



Morning Alert - Monday, December 19, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with a report that the U.S. military will resume flight operations of the Osprey as early as today, saying that Okinawa Governor Onaga told reporters on Sunday that flights by the Osprey are unacceptable in the absence of an explanation of the cause of the accident. The network also reported on the growing concern among local residents over the planned deployment of the Osprey to Yokota AB. NTV led with a report on the Club World Cup final on Sunday, in which Real Madrid beat Kashima Antlers 4-2. Other top news included a report that the principal of a high school famous for its sumo club held a press conference on Sunday saying that the teacher in charge of the club had physically abused students.

Top stories in national dailies included an increase in the number of Japanese public schools providing free school lunches (Asahi); survey results showing that over 5% of small companies in Tokyo and Osaka pay their workers below the minimum wage (Mainichi); survey results showing that municipalities failed to take preventive measures in 40% of family murder cases that occurred since 2013 (Yomiuri); social security reform plans in Japan (Nikkei); and the Securities and Exchange Surveillance Commission's conclusion that former Toshiba executives should face criminal charges over the company accounting fraud (Sankei).

SECURITY

Onaga visits site where Osprey made emergency landing

Most papers wrote that Okinawa Governor Onaga on Sunday visited the coastal area in Nago where an Osprey made an emergency landing last week. After inspecting the site, Onaga said the U.S.

military's reported plan to resume Osprey operations this week is outrageous and the relationship of trust between the central and local governments will be completely destroyed if the GOJ allows Osprey flights.

In a related development, Yomiuri wrote that Foreign Minister Kishida told reporters on Sunday that the GOJ has been calling on the USG to investigate the cause of the incident, provide information, and prevent a similar incident from happening and that close communication between the U.S. and Japan on the matter is necessary. The paper interpreted this remark to mean that Kishida expressed a cautious view about the early resumption of Osprey flights. Concerning the United States' notification to Japan of its intention to resume Osprey operations on Dec. 19, Kishida stated that a decision has yet to be made.

U.S. plans to resume Osprey flights in Okinawa this week

Saturday's Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri and Sunday's Nikkei wrote that the USFJ has notified the Japanese government of a plan for an MV-22 Osprey to fly from the Ie Jima Auxiliary Airfield to MCAS Futenma this week for inspection and maintenance. Meanwhile, Sunday's Yomiuri wrote that the U.S. military has conveyed to the Japanese government its intention to lift its suspension of Osprey operations on Dec. 19 and that Tokyo is making all-out efforts to dispel local concern over the safety of the aircraft, since Okinawans will react sharply if Osprey operations are resumed within a week of the incident on Dec. 13. According to the paper, in response to the U.S. military's desire to resume Osprey flights on Dec. 16, SDF Joint Staff Chief Kawano stressed to USFJ Commander Martinez the need for a thorough investigation and full explanation of the cause of the accident out of concern that Okinawa's negative sentiment toward the Osprey would grow further if Osprey flights were resumed only three days after the incident. The paper speculated that the U.S. military is seeking the early resumption of Osprey operations because the aircraft plays a key role in transporting Marines in the Asia-Pacific region, noting that the aircraft has played important roles in disaster relief in Kumamoto and elsewhere. The paper added that the Osprey is indispensable for the U.S. military's operations and that the U.S. military has trouble comprehending why the Osprey is treated differently from other military aircraft.

Anti-Osprey rally held in Okinawa

Most Sunday papers wrote that a protest rally was held in front of Camp Schwab on Saturday. According to the organizer, some 900 people participated in the rally to call for the complete withdrawal of Ospreys from Okinawa and the cancellation of the FRF construction at Henoko.

INTERNATIONAL

Abe seeks meeting with Trump in January

Asahi wrote that it has learned from a senior LDP official that arrangements are being made for Prime Minister Abe to hold talks with Donald Trump probably on Jan. 27 or 28 after his inauguration as president on Jan. 20.

Sunday's Nikkei wrote that it has learned from a GOJ source that Prime Minister Abe is mulling a visit to the U.S. to meet with Donald Trump around Jan. 27 after his inauguration as president on Jan. 20. The paper speculated that Abe intends to confirm the maintenance of the U.S.-Japan alliance and convey his view on the TPP during the envisaged meeting with Trump. The paper also conjectured that Abe plans to demonstrate at home and abroad the strong U.S.-Japan relationship and build a personal relationship of trust with the new president by stressing that the strong bilateral alliance contributes to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and is in Washington's interest.

Washington correspondent Yoshino wrote in a related column that the Abe administration has not disclosed information about its efforts to seek a meeting with Trump in Washington in January out of concern for the reaction from the Obama administration because National Security Advisor Rice reacted strongly to Abe's meeting with President-elect Trump in November by saying that the United States does not have two presidents.

A/S Russel to visit Japan

Saturday evening's Nikkei ran a Kyodo report saying that the Department of State announced on Friday that Assistant Secretary of State Russel will travel to Japan and Singapore on Dec. 17-22. According to the announcement, Russel will travel to Japan on Dec. 17-19 to discuss U.S.-Japan relations with Japanese officials.

Abe, Putin agree on joint economic activities in Northern Territories, but differences remain

All Saturday morning papers ran extensive front- and inside-page reports on bilateral talks held between Prime Minister Abe and President Putin at the Kantei on Friday and their post-meeting joint press conference, during which the two leaders issued a press statement saying that Japan and Russia agreed to launch talks on joint economic activities in the Northern Territories. Abe said at the news conference that the joint economic activities are an important step toward concluding a peace treaty, and Putin stated that the joint activities will help build confidence between the two nations and pave the way for discussing a peace treaty. However, the papers wrote that the two leaders failed to narrow their differences over sovereignty of the four Russian-held islands, noting that the two nations used ambiguous language in the joint statement, saying that "the joint economic activities will not undermine either country's position on a peace treaty." During the summit meeting, the Russian side insisted that the activities should be conducted according to Russian law as the islands are part of its territory, while Japan contended that it cannot accept such an arrangement.

The papers wrote that although Abe tried to achieve a breakthrough in Japan's territorial talks with Russia by adopting a "new approach," he failed to produce major progress on the issue because Putin made no compromises on Russia's claim over the sovereignty over the islands. The papers

also wrote that Putin's deep-seated distrust of the U.S.-Japan alliance was made clear, as he referred to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty during the press conference by saying that he hopes that Japan will give consideration to Russian concerns about the U.S.-Japan alliance. Asahi speculated that Putin proposed the resumption of a 2+2 meeting with Tokyo in a bid to drive a wedge into the U.S.-Japan alliance. Nikkei wrote that Moscow is concerned about the possibility of the U.S. military's influence in the Northern Territories because the islands are the frontline of its security in the region. Sunday's Sankei wrote that Abe plans to promote defense cooperation with Russia, as seen in his plan to resume a 2+2 meeting, in order to check China's growing military presence in the region.

The papers also reported on the reaction from the ruling and opposition parties as well as former Japanese residents of the islands, saying the opposition camp criticized Abe for failing to make progress in the territorial talks and the former residents expressed disappointment at the lack of progress. LDP Secretary General Nikai stated that it is necessary for the GOJ to understand that many Japanese people are disappointed with the results of the Japan-Russia summit.

Japan, ROK share intelligence on North Korea for first time based on GSOMIA

Most Saturday morning papers wrote that South Korea's Ministry of National Defense announced on Friday that the country exchanged with Japan information about North Korea's nuclear and missile programs for the first time since they signed a General Security of Military Information Agreement in November.

Japan, France to hold 2+2 meeting

Saturday evening's Yomiuri wrote that the governments of Japan and France are making arrangements to hold a 2+2 meeting of foreign and defense ministers in France in early January. The two nations will discuss joint research on underwater drones and cybersecurity based on their agreement on joint research and development of defense equipment.

Japan to pay UNESCO dues

Saturday morning's Asahi wrote that the GOJ has decided to pay its financial contributions to UNESCO this year totaling some 3.85 billion yen that Tokyo has withheld in protest of the UN body's listing Chinese documents relating to the 1937 Nanjing Massacre in the Memory of the World Register last year. The paper wrote that Tokyo made the decision out of concern that the continued failure to pay its dues could weaken its voice in the international organization and allow China to increase its influence in the body.

AMBASSADOR

Ambassador Kennedy urges students to study abroad, develop U.S.-Japan alliance

Regional editions of national newspapers, including Asahi, Mainichi, Sankei, as well as Kyodo and Jiji wire services, reported on Ambassador Kennedy's speech in Kyoto on Saturday, during which she urged some 100 local university students to study abroad by saying: "Judging from my own experience, nothing can teach you more about yourself and the world than living abroad." According to Asahi, recalling her first trip to the ancient Japanese city as a student decades ago, the Ambassador said: "Kyoto is a special place. I'm glad that I was able to come here before departing Japan. It's like my hometown of Boston which is full of students." While quoting JFK's message that the "educated citizen must be a participant and not a spectator," the Ambassador called on the students to travel overseas by saying: "This message applies to both U.S. and Japanese students. Your curiosity is necessary for the U.S.-Japan alliance."

Sankei quoted her as saying: "Prime Minister Abe's offering of flowers at Pearl Harbor will be a historic moment. It will soon be your turn to develop the alliance. Please invest your time and talent in studying abroad." Ambassador Kennedy also mentioned bilateral relations by saying: "I am proud that U.S.-Japan relations are stronger than ever. Japan's comprehensive security laws will enhance the efficiency of U.S.-Japan cooperation and make joint humanitarian assistance possible." According to Jiji, the Ambassador mentioned the planned reversion of the Northern Training Area in Okinawa and stated: "The size of the land used by the U.S. military will be reduced. It will be reduced still further. This is one example of U.S.-Japan partnership."

ECONOMY

Japan, EU give up on concluding EPA this year

Most Sunday papers reported that on Saturday Japan and the EU gave up their plan to reach a rough agreement on an EPA by the end of the year because they failed to reach a consensus on such issues as Japan's cuts in tariffs on farm products, including cheese, at their chief negotiators' meeting last week in Tokyo. The papers wrote that although both parties will seek an early agreement, their negotiations may be extended because of growing criticism of free trade and globalism in Europe. The papers also wrote that the Abe administration had hoped to reach an agreement swiftly in the hope that the accord with the EU would become the "engine" of the Abenomics growth strategy in place of the aborted TPP.

OPINION POLLS

66% call for review of Osprey deployment

Most papers reported on the results of a Kyodo News poll conducted on Dec. 17-18. Regarding the Osprey's recent emergency landing in Okinawa, 66.8% of the respondents said that the deployment of Ospreys in Okinawa needs to be reviewed, while 28% said the deployment can continue. Concerning the Diet approval of the TPP ratification and related bills, 45.3% opposed it while 37.8%

expressed support. Some 69.6% opposed the integrated resort law that legalizes casinos, while 24.6% expressed support. When asked their views about the Japan-Russia summit last week, 38.7% welcomed it, while 54.3% did not. The support rating for the Abe cabinet stood at 54.8%, down 5.9 points from a month ago, while nonsupport rose 3.7 points to 34.1%. Nikkei speculated that negative views of the LDP's moves to win passage of the casino bill in the Diet and disappointment with the lack of progress in the territorial dispute with Russia caused the drop in cabinet support.

60% support “joint economic activities” with Russia

Mainichi reported on the results of its nationwide-telephone survey conducted on Dec. 17-18, in which 59% of the respondents welcomed the idea of carrying out joint economic activities in the Northern Territories before the issue of sovereignty over the Russian-held islands is resolved, while 25% opposed it. Some 60% expressed expectation for progress in the territorial talks with Russia. Concerning the integrated resort law that legalizes casinos, 59% expressed opposition while 29% supported it. Cabinet support stood at 51%, up 3 points from a month ago, while nonsupport stood at 32%, down 1 point.

