

MONTHLY RECAP : SEPTEMBER

DPRK Satellite Launch Capability Touted

On September 1, as North Korea celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the launch of its Taepodong-1 rocket, it announced that the country's "technology has advanced to the level where we can freely launch a working satellite at any time." It also called the launch of the Taepodong ten years ago "successful", while other countries' intelligence agencies have questioned that in the past.

DPRK Nuclear Issue

It was reported on September 3 that North Korea had begun to move stored equipment at the Yongbyon nuclear complex, a sign that it is preparing to go through with threats to restart its nuclear program due to the U.S. failure to remove it from the list of terrorism-sponsoring states.

On September 6, State Department Assistant Secretary Christopher Hill reiterated that the United States would remove North Korea from the list of terrorism sponsoring states "immediately" if an agreement on a nuclear facility verification regime was reached.

On September 8, it was reported that the North reiterated its rejection of the U.S. demand for an "international level" of verification, citing the nation's "dignity and pride" about its "grandness".

On September 22, it became known that North Korea had asked the International Atomic Energy Agency to remove seals and surveillance equipment from the Yongbyon site. On the

24th, IAEA announced that its inspectors had been kicked out and that North Korea was set to restart its nuclear reprocessing plant.

On September 29, the State Department announced that Assistant Secretary Chris Hill would be traveling to North Korea by Pyongyang's invitation to hold talks on halting nuclear issues.

DPRK International Events

North Korea kicked off the 11th Pyongyang International Film Festival on September 17, with more than 110 films from over 40 countries.

The Pyongyang Autumn International Trade Fair opened on September 22, with more than 150 companies, over 70 from China, from 15 different countries participating in the four-day event.

Inter Korean Spending

The ROK Ministry of Unification announced that as of the end of July, a mere 117 billion won, or less than 9 percent of the funds budgeted for 2008, of the Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund had been spent.

Inter-Korean Exchanges

The ROK Ministry of Unification confirmed on September 2 that North Korea had notified a South Korean charity group that it would accept food aid from it. The North had previously rejected aid from the group as it turned its back on all assistance from the South due to the policies of President Lee Myung-bak.

ROK Unification Minister Kim Ha-joong announced that the ROK would resume food aid to the North, reversing the previous policy of waiting until Pyongyang requested aid. The ministry will also reportedly allow group travel to the North, which had been suspended in the wake of the shooting of a tourist at the Mt Kumgang resort area. However, on September 21 it was announced that the South was reconsidering these measures and may not provide aid if North Korea continues to restore nuclear facilities.

Hydroelectric power generation in North Korea is leading to water shortages in parts of the South. An ROK National Assembly lawmaker urged the government to take measures as it was reported that the completion in 2003 of the North's Innam Dam in Wonsan lead to a decrease of 43 percent in the amount of water flowing down to the South Korea Hwacheon Dam.

U.S. Food Assistance

On September 9, it was reported that 24,500 tons of corn from the United States had arrived and been distributed in the DPRK. It is the fourth shipment of food delivered as part of Six Party Talks agreements.

DPRK Espionage

As last month's arrest of a North Korean spy posing as a defector has raised questions regarding the South's screening of Northern refugees, it was announced at the beginning of the month that military sources believe as many as 50 DPRK spies have infiltrated the military, and around 100

cases of espionage are currently under investigation.

On September 3, North Korea denied that Won Jeong-hwa was working as a spy, and accused South Korea of launching “a confrontational racket” against the North by concocting the espionage incidents.

DPRK Defectors

In the wake of bad press following the arrest of a defector accused of espionage, it was reported on September 4 that 41 DPRK defectors had been charged in an insurance fraud scheme that police believe has been ongoing for over four years.

A motion was submitted to the National Assembly on September 4 calling for revision of the DPRK refugee protection law to include a one-year training program, rather than the current 8-week program offered by the ROK government.

DPRK-Japan Relations

Japan’s Mainichi Shimbun reported on September 4 that the resignation of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda was expected to lead to North Korea’s delay in completing the reinvestigation into missing Japanese abductees. It was previously agreed that the results of the reinvestigation would be reported by the end of autumn.

Kim Jong Il Health

Rumors began circulating about the Health of Kim Jong Il as he failed to appear at a military parade held to mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of North Korea on September 9. He failed to appear at harvest festival celebrations (Chuseok) later in the month, fueling rumors that he had suffered a stroke and was in recovery while being attended to by a team of Chinese doctors. No signs of domestic rumors, market reactions, or political posturing have been reported.