



Morning Alert - Thursday, September 1, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most networks and national papers gave prominent coverage to reports on severe damage caused by Typhoon Lionrock in northern Japan, saying that a total of 11 people died in Iwate Prefecture. TBS and Fuji TV led with reports on the decision by Tokyo Governor Koike to postpone the relocation of Tsukiji Fish Market to Toyosu originally planned for November.

INTERNATIONAL

Abe welcomes announcement on Putin's visit to Japan in December

Several papers wrote that during a meeting on Wednesday with former Lower House member Muneo Suzuki, who is well-versed in Russian affairs, PM Abe welcomed President Putin's decision to visit Japan in December by saying that it is a very positive message.

Yomiuri speculated that Moscow announced Putin's Japan trip ahead of Abe's visit to Vladivostok for talks with Putin with the goal of obtaining Japanese economic assistance and keeping the U.S. in check by extending overtures to Tokyo. Sankei said Russia is anxious to end its diplomatic isolation over the situation in Ukraine by courting Japan, adding that Moscow is also hoping to deepen relations with Tokyo to offset its growing economic reliance on China.

U.S. wary of rapprochement between Japan, Russia

Yomiuri wrote that although Washington outwardly appears to be taking a wait-and-see attitude toward Putin's Japan trip in December, it is wary of rapid reconciliation between Tokyo and Moscow since it may disrupt G7 unity in applying pressure on the Putin administration over the situation in

Ukraine. DOS spokesperson Kirby said: “The U.S. is not concerned or worried about bilateral relations between Russia and Japan.... But nothing has changed about our view that it’s still not business as usual with Russia.”

GOJ to adopt new approach on territorial dispute with Russia

Mainichi’s lead story claimed that the Abe administration has put together a new policy on the Northern Territories dispute, explaining that the GOJ would allow Russians to live on the four islands if Moscow were to accept that the contested territories belong to Japan. Some 17,000 Russians now live on the islands and they would be accorded a high level of autonomy under Japanese sovereignty. This new approach will probably be discussed when PM Abe meets with President Putin in Vladivostok tomorrow. While calling the approach a significant policy turnaround meant to achieve a breakthrough in the decades-long deadlock on the territorial dispute, the daily predicted that negotiations will probably not go smoothly.

Trump stops “Japan bashing” in response to Japan’s lobbying

Nikkei’s Washington correspondent Yoshino wrote that Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has apparently toned down his critical rhetoric on Japan lately, conjecturing that the outspoken candidate has stopped his Japan bashing in response to recommendations from advisors, including Senator Jeff Sessions. The columnist asserted that Japanese diplomats have lobbied the senator hard by arguing that Trump should not criticize Japan since the U.S. will need to continue the war on terrorism in coordination with Japan and other allies.

SECURITY

Osprey training to be partially moved out of Okinawa

Yomiuri projected that the U.S. and Japan plan to hold a Joint Committee meeting today, during which they are expected to agree on moving more training drills by USMC Ospreys out of Okinawa in order to enlist local support for Futenma relocation. The two sides will draw up training relocation plans annually for announcement every April. Noting that several of the Futenma-based Ospreys will conduct drills in the U.S. in the near future, the paper wrote that the GOJ will foot the bill for their relocation.

Mainichi ran a similar story, claiming that 16 of the 24 Futenma-based tilt-rotor aircraft will take part in transportation drills on Guam starting in mid-September. Since the Guam practice is only about three weeks long, the paper expressed doubt about whether Okinawa will become more flexible about the Futenma relocation plan in response to the relocation of training.

Okinawa to allow construction work on Camp Schwab

Several papers wrote that during a meeting yesterday with GOJ officials at the Kantei, Okinawa Vice Governor Ageda hinted at the prefectural government’s acceptance of a GOJ plan to restart

construction work on two housing facilities on Camp Schwab that has been suspended on account of the court-arbitrated settlement for the FRF trial. Okinawa will perhaps accept the plan on the grounds that the work has no direct connection to the landfill work associated with the FRF construction. However, the prefectural government rejected a separate GOJ idea on building a concrete plant on the base out of concern that it could be used for landfill work.

Defense Ministry submits record budget request

Most papers reported on the Defense Ministry's request for a record-high sum of 5.1685 trillion yen for the FY2017 budget, with Sankei saying that the ministry is eyeing higher spending on island defense and missile defense to deal with continued provocations by China and North Korea. Tokyo Shimbun expressed concern about greater "integration" between the SDF and the U.S. military as a result of Japan's procurement of updated SM-3 interceptors, F35s, and a Global Hawk UAV.

MOD to drastically increase subsidies for academic research on military technology

Tokyo Shimbun reported in its lead story that in its budget request for FY2017, the Defense Ministry decided to earmark 11 billion yen for subsidies aimed at encouraging universities and other academic institutions to conduct research on technology that can be used for military purposes. The corresponding figure for the current fiscal year was only 60 million yen.

POLITICS

TPP to be subject of fierce debate in fall Diet session

Nikkei projected that the TPP will become a major issue of contention between the ruling and opposition camps in the upcoming extraordinary Diet session that will begin on Sept. 26. While quoting an unnamed senior LDP official as saying that the Kantei is extremely keen to pass the TPP legislation during this session, the paper said the Abe administration hopes to obtain parliamentary endorsement for the regional free trade deal ahead of the U.S. presidential election on Nov. 8. Since Lower House by-elections are planned for Tokyo and Fukuoka on Oct. 23, the article speculated that the opposition may step up its criticism of the TPP bill depending on who is elected as the next leader in the DP presidential race on Sept. 15.

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