the Siberian town of Khasan via a new 54-kilometer (33.5-mile) railroad to Rajin in northeastern North Korea, left November 27 on a Chinese ship for the southeastern port of Pohang in South Korea. It is the first shipment of the so-called Rajin-Khasan project, a trilateral trade agreement among Russia and the two Koreas proposed at the Korea-Russia presidential summit in November 2013. The project aims to reinvent Rajin as a trade hub. The Khasan-Rajin railway is the product of a Russia-North Korea venture started in 2008. Railway construction and the port’s renovation were completed in September. A South Korean business consortium of Posco, Korail and Hyundai Merchant Marine reportedly has decided to join the Rajin-Khasan project by acquiring 50 percent of shares owned by Russia. The stake is estimated to be worth between 180 billion won and 200 billion won ($162 million and $180 million). The project was broached during a November summit last year between President Park Geun-hye and her Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on the so-called Eurasia Initiative, in which Park proposed a new Silk Road railway network that would connect the Korean Peninsula, China and Russia. South Korea hopes the Rajin-Khasan project will be a starting point for the resumption of economic exchanges with Pyongyang that were suspended after the Lee Myung-bak government imposed sanctions on the North on May 24, 2010, in the wake of the sinking of the Cheonan. “This is not just a business project concerned mostly with economic value. It also has political value by contributing to peace in Northeast Asia,” said Lee Seung-ryul, director general at the Russia Trade Division under the Trade Ministry. “The project will be a good example for South Korean businesses interested in Siberia. Russia, and Siberia in particular, has a close economic relationship with North Korea, so South Korean companies that join the relationship will help both economic and political relations among all three countries.” Fourteen South Korean government officials and representatives of the private-sector consortium are returning today from a five-day trip to Rajin to observe the shipping process. According to JoongAng Ilbo, Posco, Korea’s largest steelmaker, imports two million tons of Siberian coal annually through the Russian port of Vladivostok. Russia, which accounts for 8 to 9 percent of Posco’s coal purchases, is the fourth-largest supplier country after Australia, Canada and the United States. Posco told JoongAng Ilbo it hopes to use Rajin in the future, as Siberia is known to have large coal reserves and using the North Korean port would reduce shipping costs. (Kim Ji-yoon, Lee Young-jong, and Lee Sang-jae, “Coal from Russia Arrives Via North,” JoongAng Ilbo, November 29, 2014)

12/2/14 The South Korean Defense Ministry said that it would allow a Christian group to build a 30-foot tower shaped like a Christmas tree near the border with North Korea, a move
likely to anger the isolated North, which had threatened to bomb a similar tower that once stood there. It said it had accepted a request from the Christian Council of Korea to build a temporary Christmas tower at the site where the old one had stood. The new tower will be illuminated from December 23 to January 6, the ministry said. “We accepted the request to protect religious activities and to honor the group’s wish to illuminate the tower in hopes of peace on the Korean Peninsula,” said Kim Min-seok, a spokesman for the ministry. In October, the South Korean military dismantled a 59-foot Christmas tower at the same site on the border northwest of Seoul, saying that the decades-old structure, which was topped by a cross, was so rusty that it had become a safety hazard. But the move angered conservative Christians and anti-North Korean activists in the South, who called it tantamount to capitulating to Pyongyang’s threats to strike the tower with artillery. For years, the steel tower, built on a hilltop, had been illuminated during the holiday season with Christmas lights visible from North Korea, where religious freedom is repressed. It was part of the back-and-forth propaganda messaging at the border that both Koreas engaged in, especially during the Cold War.


Uemura Takashi was 33 when he wrote the article that would make his career. Then an investigative reporter for Asahi Shimbun, Japan’s second-largest newspaper, he examined whether the Imperial Army had forced women to work in military brothels during World War II. His report, under the headline “Remembering Still Brings Tears,” was one of the first to tell the story of a former “comfort woman” from Korea. Fast-forward a quarter century, and that article has made Uemura, now 56 and retired from journalism, a target of Japan’s political right. Tabloids brand him a traitor for disseminating “Korean lies” that they say were part of a smear campaign aimed at settling old scores with Japan. Threats of violence, Uemura says, have cost him one university teaching job and could soon rob him of a second. Ultranationalists have even gone after his children, posting Internet messages urging people to drive his teenage daughter to suicide. The threats are part of a broad, vitriolic assault by the right-wing news media and politicians here on Asahi, which has long been the newspaper that Japanese conservatives love to hate. The battle is also the most recent salvo in a long-raging dispute over Japan’s culpability for its wartime behavior that has flared under Prime Minister Abe Shinzo’s right-leaning government. This latest campaign, however, has gone beyond anything postwar Japan has seen before, with nationalist politicians, including Abe himself, unleashing a torrent of abuse that has cowed one of the last strongholds of progressive political influence in Japan. It has also emboldened revisionists calling for a reconsideration of the government’s 1993 apology for the wartime coercion of women into prostitution. “They are using intimidation as a way to deny history,” said Uemura, who spoke with a pleading urgency and came to an interview in this northern city with stacks of papers to defend himself. “They want to bully us into silence.” “The War on Asahi,” as commentators have called it, began in August when the newspaper bowed to public criticism and retracted at least a dozen articles published in the 1980s and early ’90s. Those articles cited a former soldier, Seiji Yoshida, who claimed to have helped abduct Korean women for the military brothels. Mr. Yoshida was discredited two decades ago, but the Japanese right pounced on Asahi’s gesture and called for a boycott to drive the 135-
year-old newspaper out of business. Speaking to a parliamentary committee in October, Abe said Asahi’s “mistaken reporting had caused many people injury, sorrow, pain and anger. It wounded Japan’s image.” With elections this month, analysts say conservatives are trying to hobble the nation’s leading left-of-center newspaper. The Asahi has long supported greater atonement for Japan’s wartime militarism and has opposed Mr. Abe on other issues. But it is increasingly isolated as the nation’s liberal opposition remains in disarray after a crushing defeat at the polls two years ago. Abe and his political allies have also seized on Asahi’s woes as a long-awaited chance to go after bigger game: the now internationally accepted view that the Japanese military coerced tens of thousands of Korean and other foreign women into sexual slavery during the war. Most mainstream historians agree that the Imperial Army treated women in conquered territories as spoils of battle, rounding them up to work in a system of military-run brothels known as comfort stations that stretched from China to the South Pacific. Many were deceived with offers of jobs in factories and hospitals and then forced to provide sex for imperial soldiers in the comfort stations. In Southeast Asia, there is evidence that Japanese soldiers simply kidnapped women to work in the brothels. Among the women who have come forward to say they were forced to have sex with soldiers are Chinese, Koreans and Filipinos, as well as Dutch women captured in Indonesia, then a Dutch colony. There is little evidence that the Japanese military abducted or was directly involved in entrapping women in Korea, which had been a Japanese colony for decades when the war began, although the women and activists who support them say the women were often deceived and forced to work against their will. The revisionists, however, have seized on the lack of evidence of abductions to deny that any women were held captive in sexual slavery and to argue that the comfort women were simply camp-following prostitutes out to make good money. For scholars of the comfort women issue, the surprise was not Asahi’s conclusion that Yoshida had lied — the newspaper acknowledged in 1997 that it could not verify his account — but that it waited so long to issue a formal retraction. Employees at Asahi said it finally acted because members of the Abe government had been using the articles to criticize its reporters, and it hoped to blunt the attacks by setting the record straight. Instead, the move prompted a storm of denunciations and gave the revisionists a new opening to promote their version of history. They are also pressing a claim that has left foreign experts scratching their heads in disbelief: that Asahi alone is to blame for persuading the world that the comfort women were victims of coercion. Though dozens of women have come forward with testimony about their ordeals, the Japanese right contends it was The Asahi’s reporting that resulted in international condemnation of Japan, including a 2007 resolution by the United States House of Representatives calling on Japan to apologize for “one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century.” For conservatives, humbling Asahi is also a way to advance their long-held agenda of erasing portrayals of Imperial Japan that they consider too negative and eventually overturning the 1993 apology to comfort women, analysts say. Many on the right have argued that Japan’s behavior was no worse than that of other World War II combatants, including the United States’ bombing of Japanese civilians. “The Asahi’s admission is a chance for the revisionist right to say: ‘See! We told you so!’” said Nakano Koichi, a political scientist at Sophia University in Tokyo. “Abe sees this as his chance to go after a historical issue that he believes has hurt Japan’s national honor.” Asahi’s conservative competitor, Yomiuri
Shimbun, the world's highest-circulation newspaper, has capitalized on its rival's troubles by distributing leaflets that highlight The Asahi's mistakes in reporting on comfort women. Since August, The Asahi's daily circulation has dropped by 230,797 to about seven million, according to the Japan Audit Bureau of Circulations. Right-wing tabloids have gone further, singling out Uemura as a "fabricator of the comfort women" even though his article was not among those that Asahi retracted. Uemura said Asahi had been too fearful to defend him, or even itself. In September, the newspaper's top executives apologized on television and fired the chief editor. "Abe is using Asahi's problems to intimidate other media into self-censorship," said Yamaguchi Jiro, a political scientist who helped organize a petition to support Uemura. "This is a new form of McCarthyism." Hokusei Gakuen University, a small Christian college where Uemura lectures on local culture and history, said it was reviewing his contract because of bomb threats by ultranationalists. On a recent afternoon, some of Uemura's supporters gathered to hear a sermon warning against repeating the mistakes of the dark years before the war, when the nation trampled dissent. Uemura did not attend, explaining that he was now reluctant to appear in public. "This is the right's way of threatening other journalists into silence," he said. "They don't want to suffer the same fate that I have." (Martin Fackler, “Rewriting War, Japanese Right Goes on Attack,” New York Times, December 3, 2014, p. A-4)

Mansourov: “Despite an inferior information communication environment, North Korea has a high capacity to conduct robust cyber operations aimed at collecting foreign intelligence, disrupting foreign computers, information and communication systems, networks and critical infrastructures, and stirring public discontent and disorder in the enemy states. The Korean People’s Army concentrated its efforts on strengthening the cyber war capabilities through establishing a command and control structure dedicated to cyber warfare, forming military units specializing in cyber warfare, training expert manpower, and advancing research and development of core cyber technologies. North Korea critically depends on outside resources for the conduct of its offensive cyber effects operations. The U.S.-ROK alliance managers often find their response options limited in the absence of a clearly identifiable North Korean government source of cyber operations. Washington and Seoul must strengthen their cooperation in cyberspace domain to deter North Korean cyber attacks and to promote the resilience of critical infrastructure, including the security of information and computer systems. ...Seoul should be more discreet about its cyber offense plans because unwarranted publicity may undermine its cyber and military security and damage its moral and legal standings in the international community. The South should seek to expand cyber cooperation with China, in order to contain the North’s cyber threats. Once the inter-Korean military-to-military dialogue is resumed, Seoul should attempt to engage Pyongyang in a cyber arms control discussion. ...Pyongyang demonstrated its cyber capabilities through the conduct of cyber warfare exercises and actual cyber operations aimed against what it considers its enemy states - the Republic of Korea, United States, and Japan. North Korea now has a credible cyber warfare capability threatening the world’s advanced nations. ...North Korea’s cyberspace comprises the computers that store digitized data and the systems and hardware that allow it to flow. In other words, North Korea has both its own virtual information environment and physical infrastructure including the domestic Internet of
networked computers, closed intranets, cellular technologies, and fiber-optic cables. North Korea’s cyberspace is constantly evolving because the technology and the people who use it are changing all the time, affecting the size and scale of cyberspace, its technical modalities and bureaucratic regulations governing it. …In the past few years, North Korea installed millions of computers, routers, and servers in the government, industry, service sector, health and educational institutions, and the military, thanks to growing Chinese imports and domestic computer hardware manufacturing. Thousands of North Korean programmers develop indigenous mostly Linux-based software to run them. Millions of ordinary users now operate these machines inter-connected in one way or another on a daily basis. Local area networks and closed intranets are steadily proliferating. The country’s highly censored national intranet called the Kwangmyong (“Bright Star”) Network runs through fiber optic cable with a backbone capacity of 2.5 gigabytes per second. Developed in 1996 with the goal of linking various research and academic institutions, the “Bright Star” Network now also includes government agencies, military units, corporate entities, and public access. Many PC cafés operate in Pyongyang and provincial capitals, providing public access to e-mail, internal websites, chat, online games, and streaming movies over a 100 megabit-per-second fiber optic link to the national intranet, which is policed by the Korea Computer Centre (KCC), North Korea’s window on the worldwide web and its leading high-technology research and development hub. The KCC, set up in 1990, acts as the regime’s gatekeeper, selecting only approved information and downloading it onto the Intranet. Content is mostly limited to science and technology, culture and arts, health and sports, and available only to selected government organizations, research institutes, universities, factories, and selective group of individuals. Almost 2.5 million people (equal to ten percent of the total population) have cellular phones, using the mobile communications technology based on a 2100 Megahertz SMS-based standard 3G network called Koryolink, which is a joint venture between the DPRK Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and Orascom. Although, at present, the government does not allow most users to have a data connection and use smart phones, according to Google CEO Eric Schmidt, who visited North Korea in January 2013, “it would be very easy for them to turn the Internet on for this 3G network.” Some privileged users vetted by the government already have the capability to access the nascent domestic web, using the locally assembled Android-based AS1201 Arirang smart phones. Today, North Korea remains by and large disconnected from the worldwide web: this is the extreme case of the most restrictive cyber security policy in action. This ultimate firewall makes North Korea relatively secure in its cyber domain because it is virtually unplugged from the global Internet. Since North Korea’s very restricted gateway to the world wide web is China, Beijing’s “Great Firewall” offers an additional layer of protection, censorship and surveillance for North Korea’s cyber space. In a way, North Korea has a “secure” model of the Internet designed primarily with security in mind, which solved the problems of anonymity and inability to limit access. The Kim regime was able to build a more “secure” section of the cyberspace, creating a domain of trusted networks inside the Internet. … Although the relative isolation of North Korean cyberspace from the global Internet cannot guarantee absolute security, it helps the regime to maintain the confidentiality of digital data, the integrity of computer systems, and the availability and resilience of the information and communications infrastructure despite persistent security threats. It cost the
government a lot of resources and time to build and sustain such a “secure, protected
cyber zone.” One wonders whether the Kim regime will ever feel politically secure and
technically confident enough to take the leap of faith and plug the country into the
world wide web. For if and when it does so, North Korea will be exposed to the same
cyber threats as the rest of the world is facing today. To do a proper assessment of
North Korea’s cyber threat, one has to (1) evaluate to what extent the North Koreans
are able to identify and exploit our vulnerabilities in cyberspace, (2) measure the
effects if they were to take advantage of these vulnerabilities, and (3) estimate the
likelihood that they will be willing to do so. Obviously, it is very hard to do on all three
accounts because of a high degree of uncertainty about our own vulnerabilities, the
North’s cyber capabilities, let alone their intentions in the cyber realm. Cyber
operations in open and democratic societies are covered in many layers of secrecy
because they are enabled not through the generation of force but by the exploitation
of the enemy’s vulnerabilities. Once the vulnerabilities in hardware and software are
uncovered and publicly discussed, they are quickly eradicated. This makes the analysis
of cyber operations a daunting task. To analyze and understand cyber operations in
closed and totalitarian societies like North Korea is even more challenging because of
their isolation, total government control over publicly accessible information, dated
nature of data, suspicious sourcing, culturally skewed perceptions, biased media
coverage, selective redactions, and intentional denial and deception. The lack of
objective information makes it problematic to have any serious public debate about
the North’s cyber capabilities and intentions, as well as the role of cyber power and
cyber warfare in North Korea’s national security. Because very little is known about
North Korea’s cyber capabilities, weapons, and intentions, its cyber threat tends to be
inflated. A tendency to play it safe emerges or an assumption of a worst-case scenario –
a “Cyber Pearl Harbor” in Seoul or Tokyo. Fears of the unknown increase the risk of
threat inflation dramatically. In particular, South Korean experts sound a great deal of
alarm about Pyongyang’s cyber warfare capabilities. In 2004, South Korea’s Defense
Security Commander General Song Yeong-geun asserted that North Korea’s computer
hacking capability was so outstanding that it was second only to that of the U.S. Central
Intelligence Agency. In June 2012, the ROK Defense Security Commander Bae Deuk-
shik agreed with the opinion that “North Korea is the world’s third most powerful
country in cyber warfare after Russia and the United States.” In contrast, U.S. analysts
tend to disagree with such alarmist assessments of the North Korean cyber
infrastructure and threat, but opinion ranges on its overall abilities. Citing the lack of
hard evidence, James Lewis questions the efficacy of North Korean cyber warfare
capabilities, arguing that Pyongyang has “strong interest and ragged, self-made
technologies,” but uses a lot of “bluster and exaggeration” to intimidate its enemies. In
his judgment, “we have seen nothing from the North that could qualify as a cyber
attack, cyber war, or as an act of cyber terrorism yet.” On the opposite, Frank Cilluffo,
co-director of the Cyber Center for National and Economic Security at George
Washington University, believes that North Korea’s cyber capability constitutes “an
important ‘wild card’ threat, not only to the United States but also to the region and
broader international stability.” Echoing his view, Egle Murauskaite states that “the
DPRK has successfully cross-purposed the cyber offensive tools at its disposal, utilizing
data collection and system penetration of foreign targets in the public and private
sector not only to exfiltrate information, but also to test adversaries’ defenses,
detection capabilities and their range of responses.” In her opinion, “a cyber arsenal offers North Korea a cheaper way of developing global military reach, in contrast to the enormous political costs of its nuclear pursuits, and the price tag attached to WMD technology.” The authors of a recent HP report appear to take the middle road by admonishing that “we should not overestimate the regime’s advanced cyber capability, yet we should never underestimate the potential impact of North Korea utilizing less advanced, quick-and-dirty tactics like DDoS to cripple their high-tech targets.”

Personally, this author is always skeptical about the source, intent, and scope of any cyber attacks publicly attributed to North Korea, recognizing the inherent uncertainties of cyberspace and limitations in our knowledge of what North Korea may or may not have, what it does, and why the regime does it. In cyberspace, many of the North Korean capabilities and intentions may be revealed only after a real attack takes place in the virtual domain, for which they will either claim responsibility or which will be undeniably traced back to the North Korean government or the non-state actors commissioned or controlled by Pyongyang. Do North Korea’s cyber capabilities pose an advanced persistent threat to the U.S. and its allies in the region? It probably does, but it is a Herculean task to prove it. North Korea is still at the early stages of conceptualizing what cyber warfare will look like in the future. Careful reading of North Korea’s authoritative media suggests that Pyongyang has recently begun to develop its own doctrine of cyber operations, which reflects its growing appreciation of the uses and limits of power in cyberspace and application of cyber power in modern warfare.

North Korean military theoreticians differentiate between cyber warfare as one of the methods of the conduct of war and cyber war as a way to affect the enemy’s will and force him to do what one wants. They distinguish cyber warfare from traditional electronic warfare (EW) and signals intelligence (SIGINT). In their thinking, cyber warfare includes the elements of electronic intelligence warfare, computer network warfare (NW), psychological warfare, military deception, and information warfare (IW). A review of North Korean open sources indicates that media coverage of all of the above-mentioned forms of warfare increased considerably, starting from 2009. It is noteworthy that references to NW, IW, and PsyOps are now included in more general media reports on cyber warfare, indicating that cyber warfare probably encompasses these types of warfare. In the 1990s, Kim Jong-il used to say that “modern warfare is electronic warfare.” But, right after the war in Iraq, Rodong Sinmun – the official mouthpiece of the Korean Workers’ Party – concluded that “In the end, Iraq disintegrated and collapsed helplessly by succumbing to a psychological warfare aimed at inspiring shock and awe, not due to the attacks by precision military equipment, as the United States publicizes.” On several occasions in the 2000s, Kim Jong-il reportedly told senior party and military cadres that information warfare would be the war of the 21st century and that the Korean People’s Army (KPA) must learn and understand enemy military information technology and operations. In contrast to his father’s emphasis on information warfare, Kim Jong-un prefers to talk about cyber warfare. He reportedly believes that alongside nuclear weapons and missiles, cyber warfare capabilities are “a magic weapon” that empowers the Korean People’s Army to launch “ruthless strikes” against the South. North Korean military strategists share the view that “cyber warfare has become a new form of warfare,” but they apparently disagree in their assessment of its strategic importance: some assert that “cyber warfare replaces the traditional method of war,” whereas others contend that it simply complements
the kinetic methods of warfare. Some go as far as to speculate that the “third world war will be the global cyber war.” They all designate cyberspace as the fifth major battlefield, following sky, land, sea, and space. They stress that cyberspace is its own medium with its own rules, and yet they struggle to define the uses and limits of power in cyberspace. They recognize cyber war capability as a core military combat power, but insist that the enemy does not have the right to retaliate for cyber attacks because of the technical complexity of determining the perpetrators of cyber operations. Noteworthy is the fact that Pyongyang took particular issue with the U.S. Defense Department’s announcement of “a cyber strategy of viewing hacker attacks from the outside as an act of war and responding by even using military force.” In July 2011, Rodong Sinmun slammed “a high-ranking DoD official who said that, should someone incapacitate the U.S. power network with a cyber attack, [the DoD] can attack the opposing country’s industrial base with missiles.” It took notice of the U.S. Defense Science Board’s assessment that “the cyber threat is serious, with potential consequences similar in some ways to the nuclear threat of the Cold War.” The North Korean government took notice of the U.S. presidential policy directive No. 20 and its impact on the U.S. approach to cyber operations. In its commentary on 10 August 2013, the DPRK Cabinet newspaper Minju Chosun emphasized that “in the top-secret document ‘PPD 20’ the U.S. termed the cyber attack an indispensable capability to restrain and overthrow the enemy doing harm to the U.S. interests in times of peace and war. This means that the U.S. is ready to mount a fierce cyber attack on anyone going against the grain with it any moment.” Under such conditions, the United States is attempting to find a new pretext for military aggression and intervention in other countries,” asserted Rodong Sinmun. North Korean official media highlighted six types of cyber threats facing the country: cyber crime, international hacktivism, international cyber terrorism, cyber defections, cyber espionage, and cyber warfare. While North Korea often seeks to exploit cyber crime in South Korea, sometimes it falls victim to it. The high level of digitalization of South Korea’s economy, society, and government makes it vulnerable to domestic cyber crime, including cyber hacking, identity theft, and malicious misinformation campaigns for personal, political, pecuniary, industrial espionage and other reasons. High cyber crime environment in the South makes it easier for the North to exploit it for the benefit of its own cyber operations and IW, but also exposes it to the risks of falling victim to sophisticated cyber criminals from the South, who often attack their targets in the ways designed to deceive the investigators and lead them to believe that the attack is coming from outside Korea. It also enables Seoul to surreptitiously conduct its own cyber operations and strategic misinformation campaigns designed to undermine the North’s capabilities and interests and tarnish its image. International hacktivism constitutes a major cyber concern for the DPRK government, which regards it as a tool of subversion and smear campaign in the hands of its enemy states. Ample evidence suggests that the DPRK government believes that most international hackers are employed or coerced into action by foreign governments, especially in the case of anti-North hackers. Following the persistent cyber attacks against the North Korean government-run propaganda websites in late March and early April 2013 (up to 30,000 hacking attempts by some counts), which coincided with the joint US-ROK military exercises, KCNA and Minju Chosun accused the South Korean government of employing “international hacker groups” in the “smear campaign against the DPRK” whereby they “intruded into Internet homepages.
of the DPRK, posted on them articles malignantly slander ing the DPRK’s dignity and stole and made public the list of subscribers.” In response to another round of cyber attacks on the eve of April 15, 2013, commemorating Kim Il-sung’s birthday, the Secretariat of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK), North Korea’s equivalent of the South’s Ministry of Unification, repeated the accusation that the ROK government was behind the “international hackers’ group” that attacked the DPRK’s Internet websites, including China-based “Uriminzokkiri,” and stole their subscribers’ lists “in a bid to weaken the influences of the DPRK’s Internet websites” and to flush out the “North’s spies” and “those following the north” and threatened merciless retaliation. On June 21, 2013, the North Korean government publicly accused the international hacking group “Anonymous” of waging repeated cyber attacks against DPRK targets, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the start of the Korean War on June 25. While claiming that “Anonymous” has failed to achieve its political and technical objectives, Pyongyang branded it as an “international terrorist organization supported by the political forces hostile to the DPRK and funded by the U.S. and ROK intelligence services.” More recently, the Kim regime has taken notice of and condemned the “Hack North Korea” movement, which is sponsored by some of the wealthiest entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley and the Human Rights Foundation. The group is focused on finding new ways to get information in and out of the DPRK by bringing together North Korean defectors, international hackers, and human rights campaigners. Regime survival is the paramount goal of the Kim family. Any cyber activity threatening the Kim regime is branded as cyber terrorism. In particular, the regime fears the introduction of the so-called “underground Internet” or “stealth Internet” which serves the purpose of “providing information for impure elements who concoct anti-government conspiracies in anti-imperialist, independent countries.” The DPRK government fears that through the underground Internet “the United States attempts to largely disseminate a US-style sense of values, bourgeois ideology and culture, and falsely fabricated materials, whereby it fosters social disturbance and political instability and instills the reactionary and tainted US-style ideology, culture, and way of life into people.” This is what constitutes “cyber terrorism” in North Korean propaganda, which condemns the ROK and U.S. authorities as the “real kingpins of cyber terrorism.” The defection of Kim Heung-kwang, a former professor at the elitist Pyongyang Computer Technology University, who became a staunch advocate of the freedom of information and democratization of North Korea in his new capacity as the executive director of Seoul-based North Korea Intellectual Solidarity, highlighted the ever-present threat of cyber defections for the North Korean regime. In as much as the North Korean government strives to expand the ranks of cyber experts and warriors, it is worried about their loyalty and dependability. As the country’s cyber capabilities grow, the more they know and the better their computer skills are, the more values they can compromise and the more damage they can do if they defect and turn against the regime. Hence, the growing importance of cyber counterintelligence. The DPRK government regards cyber espionage as the clear and present danger to its state sovereignty and national security. Edward Snowden’s revelations in summer 2013 presented Pyongyang with the opportunity to draw international attention to the fact that the U.S. National Security Agency reportedly monitored DPRK embassies and wire-tapped North Korean government communications all over the world, attempted to infiltrate its telephone and computer networks, and eavesdropped on phone calls of
North Korean citizens traveling abroad.  

At the Third Committee of the 68th UN General Assembly, North Korea co-sponsored the German-Brazil-proposed resolution on the “Right to private life in IT era” designed to cope with the U.S. illegal eavesdropping, and, on November 26, 2013, the DPRK representative condemned U.S. electronic spying as “a wanton violation of the UN Charter because it is an infringement upon the sovereignty of states, intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states, and the worst abuse of human rights.”  

Pyongyang cyber experts observe that “many countries and military organizations are adopting cyber strategies in response to cyber war, spurring on the creation of cyber military headquarters and strengthening cyber war capabilities,” according to Minju Chosun. This author assesses that the KPA may have already established its own cyber warfare headquarters because of repeated references in North Korea’s authoritative media to the creation of cyber military headquarters in various countries as a way to address new security challenges posed by the intensifying cyber arms race, escalating confrontation in cyberspace, and growing threat of outright cyber war, as well as Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)’s tongue-in-cheek denial of the “misinformation” floating in the South that “the North operates a unit exclusively in charge of cyber warfare.”  

Pyongyang often uses a description of events in third countries and tongue-in-cheek refutations of the so-called “misinformation” or rumors in the South to signal its own position on or action in sensitive subjects. In this author’s judgment, the KPA Cyber Command (North Korean designator unknown) is probably not an independent service command on par with the KPA Army, Navy, Air and Anti-Air Forces, and Strategic Forces (formerly known as Strategic Rocket Forces). Nor is it a corps-level large combined unit under the Ministry of People’s Armed Forces, as the North’s media reporting would imply. But, it appears to be a division-level command unit subordinated to either the KPA General Reconnaissance Bureau, as it was speculated in some ROK and Western media reporting, or to the Air and Anti-Air Command, as the North’s uncharacteristically detailed description of the organizational evolution of the U.S. Cyber Command would imply. According to South Korea’s Defense Security Command (DSC), North Korea operates at least three cyber warfare units that specialize in hacking into South Korean and U.S. military computer networks, stealing classified information, and GPS jamming of ROK and USFK military communications. KPA General Staff has been operating for years a 100-men strong “technology reconnaissance team” (a.k.a. Intelligence and Information Surveillance Unit) which is exclusively in charge of collecting information, establishing combat simulations, and disrupting military computer networks in South Korea and the U.S. It also operates Enemy Attack Bureau No. 204, which is probably responsible for staging cyber attacks against ROK and Western targets. The KPA Reconnaissance General Bureau operates Liaison Office No. 121, which may be responsible for KPA’s GPS jamming operations. In addition, the State Security Department and WPK’s Bureau 225 operate the specialized subunits responsible for the production of anti-South Korean multimedia content, which they disseminate among their operatives through the spy networks in China and Japan, according to Chosun Ilbo, South Korea’s mainstream conservative daily. Since the mid-1980s, the Korean People’s Army has been reportedly engaged in systematic education and training of cyber war experts and operational officers for cyber operations. According to ROK government analysts, the number of cyber war experts in KPA has grown from approximately 100 in 2004 to 500-600 in 2009, more than 3,000 in 2012, and over
5,900 in mid-2014. The North Korean government selects talented children from students across the country and sends them for specialized training to computer classes at Kumsong No 1 Senior Middle School. Upon graduation, the best students are enrolled into Pyongyang University of Automation (formerly Mirim College), College of Information Science and Technology of Kim Ch’aek University of Technology, College of Computer Science of Kim Il Sung University, and Kim Hyŏng-gwŏn Military Academy of Communications Men, for advanced education in computer science and information technology and training in sophisticated IT skills. Upon commencement, many of these graduates are recruited as cyber warfare officers of the IW units under the Ministry of People’s Armed Forces or placed as communications officers in battalion-level military units. According to ROK media, Pyongyang University of Automation in Hyŏngjesan district is a five-year military university specializing in computer science, electronic information transmission, and code development. It offers such programs as electronic warfare research, cyber warfare research, military IT system development, computer-based command and control systems, and information intelligence. According to ROK media, Kim Hyŏng-gwŏn Military Academy of Communications Men in Hamhung is a three-year military academy training commanding officers in the field of military communications and electronic warfare. Key research institutes involved in developing core concepts and technologies for cyber operations for the KPA are reported to be Kusŏng Electronic Warfare Institute under KPA General Staff (R&D of EW concepts, methods, and equipment), Kanggye Institute (R&D on military electronics and guidance systems) and Research Institute No. 110 (R&D on cyber warfare capabilities), both under the Second Academy of Natural Sciences. Moreover, the December 1 Research Institute for Computer Programmer Training under the North’s Ministry of Electronics Industry is probably responsible for training the computer hacker personnel who eventually may form the ranks of the so-called “patriotic hackers” or “cyber militia” in the ranks of the Worker-Peasant Red Guards. The Korean People’s Army reportedly prepares for a future cyber war of rather long duration by investigating expert hacking techniques and studying plans to paralyze the computerized networks of South Korea, United States, and Japan, as well as by developing software for disrupting the command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems of its major adversaries, according to the U.S. Army’s Asian Studies Detachment (ASD). The KPA IW unit seeks “to gain control of South Korean and U.S. military information system by hacking into their computer networks and taking out classified data. When necessary, they may spread computer viruses to disrupt the networks.” The North Korean unit has also set up simulated cyber war training software and collected extensive data via “spyware” emails and various phishing schemes on USFK and South Korean high-ranking military personnel. The academic articles written by North Korean scientists—along with other research on network intrusion detection systems (NIDS) published in the DPRK—illustrate the DPRK’s high level of interest in, and in the understanding of, hacking methods. For instance, the Kim Il Sung University Journal, Natural Sciences, published a number of scholarly articles by North Korean software programmers which illustrated their familiarity with hacking tools, network intrusion detection systems, and Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA)-sponsored research on the issue. In a December 2006 article published in Natural Sciences called “A Method to Improve Detection Rate in the Intrusion Detection by Neural Networks,” the authors
listed the following attack groups: Denial of Service (DOS), User to Root (U2R), Remote to User (R2L), Probing (Prob)/Surveillance, and Data Attacks. In a May 2008 article titled “A Method of the Parameter Selection for Detection of the Portscan Attacks,” the North Korean researchers mentioned the following eight types of widely used computer network attacks/tools, which they label “attack tool programs”: Nmap, Guest, Back, Dict, Portsweep, Lpsweep, Satan, and Nessus. Although it was not clear whether they actually used any of the eight attacks/tools in their research, they appear to have a very good understanding of the features and applications of the attacks/tools listed above. The North has reportedly employed social engineering techniques for collecting on enemy states’ militaries by taking advantage of “even a single percent of a loophole” and penetrating the human error of administrators, according to Dr. Kim Heung-kwang, former professor of North Korea’s Pyongyang College of Computer Science and now head of Seoul-based NK Intellectuals Solidarity. He explains, “North Korean hackers’ main duty is to steal Internet protocols (IP), and it is a piece of cake for hacker unit members to hack the ROK military’s Internet because they usually hack using the IPs from third countries, such as China and Japan.” In 2011, North Korea revealed a particular interest in the technology the U.S. uses to build what it calls the “underground Internet” or “stealth Internet” not only because it wants to block it since it is designed “to provide information for impure elements who concoct anti-government conspiracies in anti-imperialist, independent countries,” but also because it can be instrumental in Pyongyang’s own attempts “to break down the Internet firewalls of other countries” (in particular, South Korea) and “to foster social disturbance and political instability and instill North Korean style ideology, culture, and way of life into the minds of the South Korean people.” Given its backward information communication infrastructure, North Korea critically depends on outside resources for conducting cyber operations. The KPA may be using servers in a number of foreign countries on several continents for misattribution in conducting cyber operations, according to various streams of reporting. Pyongyang may also be involved in supply chain technical penetrations through its work in microelectronic circuit development and production. North Korea runs forward cyber bases in China that conduct DDoS attacks against ROK websites, according to multiple reports from Western media. According to South Korea’s Defense Security Command (DSC), most attacks by North Korean hackers take place via China, which has also been suspected of attempting to extract information from South Korean government computers. At the seventh conference on the protection of national defense intelligence, hosted by the ROK Defense Security Command in mid-June 2009, the DSC estimated that South Korea’s defense networks were attacked on average 95,000 times per day, with eleven percent of the attacks being “sophisticated attempts to extract military intelligence,” while the rest being relatively easier to head off. Hacking attempts amounted to 10,450 cases: 81,700 spread of viruses; 950 “denial-of-service (DoS)” attacks causing abnormal traffic; and 1,900 falsification of Internet homepages. According to ROK government sources, approximately 30 DPRK-affiliated software development companies in Dalian, China, work as subcontractors to produce China’s logic bombs. A logic bomb is a cyber weapon that is installed as a program when making personal computer software, so it is more certain than a virus, and easier. The logic bomb is a cyber penetration to collect, monitor, or disrupt a host computer system. South Korea suspects that computer software and hardware originating in Dalian would be technically
compromised. According to Seoul Daily citing ROK intelligence authorities, North Korea has also been using South American-based servers since January 2009 to misattribute hacking activities, as well as routing through U.S. servers, to target the ROK and USFK. E-mails with hidden hacking programs have been sent to ROK and USFK military generals and major ranking officials since January 2009. According to ROK military officials, “It is not easy to track these emails because they route via servers of third countries, but they are presumed to be acts of North Korean hackers.” The hacking programs hidden in e-mails were designed to pilfer personal information and documents. Finally, it is plausible to assume that North Korea may be active in the international cyber black market, including the cyber arms black market and cyber “zero-day” vulnerabilities market in which transnational criminal groups buy and sell specialized cyber capabilities. Also, Pyongyang may be scouting for foreign cyber talent to conduct cyber operations. The attribution challenge renders classic deterrence strategies feeble in cyberspace. The U.S.-ROK alliance managers often find their response options limited in the absence of a clearly identifiable North Korean government source of cyber operations. Yet, it is beyond doubt that today North Korea conducts hostile cyber operations against the U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances. The problem of “who” to deter and retaliate against in cyberspace is made even more difficult by a plethora of non-state actors who operate in the cyber environment, pursuing both their independent agendas and acting in support for North or South Korea and their allied states and their policy objectives. Often they act as proxies for these states. But, automatically presuming state sponsorship for non-state cyber operations can be misleading even in the case of North Korea. A missile has a return address, a computer code does not. Sophisticated cyber warriors hide their tracks whereas users of kinetic weapons could not care less. It takes a lot of time and resources to do the cyber forensics and identify the source of a cyber attack, but even then the answer is rarely definitive. Thus, South Korea must do much more to strengthen its capability to improve attribution or, at least, to convince the international community that it has developed much better ways and means to pinpoint the real source of cyber attacks. Greater information sharing and dedicated public-private partnerships between the ROK’s key government stakeholders and leading computer security firms may help to not only speed up tracing an attack, but also finding out who was operating a specific computer and his/her political agenda. In addition to valid and reliable identification, another critical component of cyber deterrence is the commitment to retaliate in order to influence the enemy’s calculations. A dilemma whether to match or escalate the use of force does not have easy answers. Judging by their public statements, the North Koreans already fear that in retaliation, the allies may not stop at proportionate cyber response and, instead, may go beyond the cyber realm to ensure the escalation dominance through the use of a mixture of cyber force and real-world kinetic force to put the North’s hard assets at risk. In a way, U.S. official statements and forceful approach to cyber warfare may have already succeeded in reshaping what KPA cyber strategists think and deterring North Korea’s most egregious offensive cyber operations. Of particular importance is the growing realization in Washington and Seoul that they must strengthen their cooperation in the cyberspace domain to deter North Korean cyber attacks and to promote the resilience of critical infrastructure, including the security of information and computer systems. In this light, in 2012, the allies established the Cyber Cooperation Working Group which
endeavors to strengthen cooperation in information sharing, cyber policy, strategy, doctrine, personnel, and exercise to improve their collective readiness against cyber threats. They held the second ROK-U.S. Cyber Policy Consultations in Washington D.C. in July 2013 and signed the initial Terms of References for the Cyber Cooperation Working Group on September 5, 2013. But, to put real teeth into cyber deterrence and make their threat of overwhelming retaliation against North Korea’s cyber attacks truly credible, Seoul and Washington may be well advised to study the latest cyber defense policy innovation at NATO and its possible applicability to the 1953 U.S.-ROK mutual defense treaty. On September 5, 2014, NATO leaders agreed that a large-scale cyber attack on a member country could be considered an attack on the entire U.S.-led alliance, potentially triggering a military response. The decision marks an expansion of the organization’s mission, reflecting new threats that can disable critical infrastructure, financial systems and government without firing a shot. “Today we declare that cyber defense is part of NATO’s core task of collective defense,” NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told a news conference. As NATO recognizes that cyber defense is part of NATO’s core task of collective defense, the new policy confirms that NATO member states are able to invoke Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty on collective self-defense in case of a cyber attack with effects comparable to those of a traditional armed attack.70 According to Jamie Shea, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges at NATO Headquarters, the policy does not set any detailed criteria for the activation of Article 5 which would have to be decided by the Allies on a case-by-case basis. The U.S. and ROK should at least watch closely how this new mutual defense commitment will play out in practice. The Kim regime regards cyber warfare as an integral part of the asymmetric warfare aimed at bridging the growing gap in military capabilities, which exists between the DPRK and its enemies today. Since in cyberspace, the weak may have the advantage over the strong, cyberspace gives North Korea, the country with no critical infrastructure connected to the Internet, the kind of power over its much bigger and cyber-savvy adversaries that it could never dream of in the pre-digital age. South Korea, which is one of the most wired nations in the world, has countless vulnerabilities that a cyber-dwarf like North Korea can exploit to harm everything—from its civilian computer networks, communications, and data to critical infrastructure and military networks. South Korea’s traditional strengths prove to be its cyber vulnerabilities. In cyberspace, power diffusion can potentially lead to power equalization. North Korean cyber strategists appear to share the common assumption that cyber offense has the advantage over cyber defense. It stems from their general belief in the “cult of the offensive” and some pragmatic calculations. It is cheaper and easier to attack computer systems than to detect the cyber attacks and defend against them. Besides, they can choose the time and place of their attacks, whereas the defender must be ready to defend his or her assets everywhere. That said, one of the recent trends in cybersecurity has been the re-evaluation of the importance of cyber defense in the offense-defense balance. More and more cyber security experts come to the conclusion that “the best defense is actually a good defense.” They recommend any and all measures that could help build up the resistance against cyber attacks and strengthen the resilience of systems and organizations by tightening the network security, employing common cyber defense tactics and techniques including firewalls, encryption, air gaps, and even hackbacks, and improving cyber forensics to track back
attackers. ROK defense planners recognize the growing complexity of cyber threats emanating from North Korea. Following a massive attack against the websites of South Korean government agencies in 2010, the ROK defense ministry established a 400-member Cyber Warfare Command to enhance the nation’s cyber warfare capabilities. More recently, in a report to the National Assembly in October 2013, the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said that it updated its contingency plan to classify North Korea’s cyber threat as a “non-military provocation” and decided to establish in 2014 the Cyber Warfare Center (CWC) under the JCS, which is supposed to serve as the “control tower for cyber warfare missions,” to protect military networks from the North’s hacking attempts. Although the specific missions of the JCS CWC remain unclear, it appears that the JCS’s cyber team will be tasked with mainly protecting the military networks and will not have an offensive or defensive role in cyber warfare. It is good that the new unit will be required to share information with the related agencies, including the defense ministry’s Cyber Warfare Command and the ROK National Intelligence Service, although it remains to be seen whether all these units will be able to develop smooth and effective inter-agency coordination. In addition, as Michael Raska, Research Fellow of S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, recommends, the South Korean government should not hesitate to “engage the finest cyber professionals and team them up with strategic and defense experts, creating partnerships with cyber security firms to share commercial information and educate cyber personnel.” If ROK government planners were serious about preventing the DPRK-inflicted Cyber Pearl Harbor, they should learn the lessons and methodology of and closely study the applicability of the operational concepts of Israel’s Cyber Iron Dome. According to Michael Raska, “Israel is developing ‘a national cyber defensive envelope’ – a multi-layered cyber defense strategy leveraging automated computerized systems and highly-trained personnel that provide intelligence, early warning, passive and active defense, and offensive capabilities across civil-military networks.” Bearing in mind Marcus Noland’s cautionary observation that “there are limitations to the applicability of Israeli lessons to the Korean case,” South Koreans will be well advised to seriously examine the possible applications of the Iron Dome missile defense methodology in the cyber domain, especially its emphasis on the establishment and operation of the complete kill chain, including enemy analysis, passive detection, target list generation, early warning, active defense, overwhelming strike effort, area suppression, command and control, and, hopefully, cyber deterrence. Computer network operations (CNO) are the integral part of the U.S.-ROK planning, organization, preparation, and execution of cyber warfare. Although much of the allied CNOs are shrouded in secrecy, their aim is to “destroy, deny, degrade, disrupt and deceive” while defending against the enemy’s persistent malicious cyber activity. It is plausible to assume that in accordance with the Presidential Policy Directive No. 20 on the U.S. Cyber Operations Policy issued in October 2012, they are engaged in the full spectrum of cyber operations from cyber collection to defensive cyber effects operations (DCEO) to offensive cyber effects operations (OCEO) against North Korean targets. In other words, they gather information about KPA cyber warfare capabilities, seek to infiltrate KPA C4 networks and identify their vulnerabilities, and contemplate to deploy their offensive cyber weapons aimed at North Korean assets even before the kinetic battle begins, establishing the conditions for both emergency cyber actions and the so-called “cyber operations with significant consequences.”
Operation Orchard is an example of successful “computer network operations” including the cyber collection effort followed up by the offensive cyber effects operation with a kinetic outcome. First, the United States and Israel were able to exploit the inadequate computer security of a key Syrian WMD official to discover and trace North Korean involvement in the Syrian nuclear program in general and the construction of the Al Kibar nuclear facility in particular. Then, the allies succeeded in penetrating the Syrian military’s computer networks, directing their own data streams into its air defense networks and effectively misleading Syrian radars and turning off its air defenses at the time of the Israeli air raid leveling the Al Kibar nuclear facility on September 6, 2007. Although originally the ROK Cyber Defense Command put a much greater emphasis on psychological warfare operations against Pyongyang’s propaganda and slandering in cyberspace, in February 2014, the ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND) unveiled a revised long-term cyber warfare strategy, which outlined the vision for the expansion of comprehensive cyber warfare missions and called for the development of offensive cyber weapons like Stuxnet, a computer virus that damaged Iran’s uranium enrichment facility, in order to cripple North Korea’s missile and nuclear facilities, according to Yonhap. The new strategy also called for augmenting the nation’s EIW capabilities in order to suppress the origins of cyber attacks and for setting up a task force in charge of conducting war exercises. In October 2014, the ROK MND reiterated its new cyber operations posture favoring cyber offense. According to Yonhap, whereas in the past, the ROK military was preoccupied with the monitoring-based operations to deter the North’s hacking attempts, now its cyber units are tasked with proactively detecting the hosts of such attacks online and launching preemptive strikes to prevent them from striking at the South from the outset. Bearing in mind the rapid growth of mobile telecommunications networks in the North, the South also plans to expand the scope of its cyber operations to cover mobile and all types of online-based equipment, according to Yonhap. ROK government pronouncements make it clear that the Cyber Defense Command will strive to damage the North’s ability to build nuclear weapons by targeting its facilities for enriching uranium and reprocessing plutonium, and it will attempt to disrupt the KPA’s ability to launch a nuclear-tipped ICBM at the time of crisis. This author agrees with Zachary Keck’s assessment that “even simply delaying North Korea’s ability to launch a nuclear missile could be crucial when paired with South Korea’s evolving precision-strike capabilities, which could be used to preemptively destroy these facilities before a nuclear attack could be launched.” In this sense, the ROK’s shift to cyber offense could be part of an asymmetric warfare strategy aimed at using non-nuclear means to preemptively destroy DPRK’s nuclear arms. That said, Seoul’s unprecedented public admission of its intended cyber targets raised eyebrows among many foreign observers, who understood that it was driven by the considerations of cyber deterrence but questioned its wisdom on legal, political, and military grounds. Because the South’s announcement was the statement of official intent, the North now claims that it has the right to preemptively strike any ROK facilities and units that are involved in preparations of a potential cyber attack against the DPRK on the basis of the anticipatory self-defense – the same legal argument the United States used to justify its war on terror. Some scholars believe that the use of Stuxnet malware during Operation “Olympic Games” represents an unlawful use of force, and, therefore, the threat to use a similar weapon is also unlawful. Others fear
that the North may react in a wildly disproportionate and indiscriminate way, going beyond what one might consider the legitimate targets in a cyber war and striking not only at the military personnel responsible for launching the virus, but also at the software developers working for private companies who help develop the virus, as well as the communications networks used to transmit information about the virus, etc. One should keep in mind that in retaliation for the Stuxnet attack, Iran launched cyber attacks against U.S. financial institutions (Operation Ababil) and deployed the Shamoon malware against Saudi Arabia’s national oil company, Saudi Aramco, and Qatar’s RasGas. It is a worthwhile objective to try to compromise the enemy’s weapons systems and military industrial facilities, especially if one can “persuade” them to do the opposite of what their owners intended. Moreover, if such attacks succeed, they can have a debilitating psychological impact on the minds of the users of the computer networks under attack, who may start doubting any information coming from the computers. Such offensive cyber operations may not only cause destruction and loss of life in the enemy camp, but also may open up new possibilities in disruption of the enemy’s operations, co-optation of its weapons platforms and industrial systems, and “persuasion” of the enemy forces. However, all these objectives must be kept secret. In my judgment, the ROK government’s public announcement about its cyber offense designs went too far in its explicit details; it is unlikely to enhance South Korea’s cyber security and probably will undermine the nation’s military security and moral and legal standings in the international community. Pyongyang is very adept at waging proxy wars in cyber space. It often employs private citizens and non-state actors of other countries to do its bidding. Often, it is very hard to attribute the conduct of these individuals and groups to the North Korean state because it is difficult to ascertain that they are either acting “on the instructions” of that state or acting under its “direction or control.” For instance, North Korean patriotic hackers based in China and disguised as Chinese citizens are known to disseminate pro-North propaganda praising the Kim Jong-un regime and anti-South propaganda slandering the ROK government and its policies in cyberspace. Last year, they posted over 14,000 comments praising North Korea on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. They also post malicious comments on all sorts of publications related to South Korea on Chinese websites and on China’s social networking sites including Weibo, according to ROK daily Chosun Ilbo. But, it is a real challenge to prove that they receive their orders from the North or that the North Korean government provides them with cyber weapons or other technical support or that the United Front Department of the Workers Party of Korea Central Committee (WPK CC) directly controls their activities. Obviously, Pyongyang has never acknowledged or adopted their conduct as its own, which could have served as an additional basis for attribution of a non-state actor’s cyber operations, according to the evolving international law of attribution. South Korea should clearly articulate its position on the matter whenever it can establish that the North has resorted to a proxy to conduct harmful cyber operations; otherwise, Pyongyang will interpret silence as acquiescence. In addition, pursuant to the law of state responsibility, the South may be justified to demand reparations or pursue countermeasures if it succeeds in ascertaining that Pyongyang either instructed the actors to mount the cyber operations or exercised effective control over them. Furthermore, Seoul should seek to expand cyber cooperation with China, the North’s biggest benefactor. As Martin Libicki, noting the importance of tackling fast-growing cyber threats from Pyongyang, pointed out,
“The best leverage that South Korea might offer would have to work through China—convincing China that the risks of a North Korean collapse are tolerable compared to all the other risks that might exist from not tamping down on North Korea.” Although current policies of the two Koreas are not conducive to any dialogue or cooperation on the peninsula, resumption of inter-Korean collaboration in the future may open the possibility for promoting cyber peace. At present, neither the South nor the North is interested in cyber disarmament or even cyber détente. They do not have the capacity to disrupt or regulate international cyber weapons trade. Each country is left to its own ways and means to deal with growing cyber threats. But, once inter-Korean dialogue is reopened, and the two militaries resume their contacts, Seoul should engage Pyongyang in a cyber arms control discussion, focusing initially on common terms and definitions. Hopefully, the two Koreas will be able to come up with some shared understandings that they can use to create new norms to shape each other’s cyber behavior in the future. A viable inter-Korean cyber weapons treaty may not be possible, but such cyber dialogue might be able to serve as a useful mechanism to clear some fog in cyberspace and lower cyber tensions on the peninsula.”

(Alexandre Mansourov, “North Korea’s Cyber Warfare and Challenges for the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” Korea Economic Institute, December 2, 2014)

Pyongyang and Washington look to be making renewed attempts at dialogue with a half-official, half-non-official, so-called “Track 1.5” meeting next month in Singapore. “As I understand it, officials from the North Korean foreign ministry and Korean Peninsula experts in the US are working out a possible meeting in Singapore next month,” said a Washington diplomatic source on December 3. The same source cautioned that “nothing has been decided for certain yet on the participants or schedule.” The US side is reportedly hoping North Korean Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Ri Yong-ho, the country’s senior representative to the six-party talks on the nuclear issue, will attend. Likely representatives from the US side include former State Department special representative for North Korea policy Stephen Bosworth and former National Counter Proliferation Center chief Joseph DeTrani. Since this fall, Washington has been suggesting that it will not be attaching conditions or a specific agenda to bilateral dialogue with Pyongyang for meetings in the 1.5 Track format - a marked contrast with the six-party talks. Washington’s need for “exploratory dialogue” is more being felt more keenly after the passage of a human rights resolution by the UN General Assembly’s Third Committee recently prompted Pyongyang to hint at the possibility of another nuclear test, analysts said. “The US has gained some room to maneuver [on the nuclear issue],” a senior South Korean government official said.

Lee Yong-in and Park Hyun, “North Korea and the U.S. to Hold ‘Track1.5’ Meeting Next Month in Singapore,” Hankyore, December 5, 2014)
“Until we resolve the issue of the divided families, we aren’t doing our duty. If there is something we can give North Korea to make this a reality, we will give it serious consideration,” a high-ranking official in the South Korean government said. “When we sit down for talks with North Korea, we need to talk about not only what we want but also what North Korea wants,” the official said in a press conference that was held on Jeju Island. The official also addressed the May 24 measures, sanctions that the South enacted against North Korea in 2010 after the sinking of the Cheonan warship. “If the two sides can meet to share various opinions about what can be done about the May 24 measures, I believe that the talks can serve as an opportunity to revoke the measures,” the official said. These remarks are being taken to mean that a grand bargain could be made that would address areas of interest both for North and South. North Korea wants the May 24 measures to be lifted and tours to Mt. Keumgang resumed, while South Korea would like to settle the issue of the divided families and to move forward with the proposals made by South Korean President Park Geun-hye in the Dresden Declaration. Prior to this, the South Korean government has held to its standard position that the issue of the May 24 measures can only be resolved through sincere negotiations between North and South Korea. In comparison, the official’s remarks are attracting attention because they are the first time that the government has suggested that the current issues facing North and South Korea could be resolved on a quid pro quo basis. According to the official, the remarks were prompted by the Park administration’s reflection on the North Korean policy that it has implemented for the past two years. “During the past two years, the South Korean government has worked to implement its vision for North Korean policy, but we have been unable to improve strained relations with Pyongyang. Letting strained relations continue in the long term is not desirable either for public well-being or national security. We need to figure out what the reason for this is, whatever it may be,” the official said. Furthermore, the official said that it is a matter of principle that North Korea must take responsibility for the sinking of the Cheonan if the May 24 measures are to be lifted. Since North Korea has disavowed responsibility for the Cheonan incident, the question of how to find a compromise with the North on this issue has yet to be answered. The official also said that the issue of propaganda leaflets being sent into North Korea, which derailed the second round of high-level talks between North and South Korea, needs to be resolved through dialogue. “No doubt, North Korea regards the leaflets as an important issue, but it is also using them as a way to put pressure on South Korea,” he said. In regard to humanitarian aid to North Korea, the official explained that the government had approved as many projects as possible except for those that North Korea had refused. (Son Won-je, “Official: Seoul Indicates a Grand Bargain on Lifting May 24 Measures,” Hankyore, December 8, 2014)

NDC Policy Department spokesman: “as regards the fact that the south Korean puppet authorities spread a wild rumor while forcibly linking the recent extra-large hacking in the U.S. with the DPRK: The SONY Pictures, a film producer in the U.S., has reportedly been attacked by hackers. The hacking is so fatal that all the systems of the company have been paralyzed, causing the overall suspension of the work and supposedly a huge ensuing loss. Much upset by this, the U.S. mobilized many investigation bodies including FBI, CIA and the Department of Homeland Security for urgent investigation and recovery of the system. We do not know where in America the SONY Pictures is
situated and for what wrongdoings it became the target of the attack nor we feel the need to know about it. But what we clearly know is that the SONY Pictures is the very one which was going to produce a film abetting a terrorist act while hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK by taking advantage of the hostile policy of the U.S. administration towards the DPRK. We already called upon the world to turn out in the just struggle to put an end to U.S. imperialism, the chieftain of aggression and the worst human rights abuser that tramples down the universal rights of people to peaceful and stable life and violates the sovereignty of other countries, as well as its followers. **The hacking into the SONY Pictures might be a righteous deed of the supporters and sympathizers with the DPRK in response to its appeal. What matters here is that the U.S. set the DPRK as the target of the investigation, far from reflecting on its wrongdoings and being shameful of being taken unawares. And the south Korean group, keen on serving its master, groundlessly linked the hacking attack with the DPRK and floated the "story about the north’s involvement", an indication of its inveterate bitterness towards its country fellowmen.** The U.S. and south Korean puppet group are all accustomed to pulling up others for no specific reason when something undesirable happens in their own land. The south Korean puppet group went the lengths of floating the false rumor that the north was involved in the hacking that happened in the U.S., a country far across the ocean. It should be well aware that it can not evade the severe punishment by the anti-U.S. sacred war to be staged all over the world if it blindly curries favor with the U.S. as now. **The U.S. should also know that there are a great number of supporters and sympathizers with the DPRK all over the world as well as the "champions of peace" who attacked the SONY Pictures.** The righteous reaction will get stronger to smash the evil doings.” (KCNA, “Spokesman of Policy Department of NDC Blasts S. Korean Authorities’ False Rumor about DPRK,” December 7, 2014)

South Korea complained about the North altering the wage system at the Kaesong Industrial Complex. “The two Koreas had agreed to improve the wage system of the Kaesong Industrial Complex to meet international standards, but any revision should be made through inter-Korean consultations,” said Lim Byeong-cheol, spokesman for the Unification Ministry. “The North’s recent announcement is a unilateral move in violation of inter-Korean agreements and we regret the situation.” The North’s Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland said two days ago that the Standing Committee of the Supreme People’s Assembly revised some of the regulations governing the Kaesong Industrial Complex on November 20. According to the committee, the North’s legislature changed 10 clauses governing the wage system of complex. Before the changes, the minimum wage of a worker started at $50 and yearly wage increases were limited to five percent of the previous year’s minimum wage. The North removed the terms and added a new clause saying the Central Industrial District Guidance Office will decide the minimum wage and its increases by evaluating labor productivity, the economic development of the industrial complex and the employment situation. Until now, the minimum wage of the workers in Kaesong has been decided through an agreement by the South’s Kaesong Industrial Complex Management Committee and the North Korean Bureau. Since 2007, the amount has been increased by 5 percent every year, and is currently set at $70.35. Including overtime payments and incentives, a worker can receive monthly pay as high
as $150. The North Korean government takes about 40 percent. Unification Ministry spokesman Lim said the North had not officially informed the South about the changes as of this morning. He said Seoul will register a protest after meeting with the North’s authorities in Kaesong. “We want to check first on the North’s intention and how much they plan to increase the minimum wage,” Lim said. “And we will consult with South Korean operators of factories in Kaesong as to how the changes will affect their businesses.” Pyongyang had made other attempts to increase wages in Kaesong this year. In June, the two Koreas agreed to increase the minimum wage by 5 percent starting from May, adding an additional $4 million in costs to the South Korean companies. (Ser Myo-ja, “North Fiddles with Kaesong Wages,” JoongAng Ilbo, December 9, 2014)

12/9/14 South Korean Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae said that Seoul and Washington should make greater efforts to engage North Korea, saying that dialogues would make pressure on the communist regime more effective. Ryoo made the suggestion during a keynote speech at a forum on Korean unification at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, stressing that the two allies should now explore “more creative and diverse approaches” to resolve Pyongyang’s nuclear and human rights problems. “Until now, Seoul and Washington focused on inducing Pyongyang to change by cooperatively putting pressure upon it. However, to make the pressure more effective, dialogues and cooperation are also necessary,” Ryoo said. “Our two countries should therefore strengthen our coordination for engagement as well. We will need to show Pyongyang clearly what it can earn by giving up the path of provocation and isolation and choosing the path of dialogue and cooperation,” he said. Ryoo also said that it is important to help North Korea actually see the benefits of cooperation with the outside world. That will be a way to “pragmatically improve the quality of life and the human rights situation of the North Korean people,” he said. (Yonhap, “S. Korea’s Point Man on N. Korea Calls for Engagement with Pyongyang,” Korea Times, December 11, 2014) Ryoo also said that it is important to help North Korea actually see the benefits of cooperation with the outside world. That will be a way to “pragmatically improve the quality of life and the human rights situation of the North Korean people,” he said. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel expressed staunch support for Park’s unification vision, saying it provides a vivid picture of the benefits the North could reap from reconciliation and denuclearization, as well as the benefits that reunification will bring to South Korea and the region as a whole. “The U.S. firmly supports this vision. We will never accept a permanent division of the Korean peninsula,” he said. “The ROK (South Korea) and the U.S. will continue to do everything we need to do to keep the peace on the peninsula through a combination of deterrence, and a strong allied defense.” He also urged the North to give up its nuclear program, stressing that the “byeongjin” policy of simultaneously seeking economic and nuclear development will never succeed. “It’s not a policy. It’s a pipe dream. It will not happen. North Korea can’t have its cake and eat it too,” Russel said of the North’s policy. “Our strategy raises the cost of continued defiance and ultimately leaves the DPRK no viable alternative but to honor its commitments and to come into compliance with its international obligations, first and foremost, with its obligations to irreversibly and verifiably denuclearize.” In a related move, a bipartisan committee of South Korea’s National Assembly passed a resolution on December 3
calling for the resumption of talks between the two Koreas. The special committee for the development of inter-Korean ties pointed out that bilateral relations remain frosty amid the North’s repeated military provocations, for nearly two years after the launch of the Park Geun-hye administration in the South. It emphasized that Seoul and Pyongyang should restart talks without attaching any preconditions to discuss a number of pending issues such as the regularization of family reunions, repatriation of prisoners of war and abducted people, the North’s human rights conditions and humanitarian food aid. "The National Assembly will also make various efforts, including a push for South-North parliamentary dialogue, to help promote government-level talks, exchanges and cooperation," read the resolution. The inter-Korean issue is a bipartisan problem, said the committee, chaired by Rep. Won Hye-young of the main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy. (Yonhap, "Seoul Stresses Engagement with Pyongyang to Improve Relations," North Korea Newsletter, 343, December 18, 2014)

Humanitarian aid to North Korea fell sharply over the past decade as nuclear saber rattling and consequent sanctions worsened the international perception of the country, a report by a state-run think tank said. In the first 11 months of this year, the amount of aid reaching the communist country stood at $28.3 million, a tenth of the more than $301 million that flowed into the North in the early 2000s, the Korea Development Institute (KDI)'s monthly North Korean report showed. The report is based on data provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The institute's analysis showed fluctuations in the amount of aid, peaking at $360.8 million in 2002 and falling to $24.5 million in 2010 after the North conducted its second nuclear test the year before, but the overall trend has been less aid going to North Korea over the years. In the 2000-2014 period, South Korea provided $430.9 million in assistance to the North, followed by $250.9 million from the United States, and $247.2 million from Japan. The three countries accounted for 80 percent of the aid to North Korea in 2000, but this dropped to 20 percent last year. (Yonhap, “International Aid to N. Korea Falls Sharply over Past Decade as Country’s Image Worsens: Report,” December 9, 2014)

The United States will continue to beef up its naval capabilities in the Pacific region in order to deter North Korea's provocations including its ballistic missile threats, U.S. Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus said. "The concerns are that the North will take some provocative actions that will allow the situation to get out of control," he told reporters in Seoul. He arrived here on Sunday for a four-day visit during which he met Seoul’s Defense Minister Han Min-koo and the chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, Adm. Choi Yun-hee, among others. Stressing that "any sort of ballistic missile threat or capability of North Korea is potentially very dangerous," the secretary said the very threats led the U.S. to have been pushing for a rebalance toward the Pacific region. "One of the things I am proud of in my time as secretary is that we are growing our fleet. We are growing not only the numbers but capabilities of our fleet," said Mabus. Noting that some 60 percent of the 70 ships ordered by the Navy over the past five years will be sent to the Pacific, including "the most modern platforms" such as ballistic missile defense destroyers, littoral combat ships and an amphibious ready group, he said the U.S. will be a fleet of more than 300 ships by the end of this decade. "There will be
more ships to be in this region to do exercise to hopefully deter any sort of actions and to make sure that we are ready for working with the Republic of Korea," he said. As ways to counter ballistic missile threats from Pyongyang, he said the U.S. maintains interoperability with the South Korean military in terms of detecting and tracking the missile launches by adopting the same Aegis combat systems and carries out "the very intensive regimen of exercises." While refusing to confirm media reports on North Korea's recent launch of a new submarine capable of firing ballistic missiles, Mabus stressed a growing importance of the maritime domain and called for "the ability to meet whatever threats, whatever occasions comes over the horizon." (Oh Seok-min, "U.S. Navy Chief Vows to Counter N. Korea Provocations," Yonhap, December 9, 2014) . "One of the things that our president said and we are doing is this rebalance toward the Pacific. One of the things I am proud of is we are growing our fleet. We are growing not only the numbers, but capabilities of our fleet," said Mabus, who arrived here on Sunday for a four-day visit to underscore the U.S. security commitment here. "We will be a fleet of more than 300 ships by the end of this decade, and 60 percent of those ships will be in the Pacific region. We are 50 percent now, and we are shifting our most modern platforms here." His remarks as skepticism has lingered over the U.S. pivot toward Asia. Mabus listed a series of new naval assets that have already been deployed or will be deployed, including eight ballistic missile defense destroyers to be deployed to Japan through 2017; four littoral combat ships to be deployed to Singapore by 2017; P8 antisubmarine, surveillance aircraft to Japan; an amphibious ready group; the marine squadron of F-35S to Japan; and three DDG-1000 Zumwalt stealth destroyers. Touching on the evolving security challenges in the region including those from China's coastal artillery and missile capabilities, Mabus hinted that the AirSea Battle concept could emerge as a centerpiece of the military operations for the Pacific Command. "Worlds are always going to be changing. Threats are always going to change. It is always a race between capabilities," he said. "And Adm. Harris in his (congressional) hearing (to be Pacific commander) talked about how we have to change our tactics, our strategies to meet (the evolving security challenges), however the world changes, and he mentioned specifically the AirSea Battle … that he wanted to do that." The U.S. has been developing the new operational concept to stop potential adversaries' military capabilities from blocking its access to operational areas or its action within those areas. The capabilities are called "anti-access/area-denial (A2AD)" capabilities or threats. Employing the concept, the U.S. seeks to create a joint force capable of effectively handling security threats across all domains — air, land, sea, space and cyberspace — so that its armed services can better counter the A2AD challenges. China has perceived itself to be a target of the AirSea Battle concept, as it poses the greatest A2AD threats through cruise and ballistic missiles, bombers and other advanced weapons with longer ranges and greater lethality, accuracy and ability to remain operational after engagement. (Song Sang-ho, “U.S. Navy Chief Says Rebalance to Asia ‘Real,’” Korea Herald, December 9, 2014)

"North Korea is presumed to have the capability of producing some four nuclear bombs per year, and it appears that the North will possess some 20 nuclear bombs by 2016," Siegfried Hecker, a research professor at Stanford, was quoted as saying by Rep. Yoo Ki-june of South Korea’s ruling Saenuri Party. In April, Hecker estimated that North Korea had about 10 nuclear bombs, according to sources in Washington. The
expert made the remarks during a Wednesday meeting with a group of lawmakers on the Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee. Yoo is the head of the committee. Speaking of the communist country’s attempts to miniaturize a nuclear warhead for missiles, Hecker raised the chances of Pyongyang’s further underground tests. "For the miniaturization, the North could carry out several rounds of nuclear tests down the road," Hecker was quoted as saying. "North Korea appears not to be sure (about the technology)." (Yonhap, “N. Korea to Have 20 Nuke Bombs by 2016,” Korea Herald, December 10, 2014)

North Korea’s military is conducting unusually intensive winter drills amid growing concerns over the unpredictable nation’s further provocations, a defense source here said. "The North’s winter military training, which began in early November, is extraordinarily active," the source said. In particular, the North has markedly increased the number of exercises of its special forces, including airborne units. The number of parachute drop drills using the Antonov An-2 aircraft this season has jumped more than 20 times from the previous year, according to the source. The North has also doubled its live-fire artillery drills, the source said. Another source said, "South Korea and the United States are closely monitoring the North Korean military’s moves around the clock. But there is no indication of any imminent conflict with the North." (Yonhap, “N. Korea in Active Winter Military Drills: Source,” December 10, 2014)

DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman “in connection with the fact that the U.S. is mulling officially bringing the DPRK "human rights issue" up for discussion at the UN Security Council: The U.S. is scheming once again to abuse the UNSC for implementing its hostile policy towards the DPRK. On December 5 the U.S. and some forces of the UNSC toeing its line sent the president of the Security Council a joint letter calling for officially referring the DPRK "human rights issue" to the Security Council. Why the U.S. is making so haste to refer the above-said “human rights issue” to the Security Council though the illegal anti-DPRK "human rights resolution" which it cooked up by setting its followers in motion has not gone through the necessary procedures at the UN General Assembly? The U.S. is leaving no stone unturned to make the "resolution” an established fact, afraid that this political fraud may face ever bitterer rebuff and condemnation from the world people. This is one more impudent reckless action which can be taken only by the gangster-like U.S. abusing the UN for its purpose of aggression through high-handed and arbitrary practices and swindle. The U.S. is persistently working to refer non-existent DPRK "human rights issue" to the Security Council although there is the UN Human Rights Council, the organization specializing in human rights issues. This is prompted by its ulterior intention to invent a pretext for military invasion of the DPRK under the pretext of its “human rights issue." The DPRK had already held in its address at the UN General Assembly this year that the Security Council should not offer a forum for applying the worst double standards and telling a whole string of lies any longer. In July last when the DPRK Government formally filed in the Security Council the issue of putting an end to the U.S.-south Korea joint military drills posing a direct threat to international peace and security, the Security Council sidestepped it. If the Security Council deliberately brings the above-said “human rights issue" irrelevant to security up for discussion under the pressure of the U.S. and its allies, it will be the most striking manifestation of the double standards. An attempt to
discuss the above-said issue at the UN Security Council on the basis of the “report submitted by the Commission of Inquiry (CI)” on the human rights situation in the DPRK which is full of prejudice and lies, a report which was not verified, will turn the council into a forum for discussing the fraudulent document. A dangerous precedent in which a pretext was invented for igniting a war of aggression on the basis of the false statement made by the U.S. Secretary of State that "Iraq has WMDs" at the UNSC 11 years ago is now repeating itself. **If the UNSC wants to discuss the human rights issue, it should not read the "report" deliberately forged by the CI without witnessing the DPRK’s reality with its own eyes but call into question the human rights abuses rampant in the U.S.** Why the UNSC is turning its face from the inhuman torture practiced by the CIA over which the UN Anti-Torture Committee expressed particular concern and which is dealt with in the 6,000 page-long report presented by the Intelligence Committee of the U.S. Senate, and such despicable human rights abuses as white American policemen’s brutalities of shooting and strangling black men to death. If the UNSC handles the “human rights issue” in the DPRK while shutting its eyes to the serious human rights issue in the U.S., one of its permanent members, while failing to settle the pending and urgent issues directly linked with the world peace and security, it will prove itself its miserable position that it has turned into a tool for U.S. arbitrary practices just as everybody can hear everywhere.” (KCNA, “U.S. Slammed for Its Move to Refer DPRK ‘Human Rights Issue’ to UNSC,” December 10, 2014)

A secret North Korean document obtained by Western intelligence states that dictator Kim Jong-il conceived and directed a program to kidnap foreigners and bring them to his communist country to force them to become spies against their homelands, the Washington Times has learned. Diplomatic sources familiar with the discovery said the recently obtained document for the first time provides details on how and why Kim, who died in 2012, directed a covert spy unit in the 1970s called the Investigation Department that kidnapped foreign nationals and brought them to North Korea. The Investigative Department, part of the ruling communist Korean Workers Party Central Committee, carried out several dozen selective kidnappings and used the abducted foreigners for training its intelligence operatives, and to be dispatched overseas in foreign spy operations and propaganda activities, including film production, the document indicates. The document, believed to have been produced within the past several years as part of a historical archive, is regarded by authorities as a classified North Korean government report, the sources said. It is considered authoritative because of its origin and the importance within the North Korean system of precisely recording the words of supreme leaders, they added. One source familiar with the document said there are no indications the report is a forgery. According to translated portions obtained by Inside the Ring, Kim met with the chief of the investigation department, which is known by its Korean acronym “Josabu,” on Sept. 29, 1977, and Oct. 7, 1977. During the meeting, he spelled out plans for how and why Kim, who was succeeded in power by his son Kim Jong-un, told the intelligence chief and a group of party officials that forcibly training foreign nationals in their 20s for five to seven years in North Korea would produce valuable intelligence agents who would be useful until the age of 60, the document stated. He then ordered spy teams dispatched to Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe to
secretly lure young men and women into supporting the regime. A special focus was placed on attractive women. Kim stated that targets of those brought to North Korea should include people who were loners or orphans. The abductions were to be carried out secretly using methods that could not be traced to Pyongyang’s agents, according to the document. Among those kidnapped by the North Koreans after the 1977 orders was 13-year-old Japanese schoolgirl Yokota Megumi, who disappeared from Japan in 1977. She was taken to North Korea, where she spent the rest of her life in captivity and, according to the North Korean government, eventually died in the communist state. On August 25, 1977, Kim ordered the investigation department to set up a covert Hong Kong unit devoted to inviting South Korean film actresses and the offspring of high-ranking South Korean officials to visit Hong Kong, the document states. The objective of the covert group was to befriend selected people as targets and use them to obtain invitations to South Korea, where North Korean agents could produce films under cover. That appears to be the motive behind the kidnappings in 1978 of South Korean actress Choi Eun-hee and her director husband, Shin Sang-ok. The couple were taken to North Korea, where it was hoped they would help the regime produce propaganda films. They escaped in 1986 during a visit to Vienna. In October 1978, according to the document, Kim ordered his intelligence operatives to persuade the abducted foreign nationals to settle in North Korea. The investigative department arranged for the abductees to live in special guest houses. It was hoped they would reside comfortably, in contrast to the harsh living conditions for most North Koreans. Ambassador Jang Il-hun, deputy chief of North Korea’s mission to the United Nations, denied that Kim was involved in the kidnapping operations. “The abduction of Japanese nationals in 1970s was an act of individual heroism conducted by some people in the intelligence community who sought fame and reputation by such acts,” Jang told Inside the Ring. Jang said the rogue operatives were motivated by “indignation” over Japan’s refusal to apologize for abuses during Tokyo’s rule over the Korean Peninsula in the early 1900s. “In no way was the government of the DPRK involved in the abduction case, to say nothing of our respected Supreme Leader Chairman Kim Jong-il,” he said in a statement, using the acronym for North Korea’s official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. “This is the truth.” Jang added that “we had so many Koreans who were repatriated from Japan, there was no need for our government to use the Japanese nationals for any government purpose.” The total number of foreigners abducted during the intelligence operations of the 1970s and 1980s is not known but has been estimated to be several dozen. They included nationals from China, Malaysia, Lebanon, France and Italy, in addition to those from Japan and South Korea. In Japan, the government has elevated the issue of resolving cases of at least 17 missing Japanese to a national priority. (Bill Gertz, “Kim Jong-il Ordered Foreign Kidnappings to Create Spies: Secret Document,” Washington Times, December 10, 2014)
Beijing on Wednesday and held talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wu Dawei. Kim’s trip, which also took him to Seoul and Tokyo, is his first to the region since he took up the new post in October. North Korea reportedly demanded a diplomatic concession of some kind when U.S. spy chief James Clapper secretly visited the North in early November to bring home two detained American citizens, Kenneth Bae and Matthew Miller. Despite the release of the Americans, Kim said the U.S. sees no indication that North Korea is serious about giving up its nuclear weapons. "We are obviously pleased that the American citizens were released, glad that they are back home," Kim said. "But, unfortunately, we haven’t seen any indication that the release of American citizens is changing North Korea’s attitudes or approach on the nuclear issue."

(Yonhap, “U.S. Envoy Signals Bilateral Meeting with N. Korea,” December 12, 2014)

North Korea could launch a peace overture toward South Korea next year in a move to come out of diplomatic deadlock, while continuing its small-scale provocations, the Seoul government said. “Chances are that North Korea could take the inter-Korean cooperation as a way out of its isolation should it fail to make progress in improving relations with major countries such as China, Russia and the United States,” South Korea’s Ministry of Unification said in a report. "The North could also make a proactive peace overture (toward the South) next year on the occasions of the 70th anniversary of the Korean Peninsula’s independence from Japanese colonial rule and the 15th anniversary of adopting the June 15 inter-Korean joint declaration that calls for exchange and cooperation between the two Koreas," the ministry said. (Yonhap, “N. Korea May Make Active Peace Gesture toward S. Korea: Seoul,” December 12, 2014)

Seats held by the Liberal Democratic Party fell by three to 290 from the number held before the election, effectively 291 after the party endorsed one independent winner. Komeito captured 35 seats, the largest number since 1996 when a lower house election was held for the first time after introduction of the current electoral system combining single-seat constituencies and proportional representation. The party won in all of nine single-seat constituencies where it fielded candidates, with the rest coming through the proportional representation segment. The combined number of lower house seats of the LDP and Komeito was 325, the same number won by the two parties in the previous lower house election in 2012. In this election, the total number of lower house seats was reduced from 480 to 475. This is why the ruling coalition’s number of lower house seats rose to a record high 68.42 percent. Thus the ruling coalition secured more than two-thirds of the seats – 317 seats in the lower house – and will have no problem passing bills even if they are voted down in the House of Councillors. The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan won 73 seats, 11 more than the DPJ could not reach its targeted number of seats, as the party lacked momentum. This time, however, the Japan Innovation Party won 41, lower than the 42 it held before the election. (Yomiuri Shimbun, “Coalition Wins 68.42% of Seats,” December 15, 2014) Party for Future Generations (19); Japanese Communist Party (8); People’s Life Party (5); Social Democratic Party (2); New Renaissance Party (0); Independents (17). (Asahi Shimbun, “Abe’s Ruling Coalition Captures Two-Thirds Majority in Lower House Election,” December 15, 2014) The landslide means Abe will see few internal rivals willing to challenge him in the LDP’s presidential election next fall, likely extending his
leadership and possibly his prime ministership for more than three more years. But that claim was tainted by a record-low turnout of about 52.66 percent, down 6.66 points from the previous low in 2012. (Yoshida Reiji, “Abe Claims Mandate for Economic, Security Policies despite Lowest Turnout Ever,” Japan Times, December 15, 2014)

A United States citizen has shown up in the repressive state, appearing on television to denounce his home country as a “Mafia enterprise” and call American democracy “an illusion”. Although details remain sketchy, it seems that the man, Arturo Pierre Martinez of El Paso, Texas, willingly went to North Korea and he says he is not being detained. At a press conference in Pyongyang Sunday morning, Martinez vigorously criticized the United States for alleged human rights violations. “The illegal war carried out against the nation of Iraq serves as a perfect example of how the U.S. government acts much like a Mafia enterprise, but criminally plundering entire nations of their resources, strategic reserves and economies instead of smaller scale business and individuals, and does so without a code of ethics,” he said, according to a CNN report. But his mother, Patricia Eugenia Martinez, told CNN that her 29-year-old son had bipolar disorder and had previously tried to enter North Korea by swimming across a river, but was apprehended and sent back to the U.S., where he was treated at a California psychiatric hospital. His mother told CNN that after Martinez was released from the psychiatric hospital, he took out a payday loan online and bought a plane ticket to China, where he apparently made it across that country’s Yalu river border and into North Korea. North Korea said in a statement that Martinez entered the country last month, just two days after James Clapper, the top U.S. intelligence official, went to Pyongyang to secure the release of Kenneth Bae and Matthew Todd Miller, two Americans who were being held by North Korea. (Anna Fifield, “North Korea Parades an American Who Denounces the U.S. System,” Washington Post, December 14, 2014)

When Sony Pictures began casting last year for a new comedy to be called “The Interview,” early scripts included the assassination of a fictionalized North Korean ruler. It was not until auditions began that actors learned that the movie would portray something much more brazen: the violent killing of the actual leader of North Korea, Kim Jong-un. Sony’s executives now say they knew that basing a film on the assassination of a living leader – even a ruthless dictator – had inherent risks. But the studio seems to have gotten much more than it bargained for by bankrolling what it hoped would be an edgy comedy. The still very-much-alive Kim appears not to have been amused when the premise of the comedy became clear. North Korea branded the $40 million film, to be released on December 25, “an act of war” and vowed a “resolute and merciless response.” Then, last month, hackers unleashed one of the most punishing cyberattacks on a major corporation in recent memory, pilfering private emails, detailed summaries of executive salaries, and even digital copies of several unreleased Sony films that they posted online. It remains a mystery who was responsible. Suspicion has fallen on Kim’s Bureau 121, an elite cyberunit, or patriotic hackers. But experts say pro-North Korea messages left behind could be a ruse to cover the hackers’ real tracks. What is clear is that by deciding to go ahead with the film, Sony stumbled into a geopolitical mess complete with all the elements of a Hollywood thriller: international intrigue, once imperious, now humiliated, film
executives, strong-willed leading men and highly sophisticated cyberattackers. The studio’s first miscalculation, film experts say, was in venturing beyond where big-budget moviemakers dared to go in the past. “The gory killing of a sitting foreign leader is new territory for a big studio movie,” said Jeanine Basinger, a professor of film studies at Wesleyan University. From early on, “The Interview” seemed to pit the sensibilities of filmmakers in the United States, where the portly North Korean leader with the cherubic looks has been a target of easy humor, against those of Sony executives in Japan, where he is reviled but taken deadly seriously. Disturbed by North Korean threats at a time when his company was already struggling, Sony’s Japanese chief executive, Hirai Kazuo, broke with what Sony executives say was a 25-year tradition. He intervened in the decision making of his company’s usually autonomous Hollywood studio, Sony Pictures Entertainment. According to hacked emails published by other media and interviews with people briefed on the matter, he insisted over the summer that a scene in which Kim’s head explodes when hit by a tank shell be toned down to remove images of flaming hair and chunks of skull. In the emails, he also asked that even the less bloody shot not be shown outside the United States. A final decision on how the assassination scene will be rendered in overseas release has not been made, a person briefed on the film’s international roll out said. Hollywood films have mocked North Korea and its leaders before. In 2004, “Team America: World Police,” a feature film made with puppets, portrayed Kim Jong-il, the father of the current leader, as a lonely but sadistic despot who eventually turned into a cockroach. But with “The Interview,” from the casting calls onward, Sony studio executives in the United States seemed aware that they were treading into a sensitive new area. “In the original version of the script that I got, it wasn’t Kim Jong-un,” Randall Park, who was cast in the role, told bloggers invited to the Vancouver set last year. “But I was told right before my audition that it was going to be Kim Jong-un.” Whether the switch reflected a possible alternate creative direction, or was the result of an effort to keep an incendiary element of the movie quiet, is unclear. A Sony spokesman declined to comment. But some in the film industry said the film’s co-directors, Evan Goldberg and the actor Seth Rogen, were trying to push creative boundaries, and that Sony allowed them to do so in part to keep them from going to a rival studio. “That was always the whole point,” said one agent familiar with “The Interview” from its earliest stages, speaking on the condition of anonymity to preserve ties to Sony. “Buried inside that comedy is a really sharp geopolitical satire.” In the movie, two American journalists are recruited by the C.I.A. to kill the North Korean leader. Experts on North Korean society said that it would not be much of a surprise if the country was behind the hacking, which it appeared to delight in even as it denied involvement. “In Korean culture, there is a real need to protect your leader’s dignity,” said Shigemura Toshimitsu, an expert on North Korea at Waseda University in Tokyo who believes that North Korea probably had at least an indirect hand in Sony’s hacking woes. “The North Korean leader’s subordinates were probably desperate to make some sort of gesture, in order to both prove their loyalty and to save their own skins.” The hacked emails that have been published paint a picture of a corporation torn between trying to be respectful of artistic license, while also trying to prevent the film from being too inflammatory. After pressure from Hirai, the emails show, Amy Pascal, co-chairwoman of Sony Pictures, repeatedly pressed Rogen to soften “The Interview’s” climactic assassination scene. “You have to appreciate the fact that we haven’t just dictated to you what it had to be,”
Pascal wrote in September to Mr. Rogen. “Given that I have never gotten one note on anything from our parent company in the entire 25 years that I have worked for them.” According to the emails and a person briefed on the matter, Hirai inserted himself into the film’s editing after North Korean officials, apparently having seen promotional materials last summer, called the film “an act of war.” In one email, Mr. Hirai approves a newly altered assassination shot that had “no face melting, less fire in the hair, fewer embers on the face and the head explosion has been considerably obscured by the fire.” At one point in the tug of war over the script, Rogen weighed in with an angry email to Pascal. “This is now a story of Americans changing their movie to make North Koreans happy,” he wrote. “That is a very damning story.” Other published emails and interviews show Michael Lynton, chief executive of Sony Pictures, stepping in to distance “The Interview” from its Japanese owner after North Korea’s initial blowback last June. In particular, Mr. Lynton pushed staff members to remove the word “Sony” from promotional materials, including billboards and trailers, and from the end credit crawl. Sony also decided not to release the R-rated film in Asia, but executives at the studio said the decision had been made largely because crudely irreverent humor does not translate easily, particularly in the more culturally conservative societies in the region. Still, the studio was aware that the raw geopolitical content would make booking the film even more difficult, according to Sony executives interviewed in recent days who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the nature of the discussion. Some analysts speculated that Sony might have been pressured to tone down the film by the Japanese government, which is in delicate negotiations with the North to discover the fate of more than a dozen Japanese abducted by North Korean agents in the 1970s and 1980s. However, many say the Sony chief executive intervened because he was alarmed by the very public – and possibly private – threats being hurled by the Kim regime. “Such threats against a specific company by a sovereign state were so shocking and unusual that it is natural for the top to want to get involved,” said Kubota Tomoichiro, an analyst at Matsui Securities in Tokyo who specializes in Sony. In the end, the Sony edits might not have had the desired effect. Although they did not specifically mention “The Interview,” the hackers demand that Sony not release what they call “the movie of terrorism.” (Martin Fackler, Brooks Barnes, and David E. Sanger, “Sony’s International Incident: Making Kim’s Head Explode,” New York Times, December 15, 2014, p. A-1)

North Korea hinted at the possibility of improving relations with Seoul in a report from its foreign ministry. It is the determination of Kim Jong-un to continue to make positive efforts in the future for the improvement of north-south relations, according to the report of the Disarmament and Peace Institute of the North’s Foreign Ministry, carried by KCNA on December 12. Supporting the ministry’s prediction, an opposition lawmaker who has just returned from a one-day trip to North Korea, said North Korea seems to have strong willingness for dialogue. “I got the impression that North Korea has a strong will for dialogue,” Rep. Park Jie-won of the main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy said on December 16 upon returning from a trip to North Korea’s border town of Kaesong where he met with Won Tong-yon, vice chairman of the North’s Asia-Pacific Committee. Park went there to deliver a wreath commemorating the third anniversary of the death of the North’s late leader, Kim Jong-il, the father of the current leader, Kim Jong-un, on behalf of Lee Hee-ho, the
widow of former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, who had a historic summit meeting with Kim Jong-il in 2000. "Vice chairman Won said he hopes that the South and the North will promote reconciliation and cooperation next year, when they celebrate the 15th anniversary of the June 15 Declaration," referring to an agreement reached at the historic summit. Won, however, said the two Koreas will be able to recover mutual trust only when the South stops the scattering by activists of leaflets critical of Pyongyang, according to the lawmaker. Park served as chief of staff to the late South Korean president during his term from 1998 to 2003. The government approved Park's visit to North Korea as it is to reciprocate the North's wreath in August to mark the 5th anniversary of the former South Korean president's death. "Today, the government approved the North Korea trip (by Rep. Park) in consideration that the (planned) delivering of the wreath is a reciprocal move," ministry spokesman Lim Byeong-cheol said at a press briefing on December 15. He added the North has notified the peace center of its decision to send Won Dong-yon to receive the wreath. (Yonhap, “Seoul Stresses Engagement with Pyongyang to Improve Relations,” North Korea Newsletter, 343, December 18, 2014)

Mansourov: “North Korea has a small operational nuclear weapons program and a robust ballistic missile development program. The North conducted three small yield nuclear tests to prove its research and development results, improving the reliability of its designs and learning to further miniaturize its nuclear warheads for ballistic missile delivery, and to publicly demonstrate its acquisition of nuclear power. It has a stockpile of plutonium sufficient to build 4-8 nuclear warheads. Following the restart of the Yongbyon nuclear reactor, it can reprocess enough plutonium for the production of one additional nuclear warhead per year. It has a highly-enriched uranium program, but its extent remains unclear. Its nuclear weapons development program is complimented by an active ballistic missile development program. Armed with around 700 short-range SCUD missiles capable of hitting South Korea, 200 Nodong medium-range missiles capable of hitting targets in Japan, and up to a hundred of intermediate range Musudan and KN-08 missiles on mobile platforms that can reach Guam, North Korea continues to work on an intercontinental ballistic missile that will be capable of striking the United States. It still has to overcome at least three technical challenges in order to develop a working and reliable nuclear weapons capability: to weaponize and miniaturize a nuclear device to fit it on an ICBM, to develop a dependable guidance system, and to develop a re-entry vehicle that can survive both the launch and re-entry. This will certainly be a time-consuming and costly process, especially in light of intensifying international sanctions. All in all, the Defense Intelligence Agency assessed with moderate confidence that the “North currently has nuclear weapons capable of delivery by ballistic missiles however the reliability will be low.” But, the Obama administration expressed considerable doubt about the efficacy and utility of North Korean nuclear missile capabilities. Although Pyongyang’s nuclear capabilities remain opaque, North Korea’s open source materials allow an astute reader of its official pronouncements to infer its leadership’s nuclear intentions with a moderate degree of confidence because the DPRK’s self-declared nuclear status and ambitions have become an integral part of the country’s national development and domestic politics, national security strategy and national defense policy, military operational planning, as well as its international diplomacy. **The principal purpose of the DPRK’s nuclear**
weapons program is to ensure the favorable environment for regime survival and national development by deterring external threats against the country’s sovereignty and leadership and by freeing internal resources for economic growth and individual consumption. The survival of the ruling Kim family is intimately linked to the nuclear weapons development program because nuclear arms help legitimize Kim Jong Un’s hereditary rule, keep his foreign foes at bay, and allow the DPRK government to prop up the civilian economy with the additional resources previously spent on conventional military arms. On March 31, 2013, Kim Jong Un said, “Nuclear weapons guarantee peace, economic prosperity, and people’s happy life.” According to the MOFA spokesman statement on 4 October 2014, “The DPRK’s nuclear force serves a powerful treasured sword to protect the sovereignty of the country and the dignity of the nation and provides a sure guarantee for focusing efforts on preserving peace and security, building economy and improving the standard of the people’s living.” Despite what many Western analysts believe, development of nuclear weapons does not take precedence over economic development in Kim Jong Un’s North Korea. In a visible departure from the military-first policy, as envisioned and practiced by his father Kim Jong Il, the Workers’ Party of Korea under Kim Jong Un’s leadership adopted at the March 2013 Plenum of its Central Committee the so-called Pyongjin Line, i.e. the strategic course on parallel construction of economy and nuclear weapons. Notwithstanding the Songun imperatives, both are regarded as parallel tracks of the overall national development strategy designed to fulfil the supreme interests of the Korean people and Juch’e revolution. According to the DPRK foreign ministry spokesman’s statement on 4 October 2014, “The DPRK’s line of simultaneously developing the two fronts serves as a banner for bolstering nuclear deterrence for self-defence to cope with the reckless nuclear threat and aggression by the U.S. and its followers and, on its basis, winning a decisive victory in building a thriving nation... The DPRK’s line of simultaneously pushing forward economic construction and the building of nuclear force is the strategic line which should be permanently maintained to meet the supreme interests of the Korean revolution.” The North Korean government emphasizes the critical role of nuclear weapons in national security and defense strategies by putting them in the center of its campaign to prevent war and shape peace suitable to Pyongyang and in the foundation of its plans to wage war under the conditions favoring the North. In his speech on 31 March 2013, Kim Jong Un called for increasing the “pivotal role of nuclear weapons in war deterrent strategy and war-waging strategy.” According to the DPRK national security doctrine, as part of the overall war deterrent strategy, “the nuclear deterrent enables peaceful development at home and allows North Korea to dictate international trends on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia.” According to the DPRK military doctrine, as part of the war-waging strategy the nuclear weapons are designed “to beat back any aggressor troops at one strike.” According to the DPRK law, the nuclear weapons “serve the purpose of deterring and repelling the aggression and attack of the enemy against the DPRK and dealing deadly retaliatory blows at the strongholds of aggression until the world is denuclearized.” This stipulation presupposes that nuclear weapons can be used both on the territory of the DPRK against the attacking enemy forces and on foreign soil against the defending enemy forces. North Korea’s past behavior demonstrates that during crisis escalation, Pyongyang increases the nuclear threat in a gradual manner in order to deter the U.S.-ROK alliance from taking hostile actions, let alone from
attacking. These escalatory moves include: a public or private warning, a demonstration ICBM test and a nuclear test of a small atomic device on its own soil, a threat to use (a) nuclear weapon(s) in self-defense on North Korea’s own soil against the attacking allied forces; and a threat to use (a) nuclear weapon(s) in retaliation against critical but purely military targets on foreign (ROK, Japan, U.S.) soil, probably in thinly populated areas, causing the least collateral damage. Careful reading of North Korean authoritative media suggests a mixed rationale for the acquisition of nuclear weapons, ranging from self-defense to deterrence, and even compellence. Its defensive aspects are grounded in the North’s victim-centric interpretation of the history of the Korean nation, its analysis of the war and peace record in the nuclear age, Pyongyang’s current threat perceptions, and Kim Jong Un’s domestic political and economic considerations. The process of competitive legitimation and multifaceted confrontation with the South, as well as Pyongyang’s interest in cooperating with and aiding to any country opposed to the United States add an offensive dimension, including a predisposition to proliferate, to the North’s nuclear posture. The North Korean official media argues that the DPRK was compelled to acquire nuclear arms for self-defense for three reasons: in response to the persistent U.S. nuclear threat; out of fear to fall victim to the outside forces and lose sovereignty and independence again, just like it happened in 1905 when Korea became a colony of Japan; and in order to defend the socialist ideology and system against imperialist encroachments. According to the foreign ministry spokesman statement on 4 October 2014, “the DPRK was compelled to make a bold decision to have access to nuclear weapons due to the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK, nuclear threat and strategy for stifling it for more than half a century.” On 15 April 2012, Kim Jong Un publically declared that “military technological supremacy is not a monopoly of imperialists anymore, and the time has gone forever when the enemies threatened and intimidated us with atomic bombs.” Today, the North Korean officials often reiterate that “the U.S. and its allies will not be able to threaten the DPRK with nuclear weapons again.” Invoking the tragic loss of Korean independence in 1905 due to outside pressure, the North Korean officials express their firm belief that “nuclear weapons will guarantee the DPRK’s sovereignty and independence.” According to the DPRK Law “On Consolidating the Position of Nuclear Weapons State for Self-Defense,” “Having an independent and just nuclear force, the DPRK put an end to the distress-torn history in which it was subject to outside forces’ aggression and interference and could emerge a socialist power of Juche which no one dares to provoke.” The North Korean government officials believe that “Nuclear weapons will help the DPRK defend its socialist system by preventing the U.S.-led international community from interfering into the DPRK’s internal affairs under the pretext of the ‘human rights.’” The WPK CC Plenary Meeting held on 31 March 2013, stated that “Only when the nuclear shield for self-defence is held fast, will it be possible to shatter the U.S. imperialists’ ambition for annexing the Korean Peninsula by force and making the Korean people modern slaves, firmly defend our ideology, social system and all other socialist treasures won at the cost of blood and safeguard the nation’s right to existence and its time-honored history and brilliant culture.” The North Korean military theoreticians also articulated three reasons explaining why nuclear weapons could help deter war. They observed that “No nuclear weapon state has ever suffered a foreign invasion since the introduction of nuclear weapons 70 years ago, despite many small and large wars fought during this time.” They also believe that
“nuclear weapons will help DPRK avoid the fate of Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria.” And, lastly, they insist that since their country loves peace, it must prepare for war, even a nuclear war in defense of world peace. Internal political and economic considerations obviously play an important role in providing the domestic rationale for continued development of nuclear weapons. As Kim Jong Un said on a number of occasions, it was the dying wish and eternal legacy of both Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, and he would never give it up because it would be tantamount to national treason, the repudiation of his forebears and their revolutionary inheritance. In addition, Kim asserted that the development of nuclear weapons should help DPRK avoid the costly arms race, reduce military spending and foster economic development. Intriguing are occasional references to the possible offensive purposes for the nuclear weapons program aimed at effecting the strategic outcomes favoring the North in its relations with the South and the United States. In particular, nuclear weapons should help the North compel the South to accept reunification on the terms agreeable to Pyongyang. Kim Jong Un likes to say that “Nuclear weapons are the sword that advances the cause of Korean reunification.” The North Korean leaders also envision an important role for nuclear weapons in a reunified Korea. In his address to the WPK CC Plenary Meeting held on 31 March 2013, Kim Jong Un said that “The nuclear weapons are a treasure of a reunified country which can never be traded with billions of dollars.” Concerning the United States, Pyongyang sometimes talks about its intention to “advance the anti-U.S. cooperation in the nuclear field,” which raises the question whether this threat means the proliferation of nuclear technology and materials to “all the countries and peace-loving people who are interested in dismembering the U.S. imperialists in all parts of the world,” since its propagandists insist that “The nuclear forces of the DPRK will demonstrate unimaginably tremendous might in effecting worldwide anti-U.S. cooperation.” The dual (defensive and offensive) purposes of the DPRK’s nuclear weapons are underscored by the Committee for Peaceful Reunification of Fatherland, whose spokesman told KCNA on 11 December 2014: “The nukes … are nothing but a shield of justice and a powerful treasured sword for defending the security of the nation from the U.S. and south Korean puppet forces’ reckless moves to ignite a nuclear war against the DPRK and for protecting peace on the Korean Peninsula and in other parts of the region.” In the past three years, the Kim regime undertook several important steps to institutionalize and elevate the DPRK’s nuclear status by revising the country’s constitution, passing new laws, and establishing new government organizations with the mandate to advance the nuclear weapons program. The Fifth Session of the 12th SPA held on April 13, 2012, revised the country’s constitution by adding a reference to the DPRK as a “nuclear state” in the preamble. Part of the revised preamble now says “In the face of the collapse of the world socialist system and the vicious offensive of the imperialist allied forces to stifle the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Comrade Kim Jong Il administered Songun politics; thus he safeguarded with honor the achievements of socialism which are the precious legacy of Comrade Kim Il Sung, developed the DPRK into an invincible politico-ideological power, a nuclear state and an unchallengeable military power, and opened a broad avenue for the building of a thriving nation.” The Seventh Session of the 12th SPA held on April 1, 2013, codified the development of nuclear weapons in the DPRK law by adopting the “DPRK Law on Consolidating the Position of Nuclear Weapons State for Self-Defense,” the “DPRK Law on Developing Space,” and the SPA Decision
"On Setting Up the DPRK State Space Development Bureau." On April 11, 2013, the DPRK General Bureau for Atomic Energy was upgraded into the full-fledged Ministry of Nuclear Power Industry, in accordance with the SPA Presidium Degree No. 3111 dated on April 11, 2013. Under Kim Jong Un’s rule, North Korea’s military industrial establishment underwent some significant changes in terms of who supervises and runs its nuclear weapons and missile development complex and what they actually research, develop, and manufacture. Its leadership became much younger. They are now more focused on the production of advanced strategic arms rather than traditional conventional weapons. The long-time chief supervisor of the North’s military industrial complex Chon Pyong Ho, 88, the then party secretary for munitions industry (1986/12 – 2010/09), passed away on July 7, 2014. His long-serving deputies – Paek Se-bong, 76, who served as Chairman of DPRK Second Economic Committee from 2003 for a decade, and Chu Kyu Chang, 81, who served as the first deputy director of WPK CC Machine Industry Department from April 2001 to September 2010 and then as its director – finally retired in 2013 and 2014, respectively. They were replaced by a new generation of the military industry administrators with technical expertise, who came from the industrial engineering and research and development backgrounds. Jo Chun Ryong, a former director of a munitions factory in his 50s, was appointed as Chairman of DPRK Second Economic Committee in early 2014 and elected as NDC Member at the First Session of the 13th SPA held on April 9, 2014. Choe Chun Sik, the rumored head of North Korean space program and organizer of military research and development, was appointed as President of DPRK Second Academy of Natural Sciences in 2012 and given the military rank of Lt.-General in 2013. Former chief engineer of Yongbyon’s 5 MWt experimental nuclear reactor Hong Sung Mu, former party secretary of Songjin Steel Complex Kang Kwan Il, and former party secretary of Unsan Tools Plant Hong Yong Chil were appointed as vice-directors of WPK CC Machine Industry Department responsible respectively for the nuclear weapons complex, missile development, and conventional armaments. Following the restructuring of the General Bureau for Atomic Energy into the Ministry of Nuclear Power Industry as part of the March 2013 WPK CC decision to expand the nuclear industry, its head Ri Je Son was appointed as the inaugural Minister of Atomic Industry. Ri’s appointment did not surprise anyone since he has been the chief administrator of the DPRK’s nuclear complex for almost two decades. NDC Member Pak To Chun, 70, still stays on the job as party secretary for munitions industry, providing party policy guidance and political oversight to the new team. In accordance with Kim Jong Un’s strategic priorities, North Korea’s munitions industry appears to be shifting its focus from expanding and modernizing conventional military capabilities, developing short and medium-range ballistic missiles, and selling arms to foreign buyers to the development and production of nuclear weapons, long-range missile delivery systems, cyber weapons, and various asymmetrical warfare capabilities. This change in production requirements was amplified when, in March 2013, the North Korean government adopted the “Pyongjin line” of parallel economic construction and nuclear armament as the foundation for the country’s long-term national security strategy. Some Western observers believe that this new emphasis on priority build-up of strategic arms was facilitated by the reorganization of the WPK CC Munitions Department into Machine Industry Department, which was probably intended to reinforce the party guidance and supervision over all WMD and space-related
activities, previously spread across a number of quasi-independent agencies. According to the Rodong Sinmun’s expert article titled “Making Nuclear Weapons Smaller, Lighter, More Diversified, and More Precise,” published on 21 May 2013, the main directions of the nuclear weapons development in the North include: miniaturization of nuclear devices, making them lighter, diversification of the types of nuclear weapons, and making nuclear weapons more precise. In his address to the WPK CC Plenary Meeting held on 31 March 2013, Kim Jong Un set forth the requirement to “build more precise and miniaturized nuclear weapons, to produce many more types of nuclear weapons delivery vehicles, to constantly develop nuclear weapons technology, and to develop more powerful and sophisticated nuclear weapons.” According to Rodong Sinmun, the main imperatives facing the nuclear weapons developers in the North are to increase the credibility of North Korea’s nuclear force and to expand the leadership’s options for more flexible response. In addition, they are faced with two auxiliary objectives: to overcome economic and technical constraints and to save money for other national projects. North Korean nuclear experts define miniaturization as “manufacturing a nuclear weapon with the explosive power under 15 kiloton.” The North Korean scientists measure nuclear bombs that range from 1,000 tons to 1 million tons in TNT equivalent in kilotons and those above 1 million tons in megatons. They classify nuclear bombs under 1kt as super miniaturized, from 1 to 15 kiloton as miniaturized, from 15 to 100 kt as mid-size nuclear bombs, those from 100 kt to 1 Mt as large-size nuclear bombs, and those above 1 Mt as super-large size nuclear bombs. They claim that the miniaturization of nuclear weapons has two aims: to allow the pursuit of a broader variety of political and military objectives in the nuclear weapons use; and to raise the economic effectiveness of the nuclear weapons production. On the one hand, they assert that the greater the explosive power of nuclear weapons, the harder it is to use them: so, it does not necessarily equate with the good thing. For instance, they assert that in the multidimensional modern warfare where the well-defined and hardened lines between the front and rear, and friendly and enemy forces are virtually absent, for all practical purposes, it is difficult to use the nuclear weapons with great explosive power. On the other hand, they believe that the miniaturization of nuclear weapons may allow to overcome serious economic constraints. For instance, if a country manufactures an atomic bomb with only 5 kilograms of uranium or plutonium instead of 50 kg, then the cost of per-unit production is equal to one-tenth, and they can produce ten bombs instead of one. Making nuclear weapons lighter refers to the reduction in the overall weight of the nuclear bomb by improving the bomb design and reducing the weight of the outer shell of the atomic bomb. They claim that the weight of the outer shell of the atomic bomb is considerably heavy, which makes its handling and practical use very difficult (adverse). Hence, the North Korean scientists experiment with various metallurgical technologies to reduce the weight of the outer shell and make the nuclear weapons lighter. The North Korean nuclear experts define diversification of nuclear weapons as the “manufacturing of various types of nuclear weapons with the aim of successful attainment of a wide range of military objectives.” The North Koreans believe that the more diversified nuclear weapons are the more political and military objectives policymakers can successfully pursue. The North Korean military planners use several taxonomies to classify nuclear weapons. They are based on the type of the nuclear chain reaction, their destructive power and firing range, where the atomic
explosion takes place, as well as the form and intended use of the nuclear device. First, they classify all nuclear weapons into atomic bombs, hydrogen bombs, and neutron bombs, depending on the type of the nuclear core reaction. Second, they classify nuclear weapons into strategic weapons, tactical nuclear weapons, and battlefield nuclear weapons, depending on their destructive power and firing range. **Strategic nuclear weapons** are made of a nuclear bomb and a delivery system designed to strike the opponent’s large cities, industrial centers, and such strategic targets as central command and nuclear weapons groupings. They are fired by ICBMs, strategic bombers, and nuclear submarines carrying ballistic missiles. **Tactical nuclear weapons** are made of a nuclear bomb and a delivery system designed for striking the enemy forces and fire power, tanks, battleships, and command posts located at the front or in the operational-tactical concentration areas. Their delivery vehicles include tactical missiles, nuclear artillery shells, fighter bombers, and homing torpedoes. **Battlefield nuclear weapons** refer to the nuclear weapons fired with the medium-range delivery systems to strike any target on the tactical battlefront. Third, depending on where the atomic explosion takes place, the nuclear weapons are classified into the air, land, underground, above water, and underwater nuclear weapons. On October 25, 2014, the National Defense Commission issued a statement pronouncing that “The DPRK never hides the fact that the declaration of the most powerful new counter-action of its own style is based on a powerful nuclear force built in every way and various ultramodern striking means deployed in the ground, sea, underwater and air.” The KCNA commentary repeated the threat on 14 November 2014 that “the DPRK’s declaration of the strongest new counter-action of its own style will be backed by the fully prepared powerful nuclear force and different type latest strike means operating on the ground and in the seas, under water and in the air.” Fourth, depending on the form and intended use of the nuclear device, the nuclear weapons are classified into nuclear warhead, nuclear bomb, nuclear artillery shell, nuclear homing torpedo, nuclear mines. The requirement of making nuclear weapons more precise has two aims: it refers to the need to calibrate and conduct nuclear explosions with greater precision, and it refers to the task of improving the navigation and guidance so that the nuclear weapon can hit the intended target with maximum precision. On the one hand, the North Korean nuclear experts recognize the need to increase the utility rate of the nuclear explosion from the current 10 percent, in order to reduce the waste and save fissile material. They assess their current level of precision to that of the U.S. nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima. On the other hand, it is an important requirement to improve the navigation and guidance systems to ensure a greater precision of nuclear strikes and guarantee precise hits against the intended targets. The North Koreans understand that regardless of how powerful the nuclear weapon may be, it will be of no use if it misses its target. All in all, the North Korean nuclear weapons establishment strives hard to advance the miniaturization, light-weighting, diversification, and precision of nuclear weapons. The escalation of nuclear tensions on the Korean peninsula in March-April 2013 lifted the veil a little bit over the North Korean thinking about some critical issues concerning the wartime employment of nuclear weapons, including the purposes of nuclear weapons use in wartime, the nuclear weapons chain of command, the possible targets for North Korean nuclear strikes, as well as the self-imposed constraints the North Korean policymakers may face during wartime. The North Korean military thinkers identified two purposes of the nuclear weapons use in
wartime: to repel invasion or attack from a hostile nuclear weapons state, i.e. the United States, on its own territory and to make retaliatory strikes against the enemy’s soil. It appears that Kim Jong Un preserves the right to the first nuclear strike, but it is unclear under what circumstances, according to his remarks at the WPK CC Plenary Meeting held on 29 March 2013. One of the circumstances Kim Jong Un alluded to in his March speech was the notion of “imminent threat.” He allegedly said “the United States was testing my self-control and getting on my nerves (in March 2013), but there was no limit to the psychological pressure I could withstand” because “the U.S. threat was not imminent.” During the nuclear crisis in spring 2013, the DPRK official media alluded to the fact that the North Korean government has already developed a set of standard operating procedures for the authorization of the employment of nuclear weapons in wartime. According to Rodong Sinmun, “the nuclear weapons of the DPRK can be used only by a final order of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army.” The key military officials to be involved in the final decision-making process appear to be Chief of KPA General Staff Department, Director of the KPA General Staff Operations Bureau, Director of General Reconnaissance Bureau, and Commander of Strategic Rocket Forces. Numerous official statements by various representatives of the DPRK government allow us to compose a tentative list of publicly declared targets for the DPRK nuclear strikes. These include: 1. U.S. military bases in South Korea; 2. U.S. military bases in the Asia-Pacific operational theater; 3. U.S. military bases in Guam; 4. U.S. military bases in Hawaii; 5. U.S. military bases in the U.S. mainland (as indicated in the notorious map of the alleged KPA targets on the U.S. mainland). On October 25, 2014, the National Defense Commission issued a statement declaring that “The revolutionary armed forces of the DPRK had already declared before the world that an operational plan for striking all the bases of the U.S. imperialist aggressor forces in the Pacific targeting the DPRK and the main cities of the U.S. mainland where war maniacs are stationed was ratified.” Several characteristics of the above target list are worth mentioning. First, all potential targets are of the U.S. origin, which lends credence to the DPRK public assertion that its nuclear weapons target only the nuclear weapons states threatening the DPRK. Second, the above list does not include any South Korean targets, except U.S. military bases in the South, thereby sending an unambiguous message to Seoul that the North does not plan to employ nuclear weapons against its compatriots in the South, whether they are military or civilian. Third, although some of the targets are clearly located in Japan, the North Koreans never mention Japan by name, making only veiled references to their neighbor, probably because of their sensitivity about Japan’s tragic past experience with the nuclear war. Furthermore, this tentative target list lends credence to the argument that North Korea may have opted to pursue a counterforce strategy that targets the key military bases of its main adversary in Korea, in the Asia-Pacific, and on its home land (when Pyongyang acquires a credible ICBM capability). This assessment puts in question the earlier conclusion drawn by Terence Roehrig that Pyongyang will likely opt for a countervalue strategy that targets South Korean, Japanese, and U.S. cities and their populations. If we take at face value the declared target list, then we can speculate that, despite the objective economic difficulties, in the long run, the North Korean regime may be contemplating to build the nuclear force much larger than some Western analysts assume. The Kim regime wants to build the nuclear force capable of delivering the first strike in order to disarm an adversary through a counterforce strategy. Generally speaking, this nuclear
posture embodies the traditional “Spirit of the Offensive” prevailing in the North Korean military doctrine under Kim Jong Un. North Korea’s decision to field mobile land-based missile launch platforms, construction of a major ICMB launch facility near the border with China, and its interest in the development and deployment of an operational submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) force suggest that Pyongyang wants to increase the survivability of its nuclear forces and acquire the second strike capability that will ensure that at least some of its nuclear units will survive the preemptive attack in order to retaliate. In the future, this may impact the nuclear command and control system and complicate the nuclear weapons use authorization procedures because the KPA Supreme Commander will have to entrust the captain of a submarine or a commander of a road-mobile missile unit with the authority to launch an operational nuclear-armed missile at the time of crisis when they will most likely be cut off from the national leadership. That said, North Korea does not have an operational second strike capability today. Hence, Kim Jong Un insists that “the KPA must blow up and reduce everything to ashes at a single nuclear strike.” It is not bravado or hubris. It is a reflection of his recognition of the harsh reality that his nuclear force will have no second chance: the KPA will either use all its nukes at once or lose them all on the spot in any confrontation with the United States. In theory, the North Korean military doctrine identifies an important constraint on the wartime nuclear weapons use: it says “the DPRK shall neither use nukes against the non-nuclear states nor threaten them with those weapons.” But, it makes an exception for those states that “join a hostile nuclear weapons state in its invasion and attack on the DPRK,” which is a veiled reference to the U.S. allies – ROK and Japan. It is noteworthy that the North Korean military doctrine based on the concepts of preemption and total all-out war implies that the Korean People’s Army not only will use nuclear weapons in a retaliatory strike, but it is also ready to take the lead and use the nuclear weapons first to counter the imminent threat of U.S.-ROK conventional invasion. If the North Korean leadership decides that the enemies’ conventional attack is imminent, it is unlikely to split hairs and deliberate long whether it is a limited action aimed at punishing for some earlier provocation or a precursor to regime change. Pyongyang will likely assume the worst and rush to use the nuclear weapons out of fear of losing them to the allied preemption in the early hours of hostilities. The North Korean government is on the record of threatening to preempt the allied preemption if a military crisis erupts on the Korean peninsula. As part of its strategic communications campaign aimed at securing the international recognition for its nuclear weapons status, the DPRK government seeks to project an image of the responsible nuclear power that understands its obligation to ensure the physical safety and security of its nuclear weapons arsenal. The DPRK Law “On Consolidating the Position of Nuclear Weapons State for Self-Defense” stipulates that “the DPRK shall strictly observe the rules on safekeeping and management of nukes and ensuring the stability of nuclear tests.” It also stipulates that “The DPRK shall establish a mechanism and order for their safekeeping and management so that nukes, their technology, and weapon-grade nuclear substance may not leak out illegally.” Lastly, to assuage international fears, the DPRK government stated publicly that it would cooperate in the international efforts for nuclear non-proliferation and safe management of nuclear substance on the principle of mutual respect and equality. The caveat is that such cooperation will “depend on the improvement of relations with hostile nuclear weapons states.” This
means that if the DPRK-U.S. relations improve, Pyongyang leaves the door open for discussions about its possible participation in the international efforts to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The DPRK government has stated recently that it is willing to return to the nuclear negotiation table without any preconditions. However, careful study of its emerging nuclear doctrine leaves no doubt that North Korea will not relinquish its nuclear weapons even for a meaningful package of credible incentives. Kim Jong Un stated that “our nuclear arsenal is not a bargaining chip and cannot be negotiated away, regardless of the price.” The WPK CC Plenary Meeting held on 31 March 2013, reiterated that “The nuclear weapons of Songun Korea are not goods for getting the U.S. dollars and they are neither a political bargaining chip nor a thing for economic dealings to be presented to the place of dialogue or be put on the table of negotiations aimed at forcing the DPRK to disarm itself.” According to the DPRK’s authoritative pronouncements, in the future, Pyongyang may contemplate peaceful denuclearization on the Korean peninsula only when two preconditions are met: The “U.S. hostile policy” is terminated, as evidenced by the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea, lifting of all sanctions and embargoes, and normalization of bilateral relations. According to the MOFA spokesman statement on 4 October 2014, “The nuclear deterrence of Songun Korea can never be given up and bartered for anything unless the U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat are fundamentally terminated.” According to the MOFA spokesman statement on 4 October 2014, in the past, the DPRK agreed to work for the denuclearization of the peninsula because the U.S. expressed its will to respect the DPRK’s sovereignty, stop the nuclear threat against it and coexist in peace. But now, the discussion of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula will be meaningless as the U.S. is set to bring down the DPRK’s state system at any cost. “Global nuclear disarmament is achieved,” as evidenced by “the abolition of nuclear weapons worldwide.” Since neither of the two preconditions are likely to be met, the international community should be ready either to compel the North’s nuclear disarmament or to live with a nuclear North Korea in the foreseeable future. In the meantime, it is important to continue to probe Kim Jong Un’s nuclear intentions, to prod Pyongyang to be more transparent with respect to its nuclear doctrine and plans, and to try to negotiate some caps on North Korea’s growing nuclear capabilities, while devising a mutually acceptable formula for the DPRK’s return to the Non-proliferation Treaty and international nuclear safeguards and inspections, encouraging the DPRK government to reaffirm its “no first use” commitment, and deterring Pyongyang from nuclear provocations in crisis situations. (Alexandre Y. Mansourov, “Kim JongUn’s Nuclear Doctrine and Strategy: What Everyone Needs to Know,” Nautilus Institute, December 16, 2014)
funds to the anti-DPRK "human rights" organizations and the U.S. Congress adopted a "bill" calling on the administrator of the U.S. State Intelligence Agency and the U.S. secretary of State to spy on the internal affairs of the DPRK and gather information critical of it, becoming all the more undisguised in their moves to escalate confrontation with the latter over "human rights." Such moves go to prove that the U.S. is regarding the "human rights" racket against the DPRK as a lever for bringing down its ideology and social system, politicizing it and stepping up it in a premeditated manner. These actions mean that the U.S. reneged on the September 19 joint statement of the six-party talks which calls for respect for sovereignty and peaceful coexistence between the DPRK and the U.S. Now that the U.S. is leaving no means untried to bring down the social system of the DPRK, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will completely lose its meaning. The DPRK agreed on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula not to allow the U.S. to swallow it up but to have the nuclear threat of the U.S. to the DPRK defused and peace and security on the peninsula ensured. Now that the confrontation between the DPRK and the U.S. over human rights is high on the agenda, any dialogue on the nuclear issue is meaningless. The U.S. is talking this or that about the release of Americans who had been detained in the DPRK. But the release was nothing but a cleaning work done by it to start confrontation with the U.S. over human rights, not to want dialogue with it. In fact, the DPRK has more things to talk over human rights than the U.S. It is the U.S. that is finding itself in a tight corner due to the disclosure of brutal tortures practiced by the CIA and the scandals of racial discrimination perpetrated by white policemen. It is again the U.S. and its lackeys who suffered shame while floating wild rumors about youngsters of the DPRK who returned home after being abducted by flesh traffickers. This time U.S. Secretary of State Kerry made such disgusting gesture as openly praising a swindler, defector from the north, whom he has used for the anti-DPRK "human rights" racket. This clearly proved that he is going reckless, keen on moves hostile to the DPRK. Former U.S. Secretary of State Powell was taken in by lies told by the CIA engrossed in gathering intelligence and inventing pretexts through tortures. But today Kerry is behaving like a fool, believing in the lies told by a "defector from the north." The DPRK has already sent a video clip disclosing the true colors of the above-said swindler to Kerry through a relevant channel. Washington’s policy aimed to topple the social system of the DPRK over its "human rights issue" is no more than a daydream. The U.S. will have to experience the toughest counteraction of the DPRK against its hostile policy towards the DPRK and be held wholly accountable for the derailing of the denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula." (KCNA, “U.S. Will Face DPRK’s Toughest Counteraction: Spokesman for DPRK FM,” December 15, 2014)

American officials have concluded that North Korea was “centrally involved” in the hacking of Sony Pictures computers, even as the studio canceled the release of a far-fetched comedy about the assassination of the North’s leader that is believed to have led to the cyberattack. Senior administration officials, who would not speak on the record about the intelligence findings, said the White House was debating whether to publicly accuse North Korea of what amounts to a cyberterrorism attack. Sony capitulated after the hackers threatened additional attacks, perhaps on theaters themselves, if the movie, “The Interview,” was released. Officials said it was not clear
how the White House would respond. Some within the Obama administration argue that the government of Kim Jong-un must be confronted directly. But that raises questions of what actions the administration could credibly threaten, or how much evidence to make public without revealing details of how it determined North Korea’s culpability, including the possible penetration of the North’s computer networks. Other administration officials said a direct confrontation with the North would provide North Korea with the kind of dispute it covets. Japan, where Sony is an iconic corporate name, has argued that a public accusation could interfere with delicate diplomatic negotiations for the return of Japanese citizens kidnapped years ago. The government is “considering a range of options in weighing a potential response,” said Bernadette Meehan, a spokeswoman for the National Security Council. The administration’s sudden urgency came after a new threat was delivered this week to desktop computers at Sony’s offices, warning that if “The Interview” was released on December 25, “the world will be full of fear.” “Remember the 11th of September 2001,” it said. “We recommend you to keep yourself distant from the places at that time.” Hours before Sony canceled the movie, the four largest theater chains in the United States – Regal Entertainment, AMC Entertainment, Cinemark and Carmike Cinemas – and several smaller chains said they would not show “The Interview” as a result of the threat. The cancellations virtually killed the movie as a theatrical enterprise, at least in the near term, one of the first known instances of a threat from another nation preempting the release of a movie. While intelligence officials have concluded that the cyberattack was both state-sponsored and far more destructive than any seen before on American soil, there are still differences of opinion over whether North Korea was aided by Sony insiders with knowledge of the company’s computer systems, senior administration officials said. “This is of a different nature than past attacks,” one official said. An attack that began by wiping out data on corporate computers – something that had been previously seen in South Korea and Saudi Arabia – had turned “into a threat to the safety of Americans,” the official said. But echoing a statement from the Department of Homeland Security, the official said there was no specific information that an attack was likely. It is not clear how the United States determined that Kim’s government had played a central role in the Sony attacks. North Korea’s computer network has been notoriously difficult to infiltrate. But the National Security Agency began a major effort four years ago to penetrate the country’s computer operations, including its elite cyberteam, and to establish “implants” in the country’s networks that, like a radar system, would monitor the development of malware transmitted from the country. It is hardly a foolproof system. Much of North Korea’s hacking is done from China. And while the attack on Sony used some commonly available cybertools, one intelligence official said, “this was of a sophistication that a year ago we would have said was beyond the North’s capabilities.” It is rare for the United States to publicly accuse countries suspected of involvement in cyberintrusions. The administration never publicly said who attacked White House and State Department computers over the past two months, or JPMorgan Chase’s systems last summer. Russia is suspected in the first two cases, but there is conflicting evidence in the JPMorgan case. But there is a long forensic trail involving the Sony hacking, several security researchers said. The attackers used readily available commercial tools to wipe data off Sony’s machines. They also borrowed tools and techniques that had been used in at least two previous attacks, one in Saudi Arabia two years ago – widely attributed to Iran – and another
last year in South Korea aimed at banks and media companies. The Sony attacks were routed from command-and-control centers across the world, including a convention center in Singapore and Thammasat University in Thailand, the researchers said. But one of those servers, in Bolivia, had been used in limited cyberattacks on South Korean targets two years ago. That suggested that the same group or individuals might have been behind the Sony attack. The Sony malware shares remarkable similarities with that used in attacks on South Korean banks and broadcasters last year. Those intrusions, which also destroyed data belonging to their victims, are believed to have been the work of a cybercriminal gang known as Dark Seoul. Some experts say they cannot rule out the possibility that the Sony attack was the work of a Dark Seoul copycat, the security researchers said. The Sony attack also borrowed a wiping tool from an attack two years ago at Saudi Aramco, the national oil company, where hackers wiped off data on 30,000 of the company’s computers, replacing it with an image of a burning American flag. Security experts were never able to track down those hackers, though United States officials have long said they believed the attacks emanated from Iran, using tools that are now on the black market. At Sony, investigators are looking into the possibility that the attackers had inside help. Embedded in the malicious code were the names of Sony servers and administrative credentials that allowed the malware to spread across Sony’s network. “It’s clear that they already had access to Sony’s network before the attack,” said Jaime Blasco, a researcher at AlienVault, a cybersecurity consulting firm. What is remarkable in this case is that after three weeks of pressure, the attack forced one of Hollywood’s largest studios and Japan’s most famous companies to surrender. Many attacks have been aimed at stealing credit card data, like the intrusions on the Home Depot and Target networks – and others at disrupting ATMs. An American and Israeli attack known as Olympic Games that targeted Iran’s nuclear program was a rare attack on infrastructure. Sony has tried to put the best face on the situation, saying it understood that movie theaters had to be worried about the safety of their customers. But the precedent set Wednesday could be damaging. Other countries or hacking groups could try similar tactics over movies, books or television broadcasts that they find offensive. The cost of the assault was small: The attackers used readily available tools to steal data and then wipe it off Sony’s machines. Representative Mike Rogers, the Michigan Republican who leads the House Intelligence Committee, said the hackers had “created a backdoor to Sony’s systems” that they repeatedly re-entered to send threatening messages to Sony employees. The North Koreans have half-denied involvement, but have left open the possibility that the attacks were the “righteous deed of supporters and sympathizers.” But that leaves open the question of what to do about the Sony attack. The North is under some of the heaviest economic sanctions ever applied. A large-scale American cyberattack would require a presidential order, and Mr. Obama has been hesitant to use the country’s cyberarsenal for fear of retaliation. (David E. Sanger and Nicole Perlroth, “U.S. Is Said to Find North Korea Behind Cyberattack on Sony,” New York Times, December 18, 2014, p. A-1) Today Sony canceled the premiere of “The Interview” and its entire Christmas-Day release of the movie because of fears that terrorists might attack theaters showing the film. The actions show just how much power the attackers behind the Sony hack have amassed in a short time. But who exactly are they? The New York Times reported this evening that North Korea is “centrally involved” in the hack, citing unnamed U.S. intelligence
officials. It's unclear from the *Times* report what “centrally involved” means and whether the intelligence officials are saying the hackers were state-sponsored or actually agents of the state. The *Times* also notes that “It is not clear how the United States came to its determination that the North Korean regime played a central role in the Sony attacks.” The public evidence pointing at the Hermit Kingdom is flimsy. Other theories of attribution focus on hacktivists—motivated by ideology, politics or something else—or disgruntled insiders who stole the data on their own or assisted outsiders in gaining access to it. Recently, the finger has pointed at China. In the service of unraveling the attribution mess, we examined the known evidence for and against North Korea. First off, we have to say that attribution in breaches is difficult. Assertions about who is behind any attack should be treated with a hefty dose of skepticism. Skilled hackers use proxy machines and false IP addresses to cover their tracks or plant false clues inside their malware to throw investigators off their trail. When hackers are identified and apprehended, it’s generally because they’ve made mistakes or because a cohort got arrested and turned informant. Nation-state attacks often can be distinguished by their level of sophistication and modus operandi, but attribution is no less difficult. It’s easy for attackers to plant false flags that point to North Korea or another nation as the culprit. And even when an attack appears to be nation-state, it can be difficult to know if the hackers are mercenaries acting alone or with state sponsorship—some hackers work freelance and get paid by a state only when they get access to an important system or useful intelligence; others work directly for a state or military. Then there are hacktivists, who can be confused with state actors because their geopolitical interests and motives jibe with a state’s interests. Distinguishing between all of these can be impossible unless you’re an intelligence agency like the NSA, with vast reach into computers around the world, and can uncover evidence about attribution in ways that law enforcement agents legally cannot. So let’s look at what’s known. First of all, Sony and the FBI have announced that they’ve found no evidence so far to tie North Korea to the attack. New reports, however, indicate that intelligence officials who are not permitted to speak on the record have concluded that the North Koreans are behind the hack. But they have provided no evidence to support this and without knowing even what agency the officials belong to, it’s difficult to know what to make of the claim. And we should point out that intelligence agencies and government officials have jumped to hasty conclusions or misled the public in the past because it was politically expedient. Nation-state attacks aren’t generally as noisy, or announce themselves with an image of a blazing skeleton posted to infected computers, as occurred in the Sony hack. Nor do they use a catchy nom-de-hack like Guardians of Peace to identify themselves. Nation-state attackers also generally don’t chastise their victims for having poor security, as purported members of GOP have done in media interviews. Nor do such attacks involve posts of stolen data to Pastebin—the unofficial cloud repository of hackers—where sensitive company files belonging to Sony have been leaked. These are all hallmarks of hacktivists—groups like Anonymous and LulzSec, who thrive on targeting large corporations for ideological reasons or just the lulz, or by hackers sympathetic to a political cause. Despite all of this, media outlets won’t let the North Korea narrative go and don’t seem to want to consider other options. If there’s anything years of *Law and Order* reruns should tell us, it’s that focusing on a single suspect can lead to exclusionary bias where clues that contradict the favored theory get ignored. Initial and
hasty media reports about the attackers pointed to cyberwarriors from North Korea, bent on seeking revenge for the Sony movie The Interview. This was based on a complaint North Korea made to the United Nations last July about the Seth Rogen and James Franco flick, which was originally slated to be released in October before being changed to Christmas Day. North Korea’s UN ambassador said the comedy, about a TV host and his producer who get embroiled in an ill-conceived CIA plot to assassinate North Korean President Kim Jong-un, was an act of war that promoted terrorism against North Korea. “To allow the production and distribution of such a film on the assassination of an incumbent head of a sovereign state should be regarded as the most undisguised sponsoring of terrorism as well as an act of war,” UN ambassador Ja Song Nam wrote the UN secretary general in a letter. “The United States authorities should take immediate and appropriate actions to ban the production and distribution of the aforementioned film; otherwise, it will be fully responsible for encouraging and sponsoring terrorism.” In other statements, North Korea threatened a “resolute and merciless” response if the U.S. didn’t ban the film. But in their initial public statement, whoever hacked Sony made no mention of North Korea or the film.

And in an email sent to Sony by the hackers, found in documents they leaked, there is also no mention of North Korea or the film. The email was sent to Sony executives on Nov. 21, a few days before the hack went public. Addressed to Sony Pictures CEO Michael Lynton, Chairwoman Amy Pascal and other executives, it appears to be an attempt at extortion, not an expression of political outrage or a threat of war. “[M]onetary compensation we want,” the email read. “Pay the damage, or Sony Pictures will be bombarded as a whole. You know us very well. We never wait long. You’d better behave wisely.” To make matters confusing, however, the email wasn’t signed by GOP or Guardians of Peace, who have taken credit for the hack, but by “God’sApslts,” a reference that also appeared in one of the malicious files used in the Sony hack. A person purporting to be a Guardians of Peace spokesperson then emphasized again, in an interview with CSO Online published Dec. 1, that they are “an international organization … not under direction of any state.” The GOP’s members include, they wrote, “famous figures in the politics and society from several nations such as United States, United Kingdom and France.” The person also said the Seth Rogen film was not the motive for the hack, but that the film was problematic nonetheless in that it exemplified Sony’s greed and fed political turmoil in the region: “Our aim is not at the film The Interview as Sony Pictures suggests,” the person told CSO Online. “But it is widely reported as if our activity is related to The Interview. This shows how dangerous film The Interview is. The Interview is very dangerous enough to cause a massive hack attack. Sony Pictures produced the film harming the regional peace and security and violating human rights for money. The news with The Interview fully acquaints us with the crimes of Sony Pictures. Like this, their activity is contrary to our philosophy. We struggle to fight against such greed of Sony Pictures.” It was only on December 8, after a week of media stories connecting North Korea and the Sony film to the hack, that the attackers made their first reference to the film in one of their public announcements. But they continued to trounce the theory that North Korea was behind their actions, and they denied ownership of an email sent to Sony staffers after the hack, threatening them and their families with harm if they didn’t denounce their employer. At this point, it’s quite possible the media are guilty of inspiring the hacker’s narrative, since it was only after news reports tying the attack to the Sony film that GOP
began condemning the movie in public statements. This week the hackers have pounced on that narrative, using it to escalate the stakes by making oblique terrorist threats against the film’s New York premiere and theaters scheduled to screen it Christmas day. **Even if members of GOP lack the means or intent to pull off a terrorist attack on their own, they’ve now created an open invitation for opportunistic attackers to do so in their name—in essence, escalating their crimes and influence to a level no other hackers have achieved to date.** So why do some people continue to claim that North Korea is the culprit? There are two forensic discoveries that fuel this assertion, but they are flimsy. Four files that researchers have examined, which appear to be connected to the hack, seem to have been compiled on a machine that was using the Korean language. This refers to the encoding language on a computer; computer users can configure the encoding language so that content on their machine renders in a language they speak. But an attacker can set the language on a compilation machine to any language they want and, researchers note, can even manipulate information about the encoded language after a file is compiled to throw investigators off. The Sony attackers didn’t just siphon data from the studio’s networks, they also used a wiper component to destroy data. To do the wiping, they used a driver from a commercially-available product that had been used by other attackers before. The product, called RawDisk, uses drivers that allow administrators to securely delete data from hard drives or for forensic purposes to access memory. The same product was used in similarly destructive attacks that hit Saudi Arabia and South Korea. Since some people have claimed those were both nation-state attacks—U.S. officials blamed Iran for the Saudi Arabia attack; South Korea blamed China and North Korea for its attack—people assume the Sony hack is also a nation-state attack. But the evidence pointing to those other attacks as nation-state attacks is also flimsy. The 2012 attack in Saudi Arabia, dubbed Shamoon, wiped data from about 30,000 computers belonging to Saudi Aramco, the state-owned oil conglomerate. Although U.S. officials blamed Iran for it, researchers found that malware used in the attack contained sloppy code riddled with errors and attributed it to hacktivists with political motives rather than a nation-state. The malware displayed part of an image of a burning U.S. flag on infected machines before they were wiped. What’s more, a group calling itself the Cutting Sword of Justice took credit for the hack. “This is a warning to the tyrants of this country and other countries that support such criminal disasters with injustice and oppression,” they wrote in a Pastebin post. “We invite all anti-tyranny hacker groups all over the world to join this movement. We want them to support this movement by designing and performing such operations, if they are against tyranny and oppression.” That sounds like a call to recruit other like-minded activists who might also be opposed to, say, a “criminal” company like Sony. Last year, a similarly destructive attack, dubbed Dark Seoul by researchers, struck computers at banks and media companies in South Korea. The attack used a logic bomb, set to go off at a specific time, that wiped computers in a coordinated fashion. The attack wiped the hard drives and master boot records of computers at three banks and two media companies simultaneously, reportedly putting some ATMs out of operation and preventing South Koreans from withdrawing cash from them. As with the Sony and Saudi Aramco hacks, the attackers used a RawDisk driver for their attack. They also left an image of a skull on the web site of the South Korean president’s office. And an IP address used for one of the attackers’ command-and-control servers matches an IP
address the Sony hackers used for one of their command servers. South Korea alternately blamed North Korea for the attack as well as China—since an IP address in China appeared to be part of the campaign. Officials later retracted the allegations. The same group behind this attack are said to be behind other attacks in South Korea that occurred on the anniversary of the Korean War. Regardless of whether the Sony, Saudi Aramco and South Korea attacks are related, the evidence indicating they're nation-state attacks is circumstantial. And all of the same evidence could easily point to hacktivists. Our money is on the latter. This is likely a group of various actors who coalesce and disperse, as the Anonymous hackers did, based on their common interests. But even with that said, there is another possibility with regard to the Sony hack: that the studio’s networks weren’t invaded by a single group but by many, some with political interests at heart and others bent on extortion. Therefore, we can’t rule out the possibility that nation-state attackers were also in Sony’s network or that a nation like North Korea was supportive of some of these hackers, since they shared similar anger over Sony. Another interesting scenario was recently posited by Deadline, suggesting that China may have initiated a breach at Sony during business negotiations with the studio last year, before handing off control to freelance hackers. (Kim Zetter, “The Evidence That North Korea Hacked Sony Is Flimsy,” Wired, December 17, 2014) The head of Sony Pictures consulted with a senior U.S. official in June, days after North Korea threatened "merciless countermeasures" over the release of an upcoming film featuring a plot to assassinate leader Kim Jong Un, leaked emails show. In an internal June 26 email seen by Reuters, Sony Pictures Entertainment Chairman and Chief Executive Michael Lynton said he told Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Daniel Russel the studio was "concerned for the safety of Americans and American and North Korean relations." U.S. officials have cast doubt on a threat against theaters planning to show the film, but police across the United States said they would take extra precautions. Sony executives told theaters the studio would not pull the comedy. However, top U.S. movie theater chains are delaying plans to show the film following threats by a hacking group that have waged a cyberattack on the Hollywood studio. "I explained that we wanted to act in a responsible fashion and that the film was designed to entertain and not to make a political statement," Lynton said, in the June 26 email to Sony General Counsel Nicole Seligman. "(Russel) said that the North Koreans were going to do whatever they were going to do with or without the film, though they may use it as an excuse (and) it would probably go on the list of complaints they have agains(t) the United States." Jen Psaki, spokeswoman for the U.S. State Department, confirmed Russel had met with Sony executives, but declined to speak about the leaked emails. "Department officials routinely meet and consult informally with a wide range of private groups, certainly including executives from movie studios and a range of private-sector companies and individuals seeking information about U.S. foreign policy and U.S. views on developments around the world," she said. "Our message in public and in private is the same: we respect artists' and an entertainer’s right to produce content of their choosing; we have no involvement in such decisions." Asked at a regular briefing whether Washington considered the movie’s content helpful or appropriate, Psaki replied: "It’s a fiction movie. It’s not a documentary about our relationship with North Korea. It’s not something we have backed, supported or necessarily have an opinion on.” Sony Pictures parent Sony Corp declined to comment on Lynton’s exchange with Russel.
Lynton’s mail said Russel planned to designate someone within the State Department to “coordinate” with Sony on the case and suggested Sony contact the North Korean mission at the United Nations to stress that the film was not intentionally disrespectful. 

“(Russel) explained that this was not an area the U.S. government would get involved in. It was our right as a private company to make and distribute the film,” Lynton said. 

“He felt very strongly that this would not result in a nuclear attack by the Koreans.”

(James Pearson, “Sony Pictures CEO Consulted U.S. State Department on Film, Leaked Emails Show,” Reuters, December 17, 2014)

The director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation has offered fresh details of the cyberattack on Sony Pictures as he defended the US claim that North Korea was responsible. Some internet security consultants have cast doubt on Pyongyang’s involvement in the data breach, but James Comey, the FBI director, said he had “high confidence” in the bureau’s conclusion and cited recently declassified material. Guardians of Peace, the group claiming credit for the attack, used proxy services to disguise their location when sending emails threatening Sony employees and posting statements online explaining their work, he said. But, he added, they got “sloppy.” “Several times either because they forgot or they had a technical problem they connected directly and we could see them. And we could see that the IP addresses that were being used to post and to send the emails were coming from IPs that were exclusively used by the North Koreans,” he said. His comments came in response to recent allegations by a private computer security firm that said the cyberattack, which revealed embarrassing emails, salary information about employees, and other sensitive information, was more likely to be an inside job. Sony’s chief executive called the attack “vicious.” Comey said the FBI was still looking to identify the “vector” of the attack but said “the likely vector for the entry into Sony” evolved from a spear phishing attempt on the company as late as last September. Spear phishing is a technique deployed by hackers who send emails posing as someone known to the recipient, seeking information such as passwords.

Comey was speaking at a cyber conference held by the FBI and Fordham University. Earlier in the day James Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence, called the Sony hack “the most serious cyber attack ever made against the US”. He said cyberattacks were a powerful new tool used by North Koreans to have maximum impact at little to no cost. “That’s why we have to push back,” he said. (Kara Scannel, “FBI Makes Case against N. Korea for Sony Hack,” Financial Times, January 8, 2015, p. 4)

The trail that led American officials to blame North Korea for the destructive cyberattack on Sony Pictures Entertainment in November winds back to 2010, when the National Security Agency scrambled to break into the computer systems of a country considered one of the most impenetrable targets on earth. Spurred by growing concern about North Korea’s maturing capabilities, the American spy agency drilled into the Chinese networks that connect North Korea to the outside world, picked through connections in Malaysia favored by North Korean hackers and penetrated directly into the North with the help of South Korea and other American allies, according to former United States and foreign officials, computer experts later briefed on the operations and a newly disclosed N.S.A. document. A classified security agency program expanded into an ambitious effort, officials said, to place malware that could track the internal workings of many of the computers and networks used by the North’s hackers, a force that South Korea’s military recently said numbers roughly 6,000 people. Most are commanded by the country’s main intelligence service, called the Reconnaissance
General Bureau, and Bureau 121, its secretive hacking unit, with a large outpost in China. The evidence gathered by the “early warning radar” of software painstakingly hidden to monitor North Korea’s activities proved critical in persuading President Obama to accuse the government of Kim Jong-un of ordering the Sony attack, according to the officials and experts, who spoke on the condition of anonymity about the classified N.S.A. operation. Obama’s decision to accuse North Korea of ordering the largest destructive attack against an American target – and to promise retaliation, which has begun in the form of new economic sanctions – was highly unusual: The United States had never explicitly charged another government with mounting a cyberattack on American targets. Obama is cautious in drawing stark conclusions from intelligence, aides say. But in this case “he had no doubt,” according to one senior American military official. “Attributing where attacks come from is incredibly difficult and slow,” said James A. Lewis, a cyberwarfare expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. “The speed and certainty with which the United States made its determinations about North Korea told you that something was different here – that they had some kind of inside view.” For about a decade, the United States has implanted “beacons,” which can map a computer network, along with surveillance software and occasionally even destructive malware in the computer systems of foreign adversaries. The government spends billions of dollars on the technology, which was crucial to the American and Israeli attacks on Iran’s nuclear program, and documents previously disclosed by Edward J. Snowden, the former security agency contractor, demonstrated how widely they have been deployed against China. But fearing the exposure of its methods in a country that remains a black hole for intelligence gathering, American officials have declined to talk publicly about the role the technology played in Washington’s assessment that the North Korean government had ordered the attack on Sony. The extensive American penetration of the North Korean system also raises questions about why the United States was not able to alert Sony as the attacks took shape last fall, even though the North had warned, as early as June, that the release of the movie “The Interview,” a crude comedy about a C.I.A. plot to assassinate the North’s leader, would be “an act of war.” The N.S.A.’s success in getting into North Korea’s systems in recent years should have allowed the agency to see the first “spear phishing” attacks on Sony – the use of emails that put malicious code into a computer system if an unknowing user clicks on a link – when the attacks began in early September, according to two American officials. But those attacks did not look unusual. Only in retrospect did investigators determine that the North had stolen the “credentials” of a Sony systems administrator, which allowed the hackers to roam freely inside Sony’s systems. In recent weeks, investigators have concluded that the hackers spent more than two months, from mid-September to mid-November, mapping Sony’s computer systems, identifying critical files and planning how to destroy computers and servers. “They were incredibly careful, and patient,” said one person briefed on the investigation. But he added that even with their view into the North’s activities, American intelligence agencies “couldn’t really understand the severity” of the destruction that was coming when the attacks began November 24. In fact, when, Gen. James R. Clapper Jr., the director of national intelligence, had an impromptu dinner in early November with his North Korean counterpart during a secret mission to Pyongyang to secure the release of two imprisoned Americans, he made no mention of Sony or the North’s growing hacking campaigns, officials say. In a
recent speech at Fordham University in New York, Clapper acknowledged that the commander of the Reconnaissance General Bureau, Kim Yong-chol, with whom he traded barbs over the 12-course dinner, was “later responsible for overseeing the attack against Sony.” (General Clapper praised the food; his hosts later presented him with a bill for his share of the meal.) Asked about General Clapper’s knowledge of the Sony attacks from the North when he attended the dinner, Brian P. Hale, a spokesman for the director of national intelligence, said that the director did not know he would meet his intelligence counterpart and that the purpose of his trip to North Korea “was solely to secure the release of the two detained U.S. citizens.” “Because of the sensitivities surrounding the effort” to win the Americans’ release, Hale said, “the D.N.I. was focused on the task and did not want to derail any progress by discussing other matters.” But he said General Clapper was acutely aware of the North’s growing capabilities. Jang Sae-yul, a former North Korean army programmer who defected in 2007, speaking in an interview in Seoul, said: “They have built up formidable hacking skills. They have spent almost 30 years getting ready, learning how to do this and this alone, how to target specific countries.” Still, the sophistication of the Sony hack was such that many experts say they are skeptical that North Korea was the culprit, or the lone culprit. They have suggested it was an insider, a disgruntled Sony ex-employee or an outside group cleverly mimicking North Korean hackers. Many remain unconvinced by the efforts of the F.B.I. director, James B. Comey, to answer critics by disclosing some of the American evidence. Comey told the same Fordham conference that the North Koreans got “sloppy” in hiding their tracks, and that hackers periodically “connected directly and we could see them.” “And we could see that the I.P. addresses that were being used to post and to send the emails were coming from I.P.s that were exclusively used by the North Koreans,” he said. Some of those addresses appear to be in China, experts say. The skeptics say, however, that it would not be that difficult for hackers who wanted to appear to be North Korean to fake their whereabouts. Comey said there was other evidence he could not discuss. So did Adm. Michael S. Rogers, the N.S.A. director, who told the Fordham conference that after reviewing the classified data he had “high confidence” the North had ordered the action. North Korea built its first computer with vacuum tubes in 1965, with engineers trained in France. For a brief time, it appeared ahead of South Korea and of China, which not only caught up but also came to build major elements of their economic success on their hardware and software. Defectors say that the Internet was first viewed by North Korea’s leadership as a threat, something that could taint its citizens with outside ideas. But Kim Heung-kwang, a defector who said in an interview that he helped train many of the North’s first cyberspies, recalled that in the early 1990s a group of North Korean computer experts came back from China with a “very strange new idea”: Use the Internet to steal secrets and attack the government’s enemies. “The Chinese are already doing it,” he quoted one of the experts as saying. Defectors report that the North Korean military was interested. So was the ruling Workers’ Party, which in 1994 sent 15 North Koreans to a military academy in Beijing to learn about hacking. When they returned, they formed the core of the External Information Intelligence Office, which hacked into websites, penetrated fire walls and stole information abroad. Because the North had so few connections to the outside world, the hackers did much of their work in China and Japan. According to Kim, the military began training computer “warriors” in earnest in 1996 and two years later opened Bureau 121, now
the primary cyberattack unit. Members were dispatched for two years of training in
China and Russia. Jang said they were envied, in part because of their freedom to
travel. “They used to come back with exotic foreign clothes and expensive electronics
like rice cookers and cameras,” he said. His friends told him that Bureau 121 was
divided into different groups, each targeting a specific country or region, especially
the United States, South Korea and the North’s one ally, China. “They spend those two
years not attacking, but just learning about their target country’s Internet,” said Jang,
46, who was a first lieutenant in a different army unit that wrote software for war game
simulations. Jang said that as time went on, the North began diverting high school
students with the best math skills into a handful of top universities, including a military
school specializing in computer-based warfare called Mirim University, which he
attended as a young army officer. Others were deployed to an “attack base” in the
northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang, where there are many North Korean-run hotels
and restaurants. Unlike the North’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs, the
cyberforces can be used to harass South Korea and the United States without risking a
devastating response. “Cyberwarfare is simply the modern chapter in North Korea’s
long history of asymmetrical warfare,” said a security research report in August by
Hewlett-Packard. When the Americans first gained access to the North Korean
networks and computers in 2010, their surveillance focused on the North’s nuclear
program and its leadership, as well as efforts to detect attacks aimed at United States
military forces in South Korea, said one former American official. (The German
magazine Der Spiegel published an N.S.A. document on Saturday that provides some
details of South Korea’s help in spying on the North.) Then a highly destructive attack
in 2013 on South Korean banks and media companies suggested that North Korea was
becoming a greater threat, and the focus shifted. “The big target was the hackers,” the
official said. That attack knocked out almost 50,000 computers and servers in South
Korea for several days at five banks and television broadcasters. The hackers were
patient, spending nine months probing the South Korean systems. But they also made
the mistake seen in the Sony hack, at one point revealing what South Korean analysts
believe to have been their true I.P. addresses. Lim Jong-in, dean of the Graduate
School of Information Security at Korea University, said those addresses were traced
back to Shenyang, and fell within a spectrum of I.P. addresses linked to North Korean
companies. The attack was studied by American intelligence agencies. But after the
North issued its warnings about Sony’s movie last June, American officials appear to
have made no reference to the risk in their discussions with Sony executives. Even
when the spear-phishing attacks began in September – against Sony and other targets
– “it didn’t set off alarm bells,” according to one person involved in the investigation.
The result is that American officials began to focus on North Korea only after the
destructive attacks began in November, when pictures of skulls and gruesome images
of Sony executives appeared on the screens of company employees. (That
propaganda move by the hackers may have worked to Sony’s benefit: Some
employees unplugged their computers immediately, saving some data from
destruction. It did not take long for American officials to conclude that the source of
the attack was North Korea, officials say. “Figuring out how to respond was a lot
harder,” one White House official said. ((David E. Sanger and Martin Fackler, “Tracking
Statistics Korea said that the North’s per capita GNI stood at W1.38 million in 2013, just 4.8 percent of South Korea’s W28.7 million (US$1=W1,088). The gap is even bigger than in 2012, when South Korea’s per capita GNI was 18.7 times the North’s. The North’s trade volume reached a paltry $7.3 billion, up $500 million on-year but still 146 times smaller than the South’s $1.07 trillion. The South produced 55 times as much steel and seven times as much cement as the North, which are major indicators of the mining and manufacturing industries. The South also has 12 times as much electricity generation capacity. There are 19.4 million registered cars in the South, more than 71 times the 271,900 in the North. Statistics Korea for the first time published North Korea’s import and export volumes. The North had $6.5 billion worth of trade with China, accounting for 89 percent of its total trade volume. This shows that the North’s reliance on China has deepened over the past decade. Until 2000, the North’s trade with China stood at a mere 24.7 percent of its trade volume. The North exported chiefly minerals (65 percent), clothes (17 percent), and fishery products (4 percent) to China, while importing petroleum (20 percent), machinery (7 percent), and electronic goods (7 percent) from it.

Cho Bong-hyun of the IBK Economic Research Institute said, “Seoul needs to help the North develop toward a market economy, because the more the economic gap widens between the two Koreas, the bigger the reunification cost will be.” (Chosun Ilbo, “Income Gap between North and South Grows,” December 17, 2014)

Kim Jong-un, in a rare move, has openly vowed to make active efforts to achieve the reunification of the Korean Peninsula, a former aide to late South Korean President Kim Dae-jung said Wednesday after a visit to the communist country. The North Korean leader made the pledge in a letter sent to Kim Dae-jung’s widow Lee Hee-ho who earlier had sent a wreath of flower across the border to mark the third anniversary on December 18 of the death of his late father, Kim Jong-il. Kim Sung-jae, who served as the culture minister under the Kim Dae-jung government from 1998-2003, led a six-member delegation from the non-profit Kim Dae Jung Peace Center on the one-day visit to the North’s border city of Kaesong. Kim Dae-jung is respected in North Korea for his "sunshine" policy of reconciling with the communist country. He held the first-ever inter-Korean summit with the then North Korean leader, Kim Jong-il, in 2000, for which he won the Nobel Peace Prize the same year. Kim Jong-il "had often reminded me of your devotion along with former President Kim Dae-jung to the people and national reunification," the young North Korean leader said in the letter dated December 18, 2014. "Following their lofty willingness for the unification and their lifetime feat, we will continue to strive actively to achieve the long-cherished dream of the unification down the road," said the young leader. In Kaesong, the visitors from South Korea met with Kim Yang-gon secretary of the Workers’ Party of (North) Korea, who also stressed his “sincere hope” for the improvement of the inter-Korean ties, according to delegation officials. “Secretary Kim Yang-gon said resolving small issues such as (the resumption of) the tour program to Mount Kumgang, (the lifting of) the May 24 sanctions, and the reunions of separated families could pave the way for greater strides,” the delegation chief said. “He said he really hope for the improvement of the inter-Korean relations.” (Oh Seok-min, “N. Korea Leader Vows Effort for Reunification,” Yonhap, December 24, 2014)
The U.N. General Assembly formally adopted a landmark resolution calling for referring North Korea to the International Criminal Court for human rights violations. Adoption has been widely expected since the resolution passed through the General Assembly’s Third Committee last month. A total of 116 nations voted for the resolution and 20 nations against it, with 53 abstentions. However, chances of an actual referral are slim because General Assembly resolutions, unlike U.N. Security Council resolutions, are not legally binding. The Security Council is expected to take up the issue as early as next week, but is unlikely to approve a referral as China and Russia are sure to veto it. (Korea Herald, “U.N. Adopts Resolution on N. Korea Human Rights,” December 19, 2014)

President Obama said that the United States “will respond proportionally” against North Korea for its destructive cyberattacks on Sony Pictures, but he criticized the Hollywood studio for giving in to intimidation when it withdrew “The Interview,” the satirical movie that provoked the attacks, before it opened. Deliberately avoiding specific discussion of what kind of steps he was planning against the reclusive nuclear-armed state, Mr. Obama said that the response would come “in a place and time and manner that we choose.” Speaking at a White House news conference before leaving for Hawaii for a two-week vacation, he said American officials “have been working up a range of options” that he said have not yet been presented to him. A senior official said Obama would likely be briefed in Hawaii on those options. Obama’s threat came just hours after the F.B.I. said it had assembled extensive evidence that the North Korean government organized the cyberattack that debilitated the Sony computers. If he makes good on it, it would be the first time the United States has been known to retaliate for a destructive cyberattack on American soil or to have explicitly accused the leaders of a foreign nation of deliberately damaging American targets, rather than just stealing intellectual property. Until now, the most aggressive response was the largely symbolic indictment of members of a Chinese Army unit this year for stealing intellectual property. The President’s determination to act was a remarkable turn in what first seemed a story about Hollywood backbiting and gossip as revealed by the release of emails from studio executives and other movie industry figures. But it quickly escalated, and the combination of the destructive nature of the attacks – which wiped out Sony computers – and a new threat this week against theatergoers if the “The Interview,” whose plot revolves an attempt to assassinate the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, opened on Christmas Day turned it into a national security issue. “First it was a game-changer,” one official said. “Then it became a question of what happens if we don’t respond? And the president concluded that’s not an option.” Obama argued that the precedent that withdrawing the movie set could be damaging – and that the United States could not give in to intimidation. “I wish they had spoken to me first,” Mr. Obama said of Sony’s leadership. “I would have told them, ‘Do not get into a pattern in which you’re intimidated by these kinds of criminal attacks.’ ” In a clear reference to Kim, he said, “We cannot have a society in which some dictator someplace can start imposing censorship here in the United States.” That would encourage others to do the same “when they see a documentary that they don’t like or news reports that they don’t like.” The chief executive of Sony Pictures, Michael Lynton, immediately defended his decision and said Obama misunderstood the facts. He argued that when roughly 80 percent of the country’s theaters refused to book the film after the latest
threat, “we had no alternative but to not proceed with the theatrical release,” Lynton told CNN. “We have not caved, we have not given in, we have not backed down.”

Obama did not pass up the opportunity to take a jab at the insecure North Korean government for worrying about a Hollywood comedy, even a crude one. I think it says something about North Korea that they decided to have the state mount an all-out assault on a movie studio because of a satirical movie,” he said, smiling briefly at the ridiculousness of an international confrontation set off by a Hollywood comedy. The case against North Korea was described by the F.B.I. in somewhat generic terms. It said there were significant “similarities in specific lines of code, encryption algorithms, data deletion methods and compromised networks” to previous attacks conducted by the North Koreans. “The F.B.I. also observed significant overlap between the infrastructure used in this attack and other malicious cyberactivity the U.S. government has previously linked directly to North Korea,” the bureau said. “For example, the F.B.I. discovered that several Internet protocol addresses associated with known North Korean infrastructure communicated with I.P. addresses that were hard-coded into the data deletion malware used in this attack.” An Internet protocol address is the closest thing to an identifier of where an attack emanated. Some of the methods employed in the Sony attack were similar to ones that were used by the North Koreans against South Korean banks and news media outlets in 2013. That was a destructive attack, as was an attack several years ago against Saudi Aramco, later attributed to Iran. While there were common cybertools to the Saudi attack as well, Obama told reporters he had seen no evidence that any other nation was involved. The F.B.I.’s announcement was carefully coordinated with the White House and reflected the intensity of the investigation; just a week ago, a senior F.B.I. official said he could not say whether North Korea was responsible. Administration officials noted that the White House had now described the action against Sony as an “attack,” as opposed to mere theft of intellectual property, and that suggested that Mr. Obama was now looking for a government response, rather than a corporate one. The F.B.I.’s statements “are based on intelligence sources and other conclusive evidence,” said James A. Lewis, a cybersecurity expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. “Now the U.S. has to figure out the best way to respond and how much risk they want to take. It’s important that whatever they say publicly signals to anyone considering something similar that they will be handled much more roughly.” While American officials were circumspect about how they had collected evidence, some has likely been developed from “implants” placed by the National Security Agency. North Korea has proved to be a particularly hard target because it has relatively low Internet connectivity to the rest of the world, and its best computer minds do not move out of the country often, where their machines and USB drives could be accessible targets. Private security researchers who specialize in tracing attacks said that the government’s conclusions matched their own findings. George Kurtz, a founder of CrowdStrike, a California-based security firm, said that his company had been studying public samples of the Sony malware and had linked them to hackers inside North Korea – the firm internally refers to them as Silent Chollima – who have been conducting attacks since 2006. In 2009, a similar campaign of coordinated cyberattacks over the Fourth of July holiday hit 27 American and South Korean websites, including those of South Korea’s presidential palace, called the Blue House, and its Defense Ministry, and sites belonging to the United States Treasury Department, the Secret Service and the
Federal Trade Commission. North Korea was suspected, but a clear link was never established. But those were all “distributed denial of service” attacks, in which attackers flood the sites with traffic until they fall offline. The Sony attack was far more sophisticated: It wiped data off Sony’s computer systems, rendering them inoperable.

“The cyberattack against Sony Pictures Entertainment was not just an attack against a company and its employees,” Jeh C. Johnson, the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, said in a statement. “It was also an attack on our freedom of expression and way of life.” (David E. Sanger, Michael Schmidt, and Nicole Perlroth, “Obama Vows a Response to Cyberattack on Sony,” New York Times, December 20, 2014, p. A-1) Bruce Bennett, a North Korean expert at the RAND Corporation told CNN that he consulted informally on the field as a favor to Lynton, who sits on the RAND Board of Trustees. “He asked RAND’s president if he had a Korean expert to speak to in order to help sort out how to handle the picture and RAND’s president asked me to do that. We had a couple of brief conversations, viewed the movie and sent some comments,” he said, adding “this was not a paid consultancy.” Bennett said he suggested Sony let the State Department know about the film and the potential political issues involved and offered to call Robert King, the State Department’s envoy for North Korean human rights. He said “I simply notified him of what was going on.” King told Bennett the film “was an American business decision and the State Department doesn’t get involved in things like that.” Bennett said he did not show King or anyone at the State Department the film and said he was skeptical that anyone at the State Department saw it. Referring to the State Department, Bennett said “their attitude was that they were glad to know about it, but it was not their role to intercede.” In addition to King’s discussion with Bennett, the State Department has acknowledged that Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs Danny Russell spoke with Lynton about the film, but denied he had any involvement in its script or creative direction. State Department spokeswoman said she did not know of anyone at State that screened the movie, though it is not clear still if State officials knew how the movie ended. “I did not come across anyone who saw the movie in advance,” Spokeswoman Jen Psaki said in an interview Thursday on CNN’s The Lead with Jake Tapper. Sen. John McCain on Friday said the cyberattack amounted to “an act of war” on Friday and said the U.S. should retaliate in kind with cyberwarfare. “This is the greatest blow to free speech that I’ve seen in my lifetime probably,” McCain said Friday on Arizona radio station KFYI 550’s "The Mike Broomhead Show." “We have to respond in kind. We have lots of capability in cyber and we ought to start cranking that up.” McCain plans to hold a cybersecurity hearing into the Sony hack in the first two weeks of the next Congress, when he takes over as the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. (Evan Perez, Jim Scutto, and Jeremy Diamond, “Obama: ‘Sony Made a Mistake,’” CNN, December 19, 2014) The Obama administration has sought China’s help in recent days in blocking North Korea’s ability to launch cyberattacks, the first steps toward the “proportional response” President Obama vowed to make the North pay for the assault on Sony Pictures – and as part of a campaign to issue a broader warning against future hacking, according to senior administration officials. “What we are looking for is a blocking action, something that would cripple their efforts to carry out attacks,” one official said. So far, the Chinese have not responded. Their cooperation would be critical, since virtually all of North Korea’s telecommunications run through Chinese-operated networks. The attacks on Sony appear to have been routed through China
and then conducted through servers in Singapore, Thailand and Bolivia. Each of the countries, officials said, had been contacted in an effort to cut off access for the hackers. But the key is China. United States officials said that American efforts to block North Korea’s access to the Internet, which is available only to the military and the elite, would necessarily impinge on Chinese sovereignty. But they also saw in the confrontation a chance to work with the Chinese on a subject the two countries have been warily discussing for several years: Establishing “rules of the road” for acceptable behavior in cyberspace. By some accounts, what the administration is trying to create is a computer equivalent to the Proliferation Security Initiative, an effort begun in the Bush administration, also aimed squarely at North Korea, to stop the shipment of nuclear materials and other weaponry. But in cyberspace that is a far harder task, since it is easier for the North Koreans to reroute computer code at lightning speed than to reroute a cargo ship carrying missiles. It is unclear that China would choose to help, given tensions over computer security between Washington and Beijing since the Justice Department in May indicted five hackers working for the Chinese military on charges of stealing sensitive information from American companies. The secret approach to China comes as American officials, convening a half-dozen meetings in the White House Situation Room last week, including one of the top national security team on the night of December 18, have been developing options to give to the president during his vacation in Hawaii. They include new economic sanctions which would cut off their access to cash – the one perk that allows the elite surrounding Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, to live lifestyles their starving countrymen can barely imagine. The sessions also included discussions of “information operations” directed at the North Korean people, officials said, but similar efforts by South Korea to sway opinion in the North have often created a furious backlash. As part of the administration effort to plan a response to the first major, state-sponsored destructive computer-network attacks on American soil, the president has asked the military’s Cyber Command, which is led by the same four-star admiral who directs the National Security Agency, to come up with a range of offensive options that could be directed at North Korea. For now, the White House appears to have declined to consider what one Defense Department official termed “a demonstration strike” in cyberspace, which could have included targets such as North Korean military facilities, computer network servers and communications networks. One obvious potential target is Yongbyon, the center of North Korea’s nuclear program, where the state has invested huge sums to produce plutonium and uranium fuel for its small arsenal of nuclear weapons. Because of its geographic and technological isolation, Yongbyon is considered a far harder target to attack than were Iran’s nuclear facilities, the subject of an American cyberoperation code-named Olympic Games. The administration’s restraint grows out of a concern over the risk of escalation with North Korea, since the United States has far more vulnerable targets, from its power grid to its financial markets, than North Korea. “There are a lot of constraints on us, because we live in a giant glass house,” said one official involved in the high-level debates. The official said the challenge was to find a mix of actions that “the North Koreans will notice” but that will not be so public that Kim’s government loses face and feels compelled to respond. Several administration officials said the White House woke up late to the growing confrontation with North Korea, with senior officials not realizing at first the scope and long-term implications of the attacks on Sony for its plans for a Christmas Day release of “The Interview,” a crude
comedy built around a far-fetched C.I.A. plot to have two bumbling journalists assassinate the young North Korean leader. But by last week, the combination of the destructive attack on Sony’s computers and the threat of attacks on moviegoers at any theater that showed the film sent the administration scrambling for a response. In interviews over the past two days, officials said the president’s decision was to have the United States directly accuse the North Korean government – a public naming of the perpetrators that went beyond previous American criticism. Then the president, in his year-end news conference, cast Kim as an insecure leader so weak that he could be provoked by an outlandish satire, even while Obama castigated Sony Pictures for giving in to intimidation by withdrawing the film. Any financial sanctions also are tricky. The North is under perhaps the heaviest sanctions on earth. Yet the one sanction in the past decade that caused the most pain to the North Korean leadership was the freezing of its accounts at a small bank in Macau, which held the money the North Korean leadership uses to buy luxury goods – and serves as an escape route if officials need to leave the country. Even if Obama was ready to respond with a cyberattack, it would not be instantaneous. “One of the things people often overlook is the complexity and time it takes to launch an attack,” said Oren Falkowitz, a former analyst at the National Security Agency who now runs Area 1, a security company based in Menlo Park, Calif. “Most attacks take hundreds of days, if not years, to plan. People often want to move quickly, but they forget a lot of legwork must be done.” In the past, other countries have resorted to basic distributed denial-of-service attacks, in which hackers flood a target’s systems with Internet traffic until they collapse under the load. But unlike systems in the United States, very little of North Korea’s network infrastructure is connected to the global Internet. The result, Falkowitz says, is that a similar denial-of-service attack on the North would amount to “ankle biting.” Tom Kellermann, a former member of the presidential commission on cybersecurity, said one option was what security experts refer to as a “hack back,” in which they use the attackers’ own computer footprints and back doors to deploy an attack that destroys North Korea’s attack infrastructure, or compromises the integrity of the machines that did the hacking. For example, the United States could deploy a malicious payload that encrypts the data on North Korea’s machines, or renders them unable to reboot – clearly “proportional,” in the president’s words, because that was what happened to Sony’s computers. But attack tools can be swapped out, and by destroying attackers’ systems, the United States would lose its ability to monitor them for future attacks. Kellermann predicted a campaign of information warfare, in which the United States plays on North Korea’s worst fears by using its access to the North Korean domestic computer and radio systems to deploy propaganda inside North Korea’s closed media bubble. (David E. Sanger, Nicole Perlroth, and Eric Schmitt, “China Is Asked to Help Block Korea Hacking,” New York Times, December 21, 2014, p. A-1) At 6 a.m. on November 24, Sony Pictures’ chief financial officer, David C. Hendler, called to tell Michael Lynton, the studio’s chief executive, that Sony’s computer system had been compromised in a hacking of unknown proportions. To prevent further damage, technicians were debating whether to take Sony Pictures entirely offline. Some of the studio’s 7,000 employees, arriving at work, turned on their computers to find macabre images of Mr. Lynton’s severed head. Sony shut down all computer systems shortly thereafter, including those in overseas offices, leaving the company in the digital dark ages: no voice mail, no corporate email, no production systems. Still, for days the
episode was viewed inside Sony as little more than a colossal annoyance. Though Sony executives were quickly in touch with federal law enforcement officials, the company’s initial focus was on setting up jury-rigged systems to let it limp through what was expected to be a few days or weeks of inconvenience. The company’s first statement on the breach, made on November 24, seems almost absurdly bland in retrospect: “We are investigating an I.T. matter.” By December 1, a week after Sony discovered the breach, a sense of urgency and horror had penetrated the studio. More than a dozen F.B.I. investigators were setting up shop on the Culver City lot and in a separate Sony facility near the Los Angeles airport called Corporate Pointe, helping Sony deal with one of the worst cyberattacks ever on an American company. Mountains of documents had been stolen, internal data centers had been wiped clean, and 75 percent of the servers had been destroyed. Everything and anything had been taken. Contracts. Salary lists. Film budgets. Medical records. Social Security numbers. Personal emails. Five entire movies, including the yet-to-be-released “Annie.” Later, it would become apparent through files stolen by the hackers and published online that Lynton and Sony’s co-chair Amy Pascal had been given an oblique warning. On November 21, in an email signed by “God’s Apstls,” the studio was told to pay money for an unspecified reason by November 24. If the studio did not comply, the bizarre missive said, “Sony Pictures will be bombarded as a whole.” But the warning either did not find its way to Lynton or he missed its importance in the daily flood of messages to his inbox. In the first days of the attack, responsibility for which was claimed by a group calling itself “Guardians of Peace,” the notion of North Korean involvement was little more than a paranoid whisper. In June, a spokesman for North Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement said the country would take “a decisive and merciless countermeasure” if the United States government permitted Sony to make its planned Christmas release of the comedy “The Interview.” At the time, the threat seemed to many almost as absurd as the film, which was not mentioned in early communications from the hackers. In the gossipy nexus that quickly connected Hollywood’s trade news media with studio insiders and a growing circuit of information technology experts, talk circulated of a “mole” — a Sony employee who was presumed by many to have been instrumental in penetrating the computer systems and spotting the most sensitive data. The theory of violation by an ex-employee or disgruntled insider persists among computer security experts who remain unpersuaded by the F.B.I.’s focus on evidence pointing toward North Korea, which the agency made public in a news release on December 19. But senior Sony executives, speaking on the condition of anonymity because the investigation is incomplete, now say the talk of a rogue insider reflects a misunderstanding of the F.B.I.’s initial conclusions about the hacking. Federal investigators, they said, did not strongly suspect an inside job. Rather, these executives said, the F.B.I. found that the hackers had used digital techniques to steal the credentials and passwords from a systems administrator who had maximum access to Sony’s computer systems. Once in control of the gateways those items opened, theft of information was relatively easy. Government investigators and Sony’s private security experts traced the hacking through a network of foreign servers and identified malicious software bearing the familiar hallmarks of a hacking gang known as Dark Seoul. Prodded for inside information at a social gathering — long before the F.B.I. announced any conclusions — Doug Belgrad, president of Sony’s motion picture group, responded, “It’s the Koreans.” As the F.B.I. stepped up its inquiry, the hackers –
who still had made no explicit mention of “The Interview” – dropped the first in a series of data bundles that were to prove a feast for websites like Gawker and mainstream services like Bloomberg News for weeks. Every few days, hackers would dump a vast new group of documents onto anonymous posting sites. Reporters and other parties who had shown an interest in searching the Sony files were then sent email alerts – essentially digital treasure maps from the hackers. Shortly before 10 a.m. the next day, Dec. 16, the hackers made good on their promise of a “Christmas gift,” delivering thousands of Mr. Lynton’s emails to the posting sites. With the emails came a message that within minutes converted the hacking from corporate annoyance to national threat and fully jolted Sony from defense to offense. “Soon all the world will see what an awful movie Sony Pictures Entertainment has made,” it said. “The world will be full of fear. Remember the 11th of September 2001.” The message specifically cited “The Interview” and its planned opening. Unfazed until then by Sony’s problems, exhibitors were instantly galvanized. “When you invoke 9/11, it’s a game changer,” said one theater executive. Within hours, the National Association of Theater Owners convened a board meeting. Through the day, the exhibitors were briefed by Sony executives (though not by Lynton), who took a position that infuriated some owners: The studio would not cancel the film, but it would not quarrel with any theater that withdrew it because of security concerns. “Sony basically punted,” said one theater executive, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of confidentiality strictures. “Frankly,” the executive added, “it’s their movie, and their mess.” Carmike Cinemas, one of the country’s four largest chains, was the first to withdraw. By the morning of Dec. 17, owners of about 80 percent of the country’s movie theaters – including Regal Entertainment, AMC Entertainment, and Cinemark, already mired in legal fights over a 2012 theater shooting in Colorado – had pulled out. That afternoon, Sony dropped “The Interview” from its schedule. In theory, the studio had gotten its way by putting the onus for cancellation on apprehensive theater owners. (Michael Cieply and Brooks Barnes, “Sony Attack, First a Nuisance, Swiftly Grew Into a Firestorm,” New York Times, December 31, 2014, p. A1)

FBI: “Today, the FBI would like to provide an update on the status of our investigation into the cyber attack targeting Sony Pictures Entertainment (SPE). In late November, SPE confirmed that it was the victim of a cyber attack that destroyed systems and stole large quantities of personal and commercial data. A group calling itself the “Guardians of Peace” claimed responsibility for the attack and subsequently issued threats against SPE, its employees, and theaters that distribute its movies. The FBI has determined that the intrusion into SPE’s network consisted of the deployment of destructive malware and the theft of proprietary information as well as employees’ personally identifiable information and confidential communications. The attacks also rendered thousands of SPE’s computers inoperable, forced SPE to take its entire computer network offline, and significantly disrupted the company’s business operations. After discovering the intrusion into its network, SPE requested the FBI’s assistance. Since then, the FBI has been working closely with the company throughout the investigation. Sony has been a great partner in the investigation, and continues to work closely with the FBI. Sony reported this incident within hours, which is what the FBI hopes all companies will do when facing a cyber attack. Sony’s quick reporting facilitated the investigators’ ability to do their jobs, and ultimately to identify the source of these attacks. As a result of our
investigation, and in close collaboration with other U.S. government departments and agencies, the FBI now has enough information to conclude that the North Korean government is responsible for these actions. While the need to protect sensitive sources and methods precludes us from sharing all of this information, our conclusion is based, in part, on the following: Technical analysis of the data deletion malware used in this attack revealed links to other malware that the FBI knows North Korean actors previously developed. For example, there were similarities in specific lines of code, encryption algorithms, data deletion methods, and compromised networks. The FBI also observed significant overlap between the infrastructure used in this attack and other malicious cyber activity the U.S. government has previously linked directly to North Korea. For example, the FBI discovered that several Internet protocol (IP) addresses associated with known North Korean infrastructure communicated with IP addresses that were hardcoded into the data deletion malware used in this attack. Separately, the tools used in the SPE attack have similarities to a cyber attack in March of last year against South Korean banks and media outlets, which was carried out by North Korea. We are deeply concerned about the destructive nature of this attack on a private sector entity and the ordinary citizens who worked there. Further, North Korea’s attack on SPE reaffirms that cyber threats pose one of the gravest national security dangers to the United States. Though the FBI has seen a wide variety and increasing number of cyber intrusions, the destructive nature of this attack, coupled with its coercive nature, sets it apart. North Korea’s actions were intended to inflict significant harm on a U.S. business and suppress the right of American citizens to express themselves. Such acts of intimidation fall outside the bounds of acceptable state behavior. The FBI takes seriously any attempt—whether through cyber-enabled means, threats of violence, or otherwise—to undermine the economic and social prosperity of our citizens. The FBI stands ready to assist any U.S. company that is the victim of a destructive cyber attack or breach of confidential business information.

Further, the FBI will continue to work closely with multiple departments and agencies as well as with domestic, foreign, and private sector partners who have played a critical role in our ability to trace this and other cyber threats to their source. Working together, the FBI will identify, pursue, and impose costs and consequences on individuals, groups, or nation states who use cyber means to threaten the United States or U.S. interests.” (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Update on Sony Investigation, December 19, 2014)

Obama: “Q: Thank you, Mr. President. I’ll start on North Korea -- that seems to be the biggest topic today. What does a proportional response look like to the Sony hack? And did Sony make the right decision in pulling the movie? Or does that set a dangerous precedent when faced with this kind of situation? THE PRESIDENT: Well, let me address the second question first. Sony is a corporation. It suffered significant damage. There were threats against its employees. I am sympathetic to the concerns that they faced. Having said all that, yes, I think they made a mistake. In this interconnected, digital world, there are going to be opportunities for hackers to engage in cyber assaults both in the private sector and the public sector. Now, our first order of business is making sure that we do everything to harden sites and prevent those kinds of attacks from taking place. When I came into office, I stood up a
cybersecurity interagency team to look at everything that we could at the government level to prevent these kinds of attacks. We’ve been coordinating with the private sector, but a lot more needs to be done. We’re not even close to where we need to be. And one of the things in the New Year that I hope Congress is prepared to work with us on is strong cybersecurity laws that allow for information-sharing across private sector platforms, as well as the public sector, so that we are incorporating best practices and preventing these attacks from happening in the first place. But even as we get better, the hackers are going to get better, too. Some of them are going to be state actors; some of them are going to be non-state actors. All of them are going to be sophisticated and many of them can do some damage. **We cannot have a society in which some dictator someplace can start imposing censorship here in the United States. Because if somebody is able to intimidate folks out of releasing a satirical movie, imagine what they start doing when they see a documentary that they don’t like, or news reports that they don’t like.** Or even worse, imagine if producers and distributors and others start engaging in self-censorship because they don’t want to offend the sensibilities of somebody whose sensibilities probably need to be offended. So that’s not who we are. That’s not what America is about. Again, I’m sympathetic that Sony as a private company was worried about liabilities, and this and that and the other. I wish they had spoken to me first. I would have told them, do not get into a pattern in which you’re intimidated by these kinds of criminal attacks. Imagine if, instead of it being a cyber-threat, somebody had broken into their offices and destroyed a bunch of computers and stolen disks. Is that what it takes for suddenly you to pull the plug on something? So we’ll engage with not just the film industry, but the news industry and the private sector around these issues. We already have. We will continue to do so. But I think all of us have to anticipate occasionally there are going to be breaches like this. They’re going to be costly. They’re going to be serious. We take them with the utmost seriousness. But we can’t start changing our patterns of behavior any more than we stop going to a football game because there might be the possibility of a terrorist attack; any more than Boston didn’t run its marathon this year because of the possibility that somebody might try to cause harm. So let’s not get into that way of doing business. **Q: Can you just say what the response would be to this attack? Would you consider taking some sort of symbolic step like watching the movie yourself or doing some sort of screening here that -- THE PRESIDENT: I’ve got a long list of movies I’m going to be watching. (Laughter.) Q: Will this be one of them? THE PRESIDENT: I never release my full movie list. But let’s talk of the specifics of what we now know. The FBI announced today and we can confirm that North Korea engaged in this attack.** I think it says something interesting about North Korea that they decided to have the state mount an all-out assault on a movie studio because of a satirical movie starring Seth Rogen and James Flacco [Franco]. (Laughter.) I love Seth and I love James, but the notion that that was a threat to them I think gives you some sense of the kind of regime we’re talking about here. **They caused a lot of damage, and we will respond. We will respond proportionally, and we’ll respond in a place and time and manner that we choose.** It’s not something that I will announce here today at a press conference. More broadly, though, this points to the need for us to work with the international community to start setting up some very clear rules of the road in terms of how the Internet and cyber operates. Right now, it’s sort of the Wild West. And part of the problem is, is you’ve got weak states that can engage in these
kinds of attacks, you’ve got non-state actors that can do enormous damage. That’s part of what makes this issue of cybersecurity so urgent. Again, this is part of the reason why it’s going to be so important for Congress to work with us and get a actual bill passed that allows for the kind of information-sharing we need. Because if we don’t put in place the kind of architecture that can prevent these attacks from taking place, this is not just going to be affecting movies, this is going to be affecting our entire economy in ways that are extraordinarily significant. … Q: … And on the hack, I know that you said that you’re not going to announce your response, but can you say whether you’re considering additional economic or financial sanctions on North Korea? Can you rule out the use of military force or some kind of cyber hit of your own? THE PRESIDENT: I think I’m going to leave it where I left it, which is we just confirmed that it was North Korea; we have been working up a range of options. They will be presented to me. I will make a decision on those based on what I believe is proportional and appropriate to the nature of this crime.” (White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Remarks by the President in Year-End Press Conference,” December 19, 2014)

Kerry: “The United States condemns North Korea for the cyber-attack targeting Sony Pictures Entertainment and the unacceptable threats against movie theatres and moviegoers. These actions are a brazen attempt by an isolated regime to suppress free speech and stifle the creative expression of artists beyond the borders of its own country. Freedom of expression is at the center of America’s values and a founding principle of our Bill of Rights. We’re a country where artists openly mock and criticize the powerful, including our own government. We don’t always like what they say about us or about others, and sometimes we’re even deeply offended. But those offenses have always taken a backseat to freedom of expression. That’s why the United States is and always will be a staunch advocate for and protector of the right of artists to express themselves freely and creatively. Whatever one’s system of government or views about free expression, there is absolutely no justification whatsoever for an attack like this. We are deeply concerned about the destructive nature of this state sponsored cyber-attack targeting a commercial entity and its employees in the United States. These lawless acts of intimidation demonstrate North Korea’s flagrant disregard for international norms. Threats in cyberspace pose one of the greatest national security challenges to the United States, and North Korea’s actions - intended to inflict significant economic damage and suppress free speech - are well beyond the bounds of acceptable state behavior in cyberspace. This provocative and unprecedented attack and subsequent threats only strengthen our resolve to continue to work with partners around the world to strengthen cybersecurity, promote norms of acceptable state behavior, uphold freedom of expression, and ensure that the Internet remains open, interoperable, secure and reliable. We encourage our allies and partners to stand with us as we defend the values of all of our people in the face of state-sponsored intimidation.” (Secretary of State John Kerry, Press Statement, December 19, 2014)

China said that it would oppose referring North Korea to the International Criminal Court, dimming chances of the regime being held accountable for human rights abuses detailed in a ground-breaking U.N. probe earlier this year. China’s foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang made the remarks a day after the U.N. General
Assembly adopted a landmark resolution calling for North Korea to be sent to the international court. The U.N. Security Council is expected to hold a meeting next week to discuss the issue. Asked whether China would veto the U.N. resolution at next week’s Security Council meeting, Qin replied, “The Security Council is not the right place to discuss the issue of human rights.” “And referring the issue of human rights to the International Criminal Court will by no means help solve the problem,” Qin said. (Yonhap, “China to Oppose Referring N. Korea to International Court,” December 19, 2014)

South Korea’s Constitutional Court outlawed a political party here for the first time since the country adopted its first constitution in 1948. The 8-1 ruling effectively spelled the immediate demise of the Unified Progressive Party (UPP) created in 2011. All five sitting lawmakers of the party also lost their seats, with by-elections slated for April next year. The establishment of an alternative party with similar policies is also prohibited. The party has been forced to forfeit all state subsidies and its assets have been frozen, according to the National Election Commission (NEC). “The genuine goal and the activities of the UPP are to achieve progressive democracy and to finally adopt North Korea-style socialism,” chief justice Park Han-cheol said, reading out the landmark ruling that was broadcast live on television. He said the court came to the conclusion that the UPP’s principles and activities were in violation of the “basic democratic order” stipulated by the Constitution of South Korea, which remains technically at war with North Korea. The court also accepted the government’s argument for the need to safeguard the country’s democracy and national security by banning an unconstitutional political party. The ruling came more than 400 days after the justice ministry filed a petition with the court following the arrest of a number of UPP members on rebellion conspiracy charges. Several UPP members, including Rep. Lee Seok-ki, were convicted of plotting to overthrow the government in the event of a war with North Korea. They were found guilty of conspiring with members of a clandestine organization, called the Revolutionary Organization, to topple the South’s government if a war broke out with North Korea. "The UPP, with a hidden agenda to adopt North Korea's socialism, organized meetings to discuss a rebellion. The act goes against the basic democratic order of the Constitution," Park said. Under South Korea’s constitution, the government can ask the Constitutional Court to review the dissolution of a political party believed to damage the country’s values. Eight justices ruled that the party’s dissolution was the only way to eliminate the threat it posed to South Korean democracy. "There is no other alternative to banning the UPP as the party causes real harm," Park added. The only dissenting justice, Kim Yi-su, cautioned against making generalizations, saying only some members of the UPP were engaged in activities supportive of Pyongyang. He maintained that a political party should only be outlawed when it is absolutely necessary to protect the country. The court also ruled that five UPP legislators be stripped of their seats regardless of whether they were elected through popular vote or the proportional representation system. Reps. Kim Mi-hyui, Kim Jae-yeon, Oh Byung-yun, Lee Sang-kyu, and Lee Seok-ki were immediately deprived of their parliamentary seats. The ruling, meanwhile, may influence the ongoing trial of Rep. Lee Seok-ki at the Supreme Court. Earlier, a Seoul appeals court commuted Lee’s prison term from 12 to nine years. The court acquitted the 53-year-old UPP legislator of charges that he had plotted the rebellion and only
President Park Geun-hye's approval rating has hit a record low amid a high-profile influence-peddling scandal involving some key presidential officials, a poll showed. The survey of 1,006 adults nationwide by Gallup Korea showed only 37 percent approved of Park's job performance. In a similar poll by Realmaster, released earlier this week, Park's approval rating stood at 39.7 percent. Only 17 percent of the respondents in their 20s approved of the Park administration, while just 19 percent of 30-something respondents did, it showed. Insufficient public communication was the top source of disapproval, followed by displeasure with her personnel management style and welfare policies for low-incomers, the poll showed. In particular, the president was apparently hit hard by a recent leak of controversial documents from her office. The documents alleged there was a behind-the-scenes power game among her former and current aides. The documents, drawn up by a former presidential staffer in early 2014 and first reported last month by a Seoul-based newspaper, suggested a former aide of Park, Jeong Yun-hoe, attempted to influence state affairs. Jeong and Park's younger brother Park Ji-man were quizzed by prosecutors earlier this month over the documents. Both of them flatly denied reports that they were embroiled in a power struggle. (Yonhap, “Park’s Approval Rating Hits Record Low,” December 19, 2014)
of libel in enforcement of international law. We propose the U.S. side conducting a joint investigation into the case, given that Washington is slandering Pyongyang by spreading unfounded rumor. We have a way to prove that we have nothing to do with the case without resorting to torture as what the CIA does. The U.S. should bear in mind that it will face serious consequences in case it rejects our proposal for joint investigation and presses for what it called countermeasure while finding fault with the DPRK.” (KCNA, “DPRK Foreign Ministry Rejects U.S. Accusation against Pyongyang over Cyber Attack,” December 20, 2014)

When a retired Chinese general with impeccable Communist Party credentials recently wrote a scathing account of North Korea as a recalcitrant ally headed for collapse and unworthy of support, he exposed a roiling debate in China about how to deal with the country's young leader, Kim Jong-un. For decades China has stood by North Korea, and though at times the relationship has soured, it has rarely reached such a low point, Chinese analysts say. The fact that the commentary by Lt. Gen. Wang Hongguang, a former deputy commander of an important military region, was published in a state-run newspaper this month and then posted on an official People's Liberation Army website attested to how much the relationship had deteriorated, the analysts say.

“China has cleaned up the D.P.R.K.’s mess too many times,” General Wang wrote in Global Times. “But it doesn’t have to do that in the future.” Of the government in North Korea, he said: “If an administration isn’t supported by the people, ‘collapse’ is just a matter of time.” Moreover, North Korea had violated the spirit of the mutual defense treaty with China, he said, by failing to consult China on its nuclear weapons program, which has created instability in Northeast Asia. The significance of General Wang’s article was given greater weight because he wrote it in reply to another Global Times article by a Chinese expert on North Korea, Prof. Li Dunqiu, who took a more traditional approach, arguing that North Korea was a strategic asset that China should not abandon. Li is a former director of the Office of Korean Affairs at China’s State Council.

In a debate that unfolded among other commentators in the pages of Global Times, a state-run newspaper, after the duel between General Wang and Li, the general’s point of view — that North Korea represented a strategic liability — got considerable support. General Wang is known as a princeling general: His father, Wang Jianqing, led Mao Zedong’s troops in the fight against the Japanese in Nanjing at the end of World War II. The general’s secretary told the intermediary that the views in his article were his own and did not reflect those of the military. How widespread his views have become within the military establishment is difficult to gauge, but a Chinese official who is closely involved in China's diplomacy with North Korea said that General Wang’s disparaging attitude was more prevalent in the Chinese military today than in any previous period. “General Wang’s views really reflect the views of many Chinese — and within the military views are varied,” said the official, who declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the matter. Relations between the North Korean and Chinese militaries have never been close even though they fought together during the Korean War, the official said. The two militaries do not conduct joint exercises and remain wary of each other, experts say. China has said little about the Obama administration’s charge that North Korea was responsible for the hacking of a film produced by Sony Pictures, “The Interview.” Nevertheless, United States officials said they had reached out to China to help block North Korea’s ability to initiate
cyberattacks. China has not yet responded to the request, the officials said. Despite the
disdain for North Korea in official Chinese circles there was probably some secret
admiration for what the North Koreans appeared to have done, Zhang Baohui, director
of the center for Asian Pacific studies at Lingnan University in Hong Kong, said. Even in
the current cold relationship between China and North Korea there were definite limits
to how far China would side with the United States on North Korea, he said. The
“mistrust and rivalry” between Washington and Beijing meant China, in the event of a
collapse of North Korea, could not tolerate a unified Korean Peninsula allied with
arrogance,” saying that despite what Americans thought of Kim Jong-un, he remained
the country’s leader. Still, the parlous state of the relationship between North Korea
and China was on display again December 17 when Pyongyang commemorated the
third anniversary of the death of Kim Jong-il, the father of the current leader, Kim Jong-
un, and failed to invite a senior Chinese official. The last time a Chinese leader visited
North Korea was in July 2013 when Vice President Li Yuanchao tried to patch up
relations, and pressed North Korea, after its third nuclear test in February 2013, to slow
down its nuclear weapons program. Li failed in that quest. The North Korean nuclear
program “is continuing full speed ahead,” said Siegfried S. Hecker, a professor at
Stanford University and former head of Los Alamos National Laboratory. North Korea
had produced enough highly enriched uranium for six nuclear devices, and it may
have enough for an additional four devices a year from now, an assessment the
Chinese concurred with, Hecker said. After the vice president’s visit, relations
plummeted further, entering the icebox last December when China’s main conduit
within the North Korean government, Jang Song-thaek, a senior official and the uncle
of Kim Jong-un, was executed in a purge. In July, President Xi Jinping snubbed North
Korea, visiting South Korea instead. Xi has yet to visit North Korea, and is said to have
been infuriated by a third nuclear test by North Korea in February 2013, soon after Kim
Jong-un came to power. Though they have not met as presidents, Xi was vice
president of China and met Kim, who at that stage was not long out of a Swiss
boarding school when he accompanied his father to China, several Chinese analysts
said. “It’s very obvious that there is a very significant change in attitudes,” said Deng
Yuwen, a former deputy editor of Study Times, the Central Party School journal, who
was dismissed in early 2013 for writing a negative piece about North Korea. In a sign of
more public questioning about North Korea, Deng, who went to Britain after losing his
job, is back in China and said he had no problem in organizing a debate two months
ago about the problems with North Korea on Phoenix television, a satellite station
based in Hong Kong that is shown on the mainland. “North Korea will ultimately fail no
matter how much you throw money at it, and it is in the process of collapse,” Deng
said. The heightened debate in China is spurred in part by fears that North Korea
could collapse even though economic conditions in the agriculture sector seemed
ready to improve, several Chinese analysts said. Indeed, one of the tricky balancing
acts for China is how much to curtail fuel supplies and other financial support without
provoking a collapse that could send refugees into China’s northeastern provinces,
and result in a unified Korean Peninsula loyal to the United States. “The general state of
relations between North Korea and China is hard,” said Zheng Jiyong, director of the
Center for Korean Studies at Fudan University, who just returned to China after four
months in Pyongyang. “If China presses D.P.R.K. too hard it could collapse,” he said.
“But if it doesn’t press hard enough it will become uncontrolled and do more things like nuclear tests.” For his part, General Wang, who is now a member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, seems unfazed by a possible collapse. “China isn’t a savior, so it cannot save the D.P.R.K. if it is really going to collapse,” he wrote in the article. “All that China can do is to make precautions accordingly. Even if the D.P.R.K.’s collapse affects northeast China to some extent that will in no way disrupt China’s journey of modernization.” (Jane Perlez, “Chinese Annoyance with North Korea Bubbles to the Surface,” New York Times, December 20, 2014, p. A-24)

12/21/14

The Obama administration struggled over the weekend to strike an appropriate public response to the Sony computer hack, as officials scrambled behind the scenes to come up with ways to retaliate. Publicly, President Barack Obama turned down the rhetorical heat against North Korea, which the US blamed last week for the hacking of Sony’s computer systems and prompting it to cancel the release of a film satirising the dictatorship. “I don’t think it was an act of war, it was an act of cyber vandalism that was very costly, very expensive,” Obama said in an interview shown on CNN. His attempt to put a more moderate interpretation on a rare, publicly identified cyber attack by a foreign government against a target in the US brought immediate condemnation from political opponents. “The president does not understand that this is a manifestation of a new form of warfare,” said Arizona senator John McCain, who was also speaking in an interview on CNN. He added: “When you destroy economies, when you are able to impose censorship on the world, and especially the United States of America, it’s more than vandalism. It’s a new form of warfare.” U.S. officials have also approached China for help in blocking cyber attacks emanating from North Korea, which relied on Chinese networks to mount its assault on Sony. “We have discussed this issue with the Chinese to share information, express our concerns about this attack and to ask for their co-operation,” a senior administration official said. “In our cyber security discussions, both China and the United States have expressed the view that conducting destructive attacks in cyber space is outside the norms of appropriate cyber behavior.” (Richard Waters, “Obama Struggles to Respond to Sony Hack,” Financial Times, December 22, 2014, p. 3)

NDC Policy Department statement: “Strange thing that happened in the heart of the U.S., the ill-famed cesspool of injustice, is now afloat in the world as shocking news. The Sony Pictures Entertainment, the biggest movie producer in the U.S., which produced the undesirable reactionary film “The Interview” daring hurt the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK and agitating even terrorism and had a plan to distribute it, was exposed to surprisingly sophisticated, destructive and threatening cyber warfare and has been thrown into a bottomless quagmire after suffering property losses worth hundreds of millions of dollars. The public in the U.S. is now describing this case as “disgrace suffered by Sony Pictures Entertainment,” “very sorry thing caused by the U.S.,” “Sony Pictures Entertainment showing a white flag before hackers” and the "unprecedented disaster suffered by the U.S." Those who meted out a stern punishment of justice were reported to be cyber experts styling themselves "guardians of peace." Seized with terrible horror and threat in face of their merciless hacking attack in retaliation against unjust actions, many movie and drama distributors in North America including 41 states of the U.S. and Canada immediately canceled the
screening of the reactionary movie. And it was reported that the Sony Pictures Entertainment which directly sponsored its production and distribution hastily issued a statement on Dec. 25 that it would suspend the screening of the undesirable movie which had been planned in 63 countries. The NDC of the DPRK highly estimates the righteous action taken by the "guardians of peace," though it is not aware of their residence. It, at the same time, considers as fortunate the step taken by the Sony Pictures Entertainment to give up the overall distribution of the above-said movie due to the decision and strong pressure of the movie and drama distributors for stopping the screening of the reactionary movie, though belatedly. This is an official stand of the army and the people of the DPRK on what happened in the heart of the U.S. This stand is taken by the DPRK because the movie "The Interview" is an undesirable and reactionary one justifying and inciting terrorism which should not be allowed in any country and any region. Another reason is that the movie is run through with a story agitating a vicious and dastardly method of assassinating a head of a legitimate sovereign state. No wonder, even political and social circles of the U.S. commented that it is quite wrong to defame the head of the state for the mere reason that his politics is different from that of the U.S. and it is in the hostile relationship with the latter and, therefore, the Sony Pictures Entertainment got into a serious trouble and paid a due price. For these reasons, the DPRK is more highly praising the "guardians of peace" for their righteous deed which prevented in advance the evil cycle of retaliation-- terrorism sparks terrorism. It is quite natural that the movie and drama producers should refrain from undesirable deeds contrary to the noble mission to lead morality and civilization. But what matters is that the U.S. and its followers are groundlessly trumpeting that the recent cyber attack was made by the DPRK. The FBI issued the results of the investigation into the hack at the Sony Pictures Entertainment on December 19. According to them, it suffered tremendous losses. One may say this is the due price incurred by wrong deed, the evil act of hurting others. The U.S. released a statement asserting that this loss was caused by the DPRK. No matter how big and disgraceful the loss may be, the U.S. should not pull up others for no reason. The FBI presented a report on the results of technical analysis of hacking program used by the "guardians of peace" for this attack, citing it as the ground that the serious hacking was caused by the DPRK. The report says the malignant code had access to north Korea's IP already known several times and the hacking methods applied in the "March 20 hacking case" and during cyber warfare against media and various other computer networks in south Korea in recent years are similar to that applied against the Sony Pictures Entertainment this time, being another ground that "this was done by the north." The report, in particular, adds that the malignant code and algorithm applied during the attack are similar to what was used during the hacking attack on south Korea, citing it as a proof. Not satisfied with those groundless "evidence," the FBI is letting loose ambiguous remarks that it is hard to fully prove due to the "protection of sensitive information sources." This means self-acknowledgement that the "assertion about the north's deed" came from an intentional allegation rather than scientific evidence. It is a common sense that the method of cyber warfare is almost similar worldwide. Different sorts of hacking programs and codes are used in cyberspace. If somebody used U.S.-made hacking programs and codes and applied their instruction or encoding method, perhaps, the "wise" FBI, too, could not but admit that it would be hard to decisively assert that the attack was done by the U.S. Moreover, the DPRK has
never attempted nor made a “cyber-attack” on south Korea. The rumor about “cyber-attack” by the DPRK was a concoction made by the south Korean puppet regime and its plot. After all, the grounds cited by the FBI in its announcement were all based on obscure sci-tech data and false story and, accordingly, the announcement itself is another fabrication. This is the DPRK’s stand on the U.S. gangster-like behavior against it. **What is grave is that U.S. President Obama is recklessly making the rumor about "DPRK’s cyber-attack on Sony Pictures" a fait accompli while crying out for symmetric counteraction, strict calculation and additionally retaliatory sanctions.** This is like beating air after being hit hard. A saying goes every sin brings its punishment with it. It is best for the guilty to repent of its evil doings and draw a lesson when forced to pay dearly for them. **The DPRK has clear evidence that the U.S. administration was deeply involved in the making of such dishonest reactionary movie.** It is said that the movie was conceived and produced according to the "guidelines" of the U.S. authorities who contended that such movies hurting the dignity of the DPRK supreme leadership and inciting terrorism against it would be used in an effective way as "propaganda against north Korea." The U.S. Department of State’s special human rights envoy went the lengths of urging the movie makers to keep all scenes insulting the dignity of the DPRK supreme leadership in the movie, saying it is needed to “vex the north Korean government.” The facts glaringly show that the U.S. is the chief culprit of terrorism as it has loudly called for combating terrorism everywhere in the world but schemed behind the scene to produce and distribute movies inciting it in various countries of the world. It is not exaggeration to say in the light of the prevailing situation that the U.S. administration and President Obama looking after the overall state affairs of the U.S. have been behind the case. Can he really cover up the crimes he has committed by trying so hard to falsify the truth and turn white to black. So we watched with unusual attention what had been done by the “guardians of peace” to avert terrorism and defend justice. Yet, we do not know who or where they are but we can surely say that they are supporters and sympathizers with the DPRK. The army and people of the DPRK who aspire after justice and truth and value conscience have hundreds of millions of supporters and sympathizers, known or unknown, who have turned out in the sacred war against terrorism and the U.S. imperialists, the chieftain of aggression, to accomplish the just cause. Obama personally declared in public the “symmetric counteraction,” a disgraceful behavior. There is no need to guess what kind of thing the “symmetric counteraction” is like but the army and people of the DPRK will never be browbeaten by such a thing. **The DPRK has already launched the toughest counteraction. Nothing is more serious miscalculation than guessing that just a single movie production company is the target of this counteraction. Our target is all the citadels of the U.S. imperialists who earned the bitterest grudge of all Koreans.** The army and people of the DPRK are fully ready to stand in confrontation with the U.S. in all war spaces including cyber warfare space to blow up those citadels. Our toughest counteraction will be boldly taken against the White House, the Pentagon and the whole U.S. mainland, the cesspool of terrorism, by far surpassing the "symmetric counteraction" declared by Obama. This is the invariable toughest stand of the army and people of the DPRK. Fighters for justice including “guardians of peace” who turned out in the sacred drive for cooperation in the fight against the U.S. to defend human justice and conscience and to dismember the U.S. imperialists, the root cause of all sorts of evils and kingpin...
of injustice, are sharpening bayonets not only in the U.S. mainland but in all other parts of the world. The just struggle to be waged by them across the world will bring achievements thousands of times greater than the hacking attack on the Sony Pictures Entertainment. It is the truth and inevitability of the historical development that justice prevails over injustice. Whoever challenges justice by toeing the line of the biggest criminal U.S. will never be able to escape merciless punishment as it is the target of the sacred drive for cooperation in the fight against the U.S. The U.S. should reflect on its evil doings that put itself in such a trouble, apologize to the Koreans and other people of the world and should not dare pull up others.” (KCNA, “U.S. Urged to Honestly Apologize to Mankind for Its Evil Doing Groundlessly Pulling up Others,” December 21, 2014)

KPA Western Command report: “as regards the fact that the south Korean puppet forces are keen to erect the Aegibong Light Tower and resume a "lighting ceremony" with the new year in the offing. The “ceremony” is a sort of psychological warfare aimed to rattle the nerves of the DPRK under the pretext of a religious event. ... The army of the DPRK does not care about any racket kicked up by the puppet forces at any place of south Korea but will never overlook any strange farce for psychological warfare in the area of the Military Demarcation Line and in the face of the service personnel of the front nor remain a passive onlooker to it. The “lighting ceremony”, a product of the Park Geun Hye group's ambition for confrontation with fellow countrymen, is an unbearable insult and mockery of the service personnel of the front and a direct declaration of a war. The Park Geun Hye group is the hordes of rascals without an equal in the world as it is trying to conduct a psychological warfare against the DPRK once again in the end of the year, not content with its confrontational moves all the year round. The service personnel of the front already showed in action the merciless retaliatory will of the army of the DPRK to cope with the "balloon operation against the north" by the puppet forces in the area along the Military Demarcation Line despite the repeated warnings. The south Korean puppet forces should not forget even a moment that the army and people of the DPRK have already launched the toughest counteractions.” (KCNA, “S. Korean Authorities Warned of Erecting Aegibong Light Tower and Resuming ‘Lighting Ceremony,’” December 21, 2014)

Rodong Sinmun: “Recently, the U.S. conservatives are crying out for modernization of nukes through nuclear test accompanied by explosion, claiming that its nuclear weapons are in the danger of being dismantled for being too old. ...[These are] outcries of nuclear maniacs keen to carry out its strategy for world hegemony on the basis of its unchallenged nuclear edge. The world has heard honey-words made by the U.S. over "nuclear disarmament" and "nuclear-free world" since it suspended underground nuclear test, but its commitments have not been put into practice. ...This is evidenced by the plan for the "world without nuclear weapons" raised by Obama after taking office. The U.S. said it "reduced" some nuclear weapons but only old ones were scrapped and, in actuality, it has stepped up the modernization of nuclear weapons behind the curtain of "disarmament." If the world is to be denuclearized, the denuclearization of the U.S. should be realized, to begin with, as it was the first to make nuclear weapons and imposed nuclear disaster upon mankind and deployed lots of nuclear weapons in its mainland and other different places of the world. Great irony is
A strange thing happened to North Korea’s already tenuous link to the Internet today: It failed. While perhaps a coincidence, the failure of the country’s computer connections began only hours after President Obama declared Friday that the United States would launch a “proportional response” to what he termed an act of “cybervandalism” against Sony Pictures. Over the weekend, as North Korean officials demanded a “joint investigation” into the Sony attacks and denied culpability – an assertion the United States rejected – Internet service began to get wobbly. By early today, the Internet went as dark as one of those satellite photographs showing the impoverished country by night. Experts who monitor the health of the global Internet called it one of the worst North Korean network failures in years. But American officials who had described over the weekend how they were intensely focused on the country’s telecommunications connections through China – and how they had asked the Chinese government for help in cutting off the North’s ability to send malicious code around the world – declined to discuss what befell those connections. “I guess accidents can happen,” one said in a very brief telephone conversation. A State Department spokeswoman, Marie Harf, told reporters, “We aren’t going to discuss, you know, publicly operational details about the possible response options,” adding that “as we implement our responses, some will be seen, some may not be seen.” There was no definitive way, at least in the short term, to determine whether the connection had been cut, overloaded, or attacked. And security experts cautioned that there could be many reasons for today’s failure. North Korea could be pre-emptively taking its systems offline to prepare for an attack, some said. Chris Nicholson, a spokesman for Akamai, an Internet content delivery company, said it was difficult to pinpoint the origin of the failure, given that the company typically sees only a trickle of Internet connectivity from North Korea. The country has only 1,024 official Internet protocol addresses, though the actual number may be a little higher. That is fewer than many city blocks in New York have. The United States, by comparison, has billions of addresses. But when the sun rose in North Korea on the morning of December 23, the few connections to the outside world – available only to the elite, the military, and North Korea’s prodigious propaganda machine – were still out. As the morning wore on, however, some of the connections began to come back after a blackout of nearly 10 hours, though there was still very little traffic, according to CloudFlare, an Internet company in San Francisco. Those connections to the outside world are managed by Star Joint Ventures, the country’s state-run Internet provider, and almost all of them run through China Unicom, China’s state-owned telecommunications company. They were not operative today, but the causes could include a cyberattack by the United States – something American officials have said they would be hesitant to do if it meant that the Obama regime persists in its nuclear threat and blackmail against other countries though it is claiming that it would build the “world without nuclear weapons.” What Obama seeks in putting up the foolish plan and adopting it as a policy is to disarm various nuclear weapons states through appeasement and deception, realize its nuclear monopoly and thus dominate the world. If the underground nuclear test is resumed in the U.S., the world will be plunged in a nuclear arms race once again. The denuclearization and stability of the world will never be realized as long as the U.S., blinded by the preponderance of nuclear weapons, remains. (KCNA, “Denuclearization of World Is Impossible as Long as U.S. Remains: Rodong Sinmun, December 21, 2014)
infringing on Chinese sovereignty. It is also possible China Unicom simply unplugged its neighbor. Internet monitors said a maintenance issue was unlikely to have caused such a prolonged failure. Doug Madory, the director of Internet analysis at Dyn Research, an Internet performance management company, said that North Korean Internet access first became unstable late December 19. The situation worsened over the weekend, and by today, North Korea’s Internet was completely offline. “Their networks are under duress,” Madory said. “This is consistent with a DDoS attack on their routers,” he said, referring to a distributed denial of service attack, in which attackers flood a network with traffic until it collapses under the load. If the attack was American in origin — something the United States would probably never acknowledge — it would be a rare attack on another nation’s Internet connections. Certainly the United States is positioned to cause failures in many places in the Internet: Among the most interesting documents released by Edward J. Snowden, the former National Security Agency contractor now in Moscow, was a map of “implants” that the United States has put in strategic places, from network connections to individual computers, around the world. Those are most useful in cyberespionage, and the United States does a lot of that in China. Other Snowden documents showed that a major Chinese maker of network switching equipment, Huawei, was among American targets. So were leadership compounds and military locations. But there is no evidence that American cyberactivities in China have moved from surveillance to what experts call “computer network exploitation” or, the next step, actual attacks. And the Chinese themselves have been coy. China’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, said it was too early to know if Obama’s accusation against the North concerning the Sony attacks was true, Reuters reported. But she also said that China’s foreign minister, Wang Yi, “reeffirmed China’s relevant position, emphasizing China opposes all forms of cyberattacks and cyberterrorism” during a call on Sunday with Secretary of State John Kerry. While rare, disruption of computers and networks is certainly part of the American offensive playbook. During the Iraq war, there were periodic efforts to send fake messages to cellphones or computers to lure militants into traps. “Olympic Games,” the cyberattack on Iran’s nuclear enrichment facility, was an extremely sophisticated attack that destroyed centrifuges, the machines that enrich uranium. It was intended to slow Iran’s progress toward a nuclear weapons capability. The United States has never acknowledged the attacks, and the central role played by Obama did not become clear until the summer of 2012, more than two years after the events. But a denial-of-service attack is far easier to arrange on short notice than a destructive attack. And it may be more akin to the “cybervandalism” that Mr. Obama spoke of against Sony. It is temporary, and while it imposes some costs, it would be limited in the case of North Korea because of the scarce availability of Internet services in the country. “Proportional would mean that we would hack a North Korean movie company,” said Victor Cha of Georgetown University, who handled North Korean issues in the George W. Bush White House. “But that would not get you very far.” Obama spoke Friday, during an interview with CNN, of the possibility of restoring the North to the list of state sponsors of terrorism. That, too, would have limited impact: The country is already among the most isolated on earth. But it is also not clear that cutting off Internet service, if that is what happened in this case, would slow North Korean hackers. Many are believed to be based in China. Sony’s attackers used servers in Bolivia, Singapore and Thailand to launch their attacks. So any cutoff of Internet services would be mostly
symbolic, a warning shot that two can play the game of disruption. (Nicole Perlroth and David E. Sanger, “North Korea Loses Its Link to the Internet,” New York Times, December 23, 2014, p. A-1) The question of who pulled the plug immediately became the stuff of a global cyber-mystery. Was it a shadowy crew of guerrilla hackers, under the flag of Anonymous? A retaliatory strike from the United States? A betrayal from China, North Korea’s top ally and its Web gatekeeper? Or just a technical glitch or defensive maneuver from the Hermit Kingdom itself? A State Department official issued a somewhat coy non-denial when asked about U.S. involvement in North Korea’s blackout. The official wouldn’t comment on how the government plans to avenge North Korea’s alleged attack on Sony but added, “As we implement our responses, some will be seen, some will not be seen.” The mystery behind North Korea’s 9 1/2-hour outage highlights a paradox of modern cyberwarfare: As attacks become more prominent, the combatants – and their motives – are becoming harder to identify. “This is the standard for espionage: Things are murky. It’s not like the movies, where in the last scene someone ties it all together with one long soliloquy,” said James Lewis, a senior fellow at the Strategic Technologies Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. On December 18, researchers began to notice an uptick in attacks against North Korea’s Internet infrastructure. Designed to overload servers and Web sites with a flood of fake traffic, such “denial-of-service” attacks can render entire networks inoperable. The next day, a Twitter account affiliated with Anonymous – the collective behind numerous high-profile hacks – announced that a counterattack against North Korean hackers had begun. “Operation RIP North Korea, engaged. #OpRIPNK,” tweeted the account known as @theanonmessage. (That account was suspended by Twitter on Monday over separate threats it had made to release a sex tape belonging to rapper Iggy Azalea.) Today, a separate group, also claiming links to Anonymous, sought credit for the outages. The timing of the two tweets was consistent with statistics tracked by the security research firm Arbor Networks. On December 18, the company recorded two denial-of-service attacks. The next day it saw four. The wave peaked Saturday and Sunday with 5.97 gigabits of data inundating North Korea’s pipes every second. Late today, Dyn Research said North Korea’s Internet access was restored after a nine-hour, 31-minute outage. While it is unclear whether Anonymous played a role in North Korea’s downtime, at least six of the observed denial-of-service attacks originated from the United States, Arbor Networks said. But other security experts said hostile code can be adapted from other attacks and filtered covertly through foreign servers. Even basic cyberattacks can use decoys or distractions, including hosts of “zombie” computers or falsified location data, to shake pursuers off the trail. “The actual work of evidence-gathering and prosecution is so much more difficult in the digital world than in the biological world,” said Alec Ross, a senior fellow at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs. “Unlike a bullet, something ‘shot’ as a cyberweapon can be reused and repurposed. Obfuscation is much easier, and it’s much easier to distribute an attack.” Some security analysts noted that North Korea’s rudimentary Web pipeline flows directly through the routers of a company called China Unicom, leading some experts to speculate that Chinese hackers were responsible for the blackout. China may have seen the Sony hack as an embarrassing, unauthorized mishap from its small but loud ally, or thought the friction it sparked with the economies of the United States and Japan could be too destabilizing to ignore. “It is quite possible that the Chinese are reminding the North

12/23/14

Putting North Korea back on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism would only be "symbolic," the State Department said, making it unlikely for Washington to use the option to punish the North for its alleged hack on Sony Pictures. "There would not be a huge practical effect from the sanctions standpoint if they were put back on. Obviously, it's symbolic," State Department deputy spokeswoman Marie Harf said at a regular briefing. Harf said that the North is already one of the most heavily sanctioned countries on earth and is already under major sanctions that the designation as a terrorism sponsor would bring about, such as a ban on arms-related exports and sales and controls over exports in dual-use items. She said she does not want to pre-judge the outcome of the government's review of whether to put the North back onto the terrorism sponsor list, but added, "This may not be the best way to respond" to the hack on Sony. (Yonhap, “U.S. Unlikely to Relist N. Korea as State Sponsor of Terrorism,” December 23, 2014)

12/24/14

Some major North Korean websites remained blocked for the second straight day amid growing speculation over cyber warfare between Washington and Pyongyang. After going down on yesterday evening, the website of the North's main propaganda organ, Uriminzokkiri, had remained inaccessible before going back online this afternoon, although no updated contents were posted. Access to other well-known North Korean propaganda websites, including Ryugyong and Ryomyong, remained blocked as of this evening. Yonhap found the Internet servers of the affected websites were all located in Chinese cities, including Shenyang and Dandong. The location of the servers indicated the problem may be taking place in the network linking China and North Korea, some experts noted. (Yonhap, “Some N. Korea Websites Remain Down,” December 24, 2014)

Seoul and Beijing agreed during a summit in July that China will give notice if anyone claiming to be a South Korean is arrested or jailed in China. The notice should contain detailed information including the person’s identity, charges, and whereabouts and be given within four days of arrest.

The consular agreement was kept under wraps while it was being tweaked into shape but has now been submitted to the National Assembly. (Chosun Ilbo, “New Pact Could Protect N. Korea Defectors,” December 24, 2014)

12/26/14

While the world’s attention focuses on North Korea’s cyberwar with Sony Pictures, the Hermit Kingdom is rapidly increasing its stockpile of nuclear weapons material, with real little pushback from the United States. A new analysis of North Korea’s nuclear program by a group of top U.S. experts, led by David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, estimates that North Korea could have enough material for 79 nuclear weapons by 2020. The analysis, part of a larger project called “North Korea’s Nuclear Futures” being run by the U.S.-Korea Institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced and International Studies, has not been previously published. “North Korea is on the verge of being able to scale up its nuclear weapons
program to the level of the other major players, so it’s critical to head this off,” Albright said in an interview. He added, “It is on the verge of deploying a nuclear arsenal that would pose not only a threat to the United States and its allies but also to China.” According to the analysis, which included the input of a team of former government officials, nuclear experts and North Korea-watchers, the regime now has as many as four separate facilities churning out nuclear weapons material or preparing to do so. The best-known one, at Yongbyon, has a functioning 5-megawatt plutonium reactor, a uranium enrichment grid with thousands of centrifuges and a light-water reactor that could be used for either military or civilian purposes. The U.S. intelligence community also believes the North Koreans have a second centrifuge facility they have never acknowledged. Even if that second uranium facility is taken out of the equation, Albright’s team projects that North Korea will have enough material for 67 bombs in five years’ time. The light-water reactor at Yongbyon is not online yet, but it should be soon. Even if that reactor is never turned on or limited to civilian purposes, North Korea could still have 45 bombs by the time the next U.S. president is finishing up his (or her) first term. North Korea is estimated to have 30 to 34 kg of weapons-grade plutonium now, enough for around nine nuclear weapons, depending on the size of each bomb.

Representative Adam Schiff, a Democratic member of the House Intelligence Committee, told us that the intelligence attributing the attack to North Korea has “a level of certainty that you normally don’t see.” Schiff worried, however, that responding to North Korea with a cyber-attack may backfire: “They can do a lot more damage to us in a cyber battle, given our exposure and given that their infrastructure is already so dilapidated,” he said. Instead, Schiff said, Obama should consider financial measures. “There are ways the administration to turn up the economic heat, both as a way of punishing this rogue regime and its cronies and as a way of deterring further attacks of this kind,” he noted. Joel Wit, a former State Department official who runs the North Korea information website 38North, also participated in Albright’s latest analysis. He said all of the “proportional responses” Obama is likely reviewing now, such as putting the regime back on the terrorism-sponsors list, are likely to fail in terms of the overall goal of deterring North Korean belligerence. “These things are not going to affect them at all,” said Wit. “Even if you did put them back on the list, it’s symbolic. They’ve been figuring ways around sanctions for 60 years and they are pretty good at it. This is a durable regime.” The environment may not be ripe for engagement, but that doesn’t mean the Obama administration should just sit on its hands and respond piecemeal to each individual provocation, Wit said. It needs a new comprehensive policy to deal with the security threat from North Korea. Albright and Wit said the administration should come up with terms for a resumption of dialogue that the North Koreans and the U.S. can both accept. “The North Koreans are more than happy to make concessions to start things up again, but the U.S. has shown no flexibility in addressing North Korea’s position to arrive at a starting point that both sides can be happy with,” said Albright. “We have this reactive approach and it’s ad hoc,” Wit added. “The North Koreans aren’t taking us seriously. They feel they are in the driver’s seat here. It’s wrong to assume they are taking these steps like this Sony hack out of weakness. They are taking these steps because they feel there’s nothing we can do to them.” And this raises an uncomfortable question for the White House. Why does a targeted cyber-hack draw a tougher response from Obama than the amassing of a small nuclear arsenal? The message it sends to Pyongyang is that they can threaten their entire
region with nuclear weapons, just so long as they don’t touch Hollywood. (Josh Rogin and Eli Lake, “N. Korea’s Nukes Are Much Scarier Than Its Hacks,” Bloomberg, Japan Times, December 26, 2014)

South Korea said it will soon propose talks with North Korea on ways to set the wages for the North’s workers at the Kaesong Industrial Complex. “The government has plans to offer consultations with the North in the near future in order to resolve the issue,” the unification ministry’s deputy spokeswoman, Park Soo-jin, told reporters. “The timing has not been decided yet.” The South is upset about the North’s unilateral decision to amend the wage system for its 53,000 workers at the joint venture by scrapping the 5-percent cap on wage increase and relaxing requirements for overtime and severance pay. (Korea Herald, “South Korea to Offer Talks with North on Kaesong Wages,” December 26, 2014)

KCNA: “The DPRK Red Cross Society handed over a south Korean resident, who illegally entered into the territory of the north side, to the south Korean Red Cross via Panmunjom [today]. (KCNA, “S. Korean Man Handed over to S. Korea Red Cross,” December 26, 2014)

Access to major North Korean websites remained unstable for the fourth straight day following a U.S. hint at cyber retaliation last week. The homepage of KCNA was blocked until early this morning. Access to the homepages of other main propaganda organs, including Uriminzokkiri and Ryugyong, as well as the website of Air Koryo, also remained unstable as of this morning. (Yonhap, “Major N. Korean Websites Remain Unstable for 4th Day,” December 26, 2014)

NDC Policy Department spokesman “denouncing the U.S. for screening even dishonest and reactionary movie hurting the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK and agitating terrorism while groundlessly linking the unheard-of hacking at the Sony Pictures Entertainment to the DPRK. …Much scared at the hacking attack of justice made by the "guardians of peace", the Sony Pictures Entertainment hastily suspended the screening of the above-said movie. But at the zealous prodding of the U.S. administration and wicked conservative forces, it again buckled down to distributing the movie, failing to guess a miserable fate to be faced by it in the future. … U.S. President Obama is the chief culprit who forced the Sony Pictures Entertainment to "indiscriminately distribute" the movie and took the lead in appeasing and blackmailing cinema houses and theatres in the U.S. mainland to distribute the movie. Obama always goes reckless in words and deeds like a monkey in a tropical forest. When the Sony Pictures Entertainment made public a statement that it would give up the distribution of the movie, frightened by the merciless retaliatory strike, Obama urged it to unconditionally screen the movie, claiming that the disgrace suffered by Sony Pictures Entertainment means sorrow of the U.S., why did it issue such a statement as holding a white flag without informing the president of it?, it is the violation of the freedom of expression and a threat to the security of the U.S. and it is necessary to make symmetric counteraction, considering the hacking attack was made by "north Korea", though it is not clear who was behind it. … Dancing to the tune of Obama’s outbursts, Kerry, McCain, Bolton and other wicked
conservative politicians zealously prodded the Sony Pictures Entertainment into distributing the movie, blustering who else but "north Korea" caused property losses worth hundreds of millions of dollars to it. If the U.S. is to persistently insist that the hacking attack was made by the DPRK, the U.S. should produce evidence without fail, though belatedly. If the U.S. cannot open to public evidence due to "protection of sensitive information source" as expressed by the FBI, the U.S. may conduct a joint investigation with the DPRK in camera. However, the U.S. is behaving recklessly, trumpeting about "symmetric counteraction," "combination of invisible sanctions and visible sanctions" and "re-designation of sponsor of terrorism" while linking the hacking attack with the DPRK without clear evidence and sure ground. In actuality, the U.S., a big country, started disturbing the internet operation of major media of the DPRK, not knowing shame like children playing a tag. We had already warned the U.S. not act like beating air after being hit hard by others. Of course, we do not expect the gangsters to pay heed to our warnings. When the public is becoming increasingly vocal about the hacking attack on the DPRK media this time, the U.S. feigned ignorance, saying that they should ask "north Korea" and the U.S. neither admits nor denies. The prevailing situation clearly shows that the U.S. is adding to its crimes by screening the movie "The Interview." With no rhetoric can the U.S. justify the screening and distribution of the movie. This is because “The Interview” is an illegal, dishonest and reactionary movie quite contrary to the UN Charter, which regards respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and protection of human rights as a legal keynote, and international laws. It is also because it is a new politically-motivated provocation made by the U.S., pursuant to its hostile policy toward the DPRK as it is a movie for agitating terrorism produced with high-ranking politicians of the U.S. administration involved. This is the reason why the world is branding "The Interview" as a typical product of the U.S. anachronistic act of challenging not only the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK but also human justice and conscience and encroaching upon peace and security. The anti-U.S. sacred war at present precisely means protecting justice and peace. If the U.S. persists in American-style arrogant, high-handed and gangster-like arbitrary practices despite the repeated warnings of the DPRK, the U.S. should bear in mind that its failed political affairs will face inescapable deadly blows.” (KCNA, “U.S. Can Never Justify Screening and Distribution of Reactionary Movie: Policy Department of NDC of DPRK,” December 27, 2014)

South Korea, the United States and Japan signed a pact next week on sharing their military intelligence about North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs in the face of Pyongyang’s evolving security threats. The three countries have been working on the signing of an agreement on sharing military secrets since May, when they agreed to launch working-level discussions during their defense ministers’ talks in Singapore. The conclusion comes two years after a bilateral information-sharing pact between Seoul and Tokyo was ruptured due to fierce public criticism in South Korea. "The three nations have agreed to sign the trilateral deal on Monday to share their intelligence on North Korea’s nuclear and missile threats,” an official from Seoul’s defense ministry said. "Sharing of intelligence will be strictly limited to the North’s nuclear and missile programs in such various forms as documents, photos and digital electronic data. We will exchange secrets with Japan not directly but via the U.S.,” he noted. "We believe
that the arrangement will be very effective in deterring the communist country from launching provocations in the first place,” the ministry official said. “The cooperation between the three nations is expected to boost the quality of the intelligence on North Korea, which will enable the allies to respond to possible provocations in a swifter fashion,” he noted. The scope of military information to be shared among the three will be confined to intelligence on threats from North Korea, the officials here stressed, in an apparent move to circumvent expected opposition from the public, which has opposed any military cooperation with Japan, its former colonial ruler. “The arrangement does not mean sharing military secrets in a broad fashion,” said the official. “Rather than directly sharing the sensitive information with Japan, we will give our intelligence first to the U.S. and the tips will then be shared with Japan upon our approval, and vice versa,” he noted. While the specifics about information sharing will be determined through further discussions later, the three-nation arrangement will be legally binding as it is based on the Seoul-Washington and Washington-Tokyo treaties on sharing confidential information, according to the official. In response to criticism that the agreement will pave the way for South Korea to join the U.S.-led missile-defense (MD) system participated in by Japan, Seoul officials stressed the government’s push for its own missile shield. “We would share military secrets with the U.S. and Japan, but we will act on our own under the current mechanism of the Korea-U.S. partnership when we need to respond to possible North Korean provocations,” another defense ministry official said. Rebuffing a U.S. call to join its MD system, which is widely seen as intended to keep China in check, Seoul has been building the Korea Air and Missile Defense System (KAMD). Asked about China’s possible opposition, the Seoul official said nothing would come before national security. “We’ve not received any comments from China regarding the issue, and we don’t predict what reaction China would take,” the official said. “We’ve decided to share the intelligence with the U.S. and Japan for our security interests that cannot be compromised in any case.” (Oh Seok-min, “S. Korea, U.S., Japan Sign Info-Sharing Pact on N.K. Nukes,” Yonhap, December 26, 2014) Under the pact, the sharing of classified information will be limited to North Korea’s missile and nuclear weapons programs. In addition, Japan and South Korea will share that intelligence not directly, but via the United States. Still, analysts said the fact that the memorandum was signed at all represented a possible warming of the relations between the two nations. They said that while Japan had always been more open to signing such an agreement, South Korea had to overcome deep distrust about Japan to sign the deal. “This small success could be an important turning point,” said Nam Chang-hee, an expert on Japan-Korea military relations at Inha University in Incheon, South Korea. “It could build Korean public confidence in Japan, which shares the same North Korean threat.” The last time Japan and South Korea tried to sign an intelligence-sharing agreement, two years ago, the deal unraveled before it could be completed because of public opposition in Korea. Officials said that today’s signing reflected a renewed appreciation of North Korea’s ability to threaten its neighbors with not only nuclear weapons, but also by less conventional means such as cyberattacks. The United States has blamed the North for hacking the film company Sony Pictures in November, while South Korea is investigating whether the North was behind a cyberattack on a nuclear plant operator. “For Japan, the United States and Korea, how to deal with the threat of North Korean nuclear weapons and missiles is a shared security concern,” said Japan’s defense
minister, Gen Nakatani. “This memorandum of understanding is meaningful because it improves the national security of the three nations.” Defense analysts said the deal was possible only because of the central role played by the United States, which is trusted by both sides and which stations tens of thousands of military personnel in Japan and South Korea. The United States did not play a direct role in the deal that fell through two years ago, which was to be a bilateral pact between Japan and South Korea. Still, defense analysts also said there were limits to how far the countries could work together. Nam said the Koreans wanted to explicitly limit the pact to North Korea because of differences in how the two countries perceive another neighbor, China. He said that while Japan had been locked in a heated contest with China over disputed islands in the East China Sea, South Korea was eager not to be seen as taking sides against the Chinese, with whom it has good relations. “This agreement is limited so as not to send the wrong signal to China,” Nam said. “The Koreans want to make it clear that this is aimed at North Korea, not China.” (Martin Fackler, “Japan and South Korea Vow to Share Intelligence about North via the U.S.,” New York Times, December 30, 2014, p. A-7)

Kim Jong-un’s New Year address: “ Seventy years have passed since our nation was divided by outside forces. In those decades the world has made a tremendous advance and the times have undergone dramatic changes, but our nation has not yet achieved reunification, suffering the pain of division. It is a deplorable fact known to everyone and it is lamentable to everyone. No longer can we bear and tolerate the tragedy of national division that has continued century after century. Last year we put forward crucial proposals for improved inter-Korean relations and national reunification and made sincere efforts for their implementation. Our efforts, however, could not bear due fruit owing to the obstructive moves by the anti-reunification forces within and without; instead the north-south relations have been on a headlong rush to aggravation. However complicated the situation may be and whatever obstacles and difficulties may stand in our way, we should unfailingly achieve national reunification, a lifetime wish of the President and the General and the greatest desire of the nation, and build a dignified and prosperous reunified country on this land. “Let the whole nation join efforts to open up a broad avenue to independent reunification in this year of the 70th anniversary of national liberation!” -this is the slogan of struggle the entire Korean nation should hold up. We should remove the danger of war, ease the tension and create a peaceful environment on the Korean peninsula. The large-scale war games ceaselessly held every year in south Korea are the root cause of the escalating tension on the peninsula and the danger of nuclear war facing our nation. It is needless to say that there can be neither trustworthy dialogue nor improved inter-Korean relations in such a gruesome atmosphere in which war drills are staged against the dialogue partner. To cling to nuclear war drills against the fellow countrymen in collusion with aggressive outside forces is an extremely dangerous act of inviting calamity. We will resolutely react against and mete out punishment to any acts of provocation and war moves that infringe upon the sovereignty and dignity of our country. The south Korean authorities should discontinue all war moves including the reckless military exercises they conduct with foreign forces and choose to ease the tension on the Korean peninsula and create a peaceful environment. The United States, the very one that divided our nation
into two and has imposed the suffering of national division upon it for 70 years, should desist from pursuing the anachronistic policy hostile towards the DPRK and reckless acts of aggression and boldly make a policy switch. The north and the south should refrain from seeking confrontation of systems while absolutizing their own ideologies and systems but achieve great national unity true to the principle of By Our Nation Itself to satisfactorily resolve the reunification issue in conformity with the common interests of the nation. If they try to force their ideologies and systems upon each other, they will never settle the national reunification issue in a peaceful way, only bringing confrontation and war. Though the people-centered socialist system of our own style is the most advantageous, we do not force it on south Korea and have never done so. The south Korean authorities should neither seek “unification of systems” that incites distrust and conflict between the north and the south nor insult the other side’s system and make impure solicitation to do harm to their fellow countrymen, travelling here and there. The north and the south, as they had already agreed, should resolve the national reunification issue in the common interests of the nation transcending the differences in ideology and system. They should briskly hold dialogue, negotiations and exchanges and make contact to relink the severed ties and blood vessels of the nation and bring about a great turn in inter-Korean relations. It is the unanimous desire of the fellow countrymen for both sides to stop fighting and pave a new way for reunification by concerted efforts. They should no longer waste time and energy over pointless arguments and trifling matters but write a new chapter in the history of inter-Korean relations. Nothing is impossible if our nation shares one purpose and joins efforts. On the road for reunification the north and the south had got such charter and great program for reunification as the July 4 Joint Statement, the historic June 15 Joint Declaration and the October 4 Declaration, thus demonstrating to the whole world the nation’s determination and mettle to reunify the country. We think that it is possible to resume the suspended high-level contacts and hold sectoral talks if the south Korean authorities are sincere in their stand towards improving inter-Korean relations through dialogue. And there is no reason why we should not hold a summit meeting if the atmosphere and environment for it are created. In the future, too, we will make every effort to substantially promote dialogue and negotiations. The entire Korean nation should turn out together in the nationwide movement for the country’s reunification so as to glorify this year as a landmark in opening up a broad avenue to independent reunification. Last year, in the international arena, hostilities and bloodshed persisted in several countries and regions due to the imperialists’ outrageous arbitrariness and undisguised infringement upon their sovereignty, which posed a serious threat to global peace and security. Especially, owing to the United States’ extremely hostile policy aimed at isolating and suffocating our Republic, the bulwark of socialism and fortress of independence and justice, the vicious cycle of tension never ceased and the danger of war grew further on the Korean peninsula. The United States and its vassal forces are resorting to the despicable "human rights" racket as they were foiled in their attempt to destroy our self-defensive nuclear deterrent and stifle our Republic by force. The present situation, in which high-handedness based on strength is rampant and justice and truth are trampled ruthlessly in the international arena, eloquently demonstrates that we were just in our efforts to firmly consolidate our self-reliant defense capability with the nuclear deterrent as its backbone and safeguard our national sovereignty,
the lifeblood of the country, under the unfurled banner of Songun. **As long as the enemy persists in its moves to stifle our socialist system, we will consistently adhere to the Songun politics** and the line of promoting the two fronts simultaneously and firmly defend the sovereignty of the country and the dignity of the nation, no matter how the international situation and the structure of relations of our surrounding countries may change. On the basis of the revolutionary principles and independent stand, we will expand and develop foreign relations in a multilateral and positive way, giving top priority to the dignity and interests of the country.” (KCNA, “Kim Jong-un’s New Year Address,” January 1, 2015)