



Morning Alert - Monday, August 22, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most networks gave top play to reports that powerful Typhoon Mindulle is approaching the Kanto region, saying that the season's No. 9 typhoon may make landfall near Tokyo at around noon today.

Top stories in national dailies included accounting manipulation totaling 230 billion yen at 85 local governments (Asahi), the closing of the Rio Olympics on Sunday (Mainichi, Yomiuri), Renesas Electronic's final negotiations to acquire American chipmaker Intersil ([Nikkei](#)), and a GOJ plan to develop its own electromagnetic railgun (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

ROK leader to visit Japan in November

Saturday morning's Sankei led with the disclosure by a source involved in Japan-ROK relations that President Park is considering traveling to Japan in November to attend a proposed trilateral summit with Japan and China. She would also likely hold a bilateral summit with PM Abe to discuss North Korea and economic cooperation between Tokyo and Seoul. The South Korean leader has taken a more positive stance toward improving ties with the Abe administration following the comfort women agreement. Seoul is also eager to strengthen cooperation with Tokyo and Washington in view of North Korea's continued provocations and China's opposition to the planned deployment of a U.S. military THAAD missile defense platform in South Korea.

Japanese politician conveys to China PM Abe's desire for summit with Xi

Most Saturday morning papers reported from Beijing that former Chief Cabinet Secretary Kawamura met with the Chinese Communist Party's No. 4 official on Friday and conveyed PM Abe's wish to hold a bilateral summit with President Xi on the margins of the G20 summit to be held in Hangzhou in early September. Abe desires to discuss with Xi the global economy and international terrorism. Kawamura also expressed concern about Chinese patrol operations in the Senkaku vicinity.

In a related development, several Saturday papers reported that the PLA Navy conducted a naval exercise in the Sea of Japan on Friday, speculating that the drill involving numerous warships was intended to hold Japan in check. However, the Chinese reportedly explained that the drill was not directed at any specific country.

Japan, China, ROK fail to arrange foreign ministers' talks in Tokyo

Monday's Mainichi wrote that although senior diplomats from Japan, China, and South Korea agreed to strengthen economic cooperation between their nations during their talks in Tokyo on Sunday, they failed to finalize the details of a foreign ministerial meeting envisioned for Aug. 23-24 in Tokyo. Deputy Foreign Minister Akiba held separate bilateral meetings with his Chinese and ROK counterparts. The Japanese diplomat lodged a protest over Chinese government ships' recent moves near the Senkaku Islands during his meeting with his Chinese counterpart, while he and his ROK counterpart discussed such issues as North Korea and the comfort women.

Sankei wrote that attention is focused on whether during their foreign ministers' meeting this week the three nations will be able to lay the groundwork for an Abe-Xi meeting in September and a trilateral summit in November. The paper speculated that the atmosphere of the talks will be unfavorable due to Tokyo's displeasure over Chinese government ships' recent sailing in Japanese waters near the Senkaku Islands and Beijing's opposition to South Korea's decision to deploy a U.S. military THAAD system.

China says Japan's SDF deployment in South China Sea "unacceptable"

Sunday's Tokyo Shimbun reported on the disclosure by several sources involved in Sino-Japanese relations that Chinese Ambassador to Japan Cheng told a senior GOJ official in late June that Japan would be "crossing the line" if it dispatched SDF warships to take part in U.S. military freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea. The envoy hinted at China's possible military response to such a scenario by saying that "China would not back off on sovereignty issues and would not be afraid of military provocations."

Japanese envoy briefly detained in Iran

Sunday's Mainichi said Japanese Ambassador to Iran Kobayashi was briefly detained and questioned by local security authorities in late April when he attended a party sponsored by an Iranian contact of his. Kobayashi and other diplomats, including the Australian ambassador, were requested to stay when security officials conducted a raid at the venue even though they insisted on diplomatic

immunity. As Kobayashi and the others were not allowed to leave the site for about an hour, the GOJ later lodged a protest with the Iranian Foreign Ministry. The paper explained that Iranian conservative elements are concerned about the inflow of foreign cultures, which has become increasingly active following the relaxation of Western sanctions in January. Most Monday papers ran similar reports.

Japanese interpreter on visa-free visit detained on Russian-held island

Monday's Asahi and Yomiuri wrote that a Japanese interpreter has been questioned by Russian authorities and is being detained on Kunashiri, one of the four Russian-held islands off Hokkaido, after visiting the island as part of a visa-free trip. This is the first time that a Japanese national has been held on an island disputed between Japan and Russia after visiting there under the bilateral visa-free program, which began in 1992. The interpreter was questioned by the Russians when he underwent a baggage inspection to leave the island. Russian media reported that a Japanese man carrying 4 million yen in cash was detained on Saturday because he had not declared possession of the money. However, they did not report whether it was the interpreter who was detained. MOFA called on Russia via its embassy in Tokyo to allow the interpreter leave the island.

Japan to increase engagement with Africa to counter China

Sunday's Asahi reported that PM Abe and the leaders of 54 African nations will assemble in Nairobi in late August for the sixth round of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). The GOJ-initiated economic conference will be held in Africa for the first time to counter China's active diplomatic and economic advancement there. The GOJ also plans to increase the frequency of the conference from every five years to every three years.

In a related development, Monday's Mainichi wrote that Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Takisawa held talks with Egyptian President el-Sisi in Cairo on Aug. 21 and called for Egypt's cooperation for TICAD. Takizawa delivered a letter from Prime Minister Abe to the Egyptian leader calling for his participation in the African development conference. El-Sisi responded by saying he will make a final decision by carefully examining the situation in the region.

SECURITY

F-35s to be stationed at Iwakuni from January

Saturday morning's Yomiuri reported on the disclosure by a GOJ source that a total of 16 USAF F-35s will be deployed at MCAS Iwakuni next year. Ten planes will arrive there in January and the six others will be deployed in August 2017. The deployment of the state-of-the-art stealth fighters is meant to enhance deterrence against China and North Korea.

Japan to upgrade F-15s

Sunday's Nikkei reported on a Defense Ministry plan to upgrade Japan's existing F-15s in order to respond to aerial provocations by the Chinese over the East China Sea. The number of air-to-air missiles carried by the fighter jets will be doubled to 16 and their wings will be overhauled to improve their durability. Because Japan's F-35s will not be deployed until FY2017 starting at ASDF Misawa base, the ministry believes that upgrading the existing fleet of some 200 F-15s is essential to enhance air defense over the East China Sea.

In a related development, the paper wrote on Monday that the GOJ will step up Japan's defense around the Senkaku Islands by allocating about 60 billion yen in the FY2016 supplementary budget to the building of three new coast guard ships and additional funding in the FY2017 budget.

Japan to deploy surface-to-air missiles on Nansei Islands

Monday's Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ has decided to deploy upgraded surface-to-air missiles on the Nansei Islands to enhance Japan's air defense over the Senkakus and other remote islands. The GOJ plans to earmark 17.7 billion yen in the FY2017 budget for the project with the goal of deploying the missiles around 2021.

MOD to build new submarine

Sunday's Sankei wrote that the Defense Ministry plans to allocate some 76 billion yen in the FY2017 budget to build a new submarine to succeed the Soryu-class attack submarine, which is said to be the most advanced conventional submarine in the world. While mentioning the separate plan by the ministry to upgrade an ASDF wing based in Naha, Okinawa, the daily said Japan is keen to enhance deterrence against China's provocations around the East China Sea.

Futenma Air Base to undergo renovations

Most Saturday morning papers said that in response to a U.S. request, the GOJ plans to refurbish outdated facilities at MCAS Futenma starting this year, noting that hangars, barracks, and other structures will be updated at Japan's expense. The renovations will probably be completed within a few years. Okinawa Governor Onaga expressed concern on Friday that the installation may remain in its current location indefinitely as a result.

Court hearing on landfill permit dispute concluded

All Saturday morning papers wrote that Okinawa Governor Onaga appeared at the Naha Branch of the Fukuoka High Court on Friday to deliver his final argument in a lawsuit filed by the central government over the legality of the governor's rescindment of permission to conduct landfill work for FRF construction off Camp Schwab. The governor said if the court rules against him and the Supreme Court upholds the ruling, he will have no choice but to respect it. The high court is expected to issue a ruling on Sept. 16. Mainichi said the Abe administration is confident that it will win the case.

Okinawa city endorses relocation of U.S. military warehouses

Saturday morning's Yomiuri wrote that Okinawa Mayor Kuwae met with a senior MOD official on Friday and expressed his municipality's readiness to accept a plan to move U.S. military warehouses from the Makiminato Service Area to Kadena Depot in exchange for increased subsidies from the central government.

Abe denies U.S. media report on his opposition to “no first use” policy

All Sunday papers took up press remarks on Saturday by PM Abe, who dismissed a recent Washington Post allegation that he conveyed Japan's concern to PACOM Commander Harris about President Obama's desire to declare no first use of nuclear weapons. The premier was quoted as saying: “There were no discussions whatsoever on the subject.... My understanding is that no decision has been made by the USG on no first use. We would like to maintain close communications with the U.S.” Asahi said this episode illustrates inconsistency in Japan's policy of calling for nuclear disarmament while at the same time relying on the extended deterrence provided by the U.S.

Japan abstains from voting on treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons

All Saturday evening papers wrote from Geneva that a UN panel on nuclear arms reduction adopted a report on Friday calling for a global conference next year to discuss the proposed Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) aimed at prohibiting nuclear arms. A total of 68 nations supported the panel report and 22 countries opposed it. Japan, South Korea, and 11 other UN members abstained. The dailies said in the course of panel discussions, the GOJ made clear its opposition to the NWC, with Asahi saying this runs counter to the wishes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Mainichi said Japan is in a dilemma because it has to continue to rely on the U.S. nuclear umbrella in the face of North Korea's relentless nuclear development even though the momentum for nuclear disarmament has been boosted following President Obama's trip to Hiroshima in May. Yomiuri raised doubts about the feasibility of the NWC since the five nuclear powers, including the U.S., boycotted panel deliberations on the treaty.

PKO in South Sudan may become point of contention at autumn Diet session

Saturday morning's Nikkei wrote that concern is mounting about ongoing SDF peacekeeping operations in South Sudan on account of continued conflict there. Although the Defense Ministry has stressed that stability is gradually being restored, some Japanese politicians are concerned about the efficacy of the ceasefire accord between the warring parties because the SDF mission is premised upon it. As the GOJ plans to give Sudan-bound SDF personnel the additional duty starting in November of going to the defense of foreign troops in the event of an enemy attack, the paper projected that the SDF operation may become a major point of contention during the Diet session to be convened in September.

ECONOMY

Senior DP official expresses opposition to early Diet ratification of TPP

Sunday's Yomiuri highlighted a speech on Saturday by DP Secretary General Edano, who stressed that there is no need for Japan to pass TPP legislation in the Diet session in the fall because the U.S. Congress is unlikely to ratify the regional free trade deal anytime soon due to opposition from Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

POLITICS

Kishida becomes third longest serving foreign minister

Monday's Sankei wrote that Kishida had served 1,335 days as foreign minister as of Aug. 21, becoming the third longest serving foreign minister following Shigeru Yoshida (1,909 days) and Masayoshi Ohira (1,472 days). Kishida, whose accomplishments thus far include President Obama's visit to Hiroshima and the Japan-ROK agreement on the comfort women issue, now plans to turn his attention to relations with Russia, including the Northern Territories issue.

SOCIETY

Survey shows Japanese are pessimistic about future

Saturday evening's Asahi published the results of a survey taken in Japan, Indonesia, and India by a private Japanese think tank that showed only 20% of Japanese were optimistic about their future, marking a sharp contrast to the two other nations. Three out of five Indian and Indonesian respondents expressed optimism. Japanese are reportedly pessimistic about their future on account of the dwindling birth rate and aging population.



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