



Morning Alert - Wednesday, December 28, 2016

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

All networks led with reports on Prime Minister Abe's meeting with President Obama at the U.S. Pacific Command and their visit to the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor. All networks broadcast live the speech delivered by Abe at Kilo Pier, during which the premier offered "sincere and everlasting condolences" for the innocent lives lost in the war, and stressed that the "the horror of war must not be repeated." He also said the people of Japan will continue to uphold the nation's unyielding policy of never waging war again, with "quiet pride" in the nation's path as a pacifist nation over the past 70 years.

Major front-page items in national papers included articles previewing Abe's Pearl Harbor visit, Toshiba's announcement on the massive loss resulting from its U.S. subsidiary Westinghouse's buyout of an American nuclear plant construction firm, and a plan by the Health Ministry to continue its investigation of Dentsu in connection with the suicide of an overworked female employee.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Abe successfully builds partnership with President Obama

All papers published scene-setters and background reports on Prime Minister Abe's Hawaii summit with President Obama and visit to Pearl Harbor. Some of the articles noted that Abe has made conscious efforts to establish a rapport with and win trust from Obama by taking a range of steps to strengthen the trans-Pacific security ties, such as enacting comprehensive security legislation and a state secrets protection law, even at the expense of potentially damaging his public standing at home. Although the Japanese leader initially "disappointed" the Obama administration by visiting

Yasukuni Shrine in December 2013, the papers wrote the U.S. leader eventually came to view Abe as a “reliable” partner, as Tokyo steadily enhanced its cooperation with Washington not only on the security front but also in the economic arena by promoting the TPP.

Sankei wrote that although the Japanese leader’s visit to Pearl Harbor marks a milestone in the Obama administration’s “rebalance to Asia” policy, the main goal of reining in China’s rapid rise has not yet been fully achieved. The conservative paper also voiced concern that the incoming Trump administration may no longer attach importance to Asia.

Asahi wrote that although many of Abe’s predecessors had sought opportunities to visit Pearl Harbor to pay tribute to the fallen and highlight reconciliation with the U.S., they failed to do so for various reasons, such as their weak political foundations at home. In contrast, Abe was able to become the first Japanese leader to visit the USS Arizona Memorial probably on account of his high public approval, strong relations with the U.S., and President Obama’s earlier visit to Hiroshima. Right-wing elements have shown restraint and not reacted strongly to the visit perhaps out of deference to Abe.

### **China anxious to display power projection capabilities**

Asahi ran a prominent inside-page report on the passage in the South China Sea by a PLA carrier battle group, conjecturing that it represents China’s intention to strengthen its effective control of the area by expanding its defense capabilities, hold the incoming Trump administration in check, and counter attempts by other countries to undermine the “one China” principle. The paper suspected that Beijing may have tried to test the next U.S. leader’s response through provocative actions since the President-elect has criticized China for “currency rate manipulation” and expressed doubts about the “one China” policy by accepting a telephone call from the Taiwanese leader. The Chinese flotilla’s moves were also intended to display the PLA’s capabilities to thwart military operations by the U.S. and Japan in the event of a Taiwan contingency. The SDF is reportedly alarmed by the steady improvement of China’s “blue ocean” power projection capabilities.

## **SECURITY**

### **FRF construction work resumed after ten months**

All papers reported on the resumption of the FRF construction work in the vicinity of Camp Schwab on Tuesday afternoon soon after Governor Onaga’s withdrawal of his rescindment of the landfill permit, explaining that dozens of workers were seen moving heavy equipment, building a floating pier, and preparing to install buoys in the ocean to demarcate the construction zone. According to the dailies, some 200 picketers assembled in front of the U.S. installation to protest the resumption, with many of them shouting the slogan “we’ll not allow a new base.”

As the central government plans to build the FRF in about five years, full-fledged construction work is expected to begin early next month, with Asahi saying that yesterday’s resumption reflects the

Abe administration's resolve to complete the construction work "as soon as possible." In his meeting with Governor Onaga on Tuesday morning, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga dismissed the Okinawa leader's warning that he will have no choice but to take a hard line in blocking the construction by saying: "The Henoko initiative is the only solution. Japan is a country ruled by law. We will move forward with the construction in line with the Supreme Court ruling." In reply, the governor said: "Things will not go so smoothly, because the Okinawan people's anger and sorrow runs deep. As I am vested with considerable authority, I will be taking a range of actions."

In a related article, Mainichi wrote that LDP Secretary General Nikai met with Governor Onaga in Tokyo on Tuesday, noting that as the two officials also held a separate meeting in Naha a day earlier, Nikai appears to be taking a conciliatory line toward the Okinawa leader perhaps in an attempt to tamp down the governor's opposition to the relocation plan. The paper said Nikai's soft line marks a sharp contrast with the hard line taken by CCS Suga, speculating that the two veteran politicians may be using "division of labor" to achieve the ultimate goal of promoting Futenma relocation.

