

## **MONTHLY RECAP: AUGUST**

### **DPRK NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS**

On August 11, 45 days after U.S. President Bush announced his intention to remove North Korea from the list of terror-sponsor states, it became administratively possible to do so but Washington “need[s] a strong verification regime in order to remove North Korea from the list,” according to State Department spokesperson Kelley Osterthaler. As talks on a verification regime have stalled, North Korea will remain on the list. North Korea responded by accusing the United States of breaching the “action for action” principle, and accused the U.S. of trying to stonewall negotiations.

North Korea announced on August 26 that it had stopped disablement of the nuclear facilities at Yongbyon due to Washington’s failure to remove the North from its list of states sponsoring terrorism. Pyongyang went on to say that it “will consider soon a step to restore the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon to their original state.” The White House responded by reiterating that it “will not take North Korea off the state-sponsor-of-terrorism list until [Washington has] a protocol in place to verify the dismantling and accounting for Korea’s nuclear program.”

It was reported by Radio Free Asia on August 18 that Pyongyang has asked the United States to support its bid for membership into the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank, and in return, it will accept the U.S.-proposed nuclear verification regime.

### **INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS**

Following North Korea's repeated refusals of the South Korean demand for a joint investigation into the shooting of a South Korean tourist visiting the Mt. Kumgang resort in the North last month, North Korea announced on August 3 that all unnecessary South Koreans would be expelled from the resort area and deported to the South. North Korea's Central Broadcasting Station carried the news of the expulsion, reporting for the first time on the shooting that took place 23 days prior.

A poll reported by Heraldbiz on August 4 showed that 70 percent of South Korean respondents thought the Lee Myung-bak government's policy toward the North is not better than the Roh Moo-hyun Participatory Government's. 36.1 percent of respondents answered that the policy was no different, and 33.9 percent answered that the new policy is worse than the previous government's. 17.1 percent thought the new policy was an improvement, while 12.9 percent answered, "don't know."

South Korean companies operating in the joint-Korean Kaesong Industrial Complex have raised the minimum wage for North Korean workers by 5 percent in August. Approximately 23,000 North Koreans work for approximately 70 South Korean companies there.

North Korea has reworded the official letter of invitation extended to South Koreans allowed to visit the North. While the previous letter stated, "we invite" and "guarantee the safety..." of visitors, the new letter "agrees" to allow visitations and "offer accommodation" to those crossing the border.

A North Korean defector living in the South was arrested on August 27, charged with passing classified information to the North, including the locations of military installations, personal information on military officers, and lists of North Korean defectors. Won Jeong-hwa entered South Korea in 2001, after having worked as a North Korean agent in China uncovering and repatriating defectors there.

#### DPRK-JAPAN ABDUCTION ISSUE

After two days of talks in Shenyang, China, North Korea and Japan reached an agreement on August 13 on investigation into the whereabouts of Japanese residents kidnapped by North Korea. North Korea has agreed to complete the investigation this fall, as Japan plans to lift restrictions on chartered flights and civilian travel between the two countries.

#### DPRK ECONOMY

On August 5, the (North) Korean Workers' Party newspaper, Rodong Shinmun, reported that during an inspection of military facilities, Kim Jong Il called on the Korean People's Army to "actively develop the sideline economy in order to provide the soldiers with better living conditions."

During two days of talks from August 5-6 in Pyongyang, Russian Railways signed an agreement with North Korea to lease for 49 years a 52-kilometer section of track connecting the Trans-Siberian Railroad to the North Korean port of Rajin. Russian Railways will refurbish the railway and also build a container terminal at the port.

## DPRK FOOD SITUATION

North Korean Central News Agency reported on August 4 that heavy rains throughout the country over the weekend, including 12.7 inches in Kangwon Province, “inflicted heavy losses to various sectors of the national economy including agriculture.”

It was reported by the Choson Shinbo, a pro-North Korea newspaper based in Japan, that North Korean scientists have developed a corn and soybean noodle that have twice as much protein and five times as much fat as ordinary wheat or corn noodles. The paper reported that the North Korean authorities are preparing to make the noodles available throughout the country.

## DPRK AID

On August 5, North Korean news announced the arrival of the second shipment of U.S. food aid to the port of Nampo, part of the 500,000 tons pledged by Washington. The first shipment was 37,000 tons, and arrived in late June.

On August 8, South Korea provided part of the 100 million tons of fuel oil or equivalent assistance agreed upon during six-party talks, sending 600 tons of steel roundbar.

## DPRK MASS GAMES

North Korea’s Arirang Festival mass games got underway on August 4, bringing together

100,000 performers presenting, according to the (North) Korean Central News Agency, a “three-dimensional fascinating extravaganza, a good combination of elegant music and dances, dynamic mass gymnastic movements, super-large screens, the ever-changing background of the stadium, splendid electronic displays, laser lighting, and more.” The games will continue through September.

#### DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS

A joint statement at the end of the U.S.-ROK summit meeting on August 6 stated, “The two presidents reaffirmed their commitment to improving the human rights situation in North Korea and shared the view that in the process of normalizing relations, meaningful progress should be made on improving North Korea’s human rights record.” This was the first time an official joint statement included a stance on DPRK human rights.

On August 7, it was announced that U.S. Special Envoy on DPRK Human Rights Jay Lefkowitz would not be allowed to visit the Kaesong Industrial Complex during his visit to South Korea. The North Korean response to his request was that the trip was “not appropriate.”

A plenary meeting of the ROK National Human Rights Commission on August 5 urged South Korea’s foreign minister to make “multifaceted diplomatic efforts” to convince China not to repatriate North Korean refugees and to protect defectors’ rights under international law.

#### DPRK AT THE OLYMPICS

North Korea came away from the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics (ranked 33 of 204) with six medals, taking gold in Women's 63 kg Weightlifting and Women's Vault Gymnastics, Silver in Women's 52 kg and Men's 66 kg Judo, and bronze in Men's 66 kg Judo, Women's 58 kg Weightlifting, and Women's 63 kg Judo. A North Korean shooter had won the Men's 50 m and 10 m pistol competitions, but was later stripped of the medals after testing positive for the banned substance propranolol. North Korea sent 63 athletes to compete in 11 sports. The two Koreas were unable to reach an agreement on a joint Olympic team, and the previously agreed-upon joint cheering squad that was to travel from South Korea through North Korea to Beijing by train also fell through.