



Morning Alert - Wednesday, December 14, 2016

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that the current Diet session ends today, saying that the two controversial bills – the integrated resort bill and the pension system reform bill – are likely to be enacted today. TV Asahi led with a report that an MV-22 Osprey made an emergency landing in waters off Nago last evening. Other top news included a follow-up report on a hit-and-run accident involving comedian Yusuke Inoue and a report on the wedding photos of Japanese table tennis player Ai Fukuhara.

Top stories in national dailies included an interview with Russian President Putin (Asahi, Yomiuri) and President-elect Trump's nomination of ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State (Nikkei).

## SECURITY

### Osprey makes emergency landing in waters off Okinawa

All papers ran front- or inside-page reports saying that the U.S. military informed the Defense Ministry and the Japan Coast Guard on Tuesday night that a U.S. Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey made an emergency landing in waters off the coast of Nago in Okinawa at around 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday. The U.S. military rescued the aircraft's five crew members, two of whom reportedly sustained injuries. This is the first emergency landing involving an Osprey deployed in Japan. The papers wrote that the incident will provoke additional criticism and concern about the safety of the Osprey among local residents. Mainichi wrote that the Defense Ministry was shocked by the incident, quoting an unnamed senior official as saying that it will probably have a major impact on the GSDF's future plans to deploy the tilt-rotor aircraft.

All networks carried similar stories this morning, with NHK showing footage of Osprey, which appeared to have sustained major damage from the emergency landing. The network said a total of 24 Ospreys are currently in use in Japan, adding that the aircraft has been involved in a number of accidents overseas, including one last year in Hawaii in which two crew members were killed. The network quoted a Nago City press officer as saying: "It is outrageous that an accident has been caused [by an Osprey]. It is unforgivable since the aircraft's safety has been questioned." One local resident was quoted as saying: "This is a terrible incident. I am shocked and filled with anger." Another was quoted as saying: "Had it occurred in a densely populated area, it would have been terrible. There should be no land used by the military." Defense Minister Inada reportedly told the press at around 3:30 a.m. this morning: "It is very regrettable that there was such an accident involving an Osprey since the public is concerned about its safety." According to the network, Inada called the USFJ Commander, Lt. Gen. Martinez, and urged him to investigate the cause of the accident and provide information. She also requested that Osprey flights be suspended until their safety is confirmed. Pentagon spokesperson Davis reportedly told the network that the U.S. is currently trying to find out what happened and investigate the cause so that such accidents will not occur again.

### **GOJ to resume construction at Camp Schwab**

Asahi wrote that the GOJ has decided to resume the suspended construction of barracks at Camp Schwab on Thursday. The paper noted that although the Okinawa Prefectural Government is opposed to the FRF construction at Henoko, it has approved the construction of barracks at Camp Schwab based on the judgment that it is not directly related to Futenma relocation.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Putin comments on Japan-Russia territorial talks**

Yomiuri gave top play to a joint NTV-Yomiuri interview with Russian President Putin at the Kremlin on Dec. 7. The Russian leader called for Japan's flexibility in talks on a peace treaty and the Northern Territories. He insisted that the talks on a peace treaty should be based on the 1956 Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration in which Moscow agreed to hand over to Japan Habomai and Shikotan after the conclusion of a peace treaty, and that Japan's proposal to discuss the other two islands of the Northern Territories is beyond the scope of the joint declaration. Putin also stated that the Northern Territories are internationally recognized as Russian territory and it is necessary for Japan to understand that the consequences of WWII have been confirmed by relevant international documents. The Russian leader also expressed his intention to seek an agreement during his talks with Prime Minister Abe in Yamaguchi on Dec. 15 on enhanced "joint economic activities" on the Northern Territories, but added that such activities should be carried out based on the understanding that the islands are Russian territory. Putin commented on Russia's relations with Japan by saying

that he is seeking complete normalization of the bilateral ties and that the continued absence of a peace treaty between the two nations is “anachronistic.”

Putin criticized Japan’s sanctions on Russia over Ukraine, saying that it will be difficult for Moscow to develop economic relations with Tokyo if sanctions are imposed. However, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga responded negatively to Putin’s desire for Japan to lift its sanctions on Russia by saying that Japan will act appropriately by respecting the unity of the G7. The Russian leader also commented on Russia’s relations with the U.S. under President Trump, saying that he agrees with Trump’s position on improving ties with Moscow.

All other national dailies reported on the gist of the interview released by the Kremlin, highlighting Putin’s remarks that Russia has no territorial dispute with Japan.

### **Abe plans to offer flowers at Honolulu cemetery**

Asahi wrote that Prime Minister Abe is considering offering flowers at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific when he visits Honolulu later this month. Abe plans to visit the cemetery on Dec. 26 and hold a meeting with President Obama and visit the USS Arizona Memorial on Dec. 27. Arrangements are also being made for Defense Minister Inada to accompany Abe on his trip to Hawaii. Noting that it has been already decided that Foreign Minister Kishida will be traveling with Abe, the paper speculated that the joint memorial trip by the prime minister, the foreign minister, and the defense minister is intended to demonstrate reconciliation between the U.S. and Japan.

### **Japan, Netherlands agree to boost defense cooperation**

Asahi wrote that Defense Minister Inada and her Dutch counterpart Hennis-Plasschaert signed a memorandum of agreement on Tuesday on defense cooperation between Japan and the Netherlands. In addition to their cooperation on missile defense and the development of defense equipment, the two nations will promote dialogue in disaster relief and other areas.

### **Japan, Australia postpone 2+2 meeting**

Several papers wrote that the governments of Japan and Australia decided on Tuesday to postpone their planned 2+2 meeting of defense and foreign ministers in late December due to the health condition of Defense Minister Payne. The two nations are expected to sign a revised acquisition and cross-servicing agreement at the next 2+2 meeting, which will be rescheduled for early next year.

### **Japan pledges \$3 billion for women in developing nations**

Most papers wrote that Prime Minister Abe stated on Tuesday at a meeting of the World Assembly for Women (WAW!) that Japan will provide more than \$3 billion through 2018 for improving conditions for women in developing nations mainly in Africa and South Asia by helping these nations improve their education and vocational training for women.

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