



Morning Alert - Thursday, January 19, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that Deputy Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Maekawa will step down to take responsibility for the issue of senior MEXT officials lobbying Waseda University to secure a job for their retired colleague. NTV led with a report that Chinese netizens are increasing their criticism of the APA Group, a Japanese hotel chain operator, which placed a book denying the Nanjing Massacre in its hotel rooms. TBS gave top play to a report on the inauguration ceremony of President-elect Trump. Other top news included a report that a case was filed with prosecutors against a mother in Osaka for forbidding her 15-year-old daughter to attend school in order to prioritize her activities as an “idol.”

Main front-page items in national papers included draft GOJ legislation making exports of second-hand defense equipment possible, the arrival of two F-35s at MCAS Iwakunui, and additional financial losses to be sustained by Toshiba stemming from its U.S. subsidiary Westinghouse’s acquisition of a nuclear construction company.

## SECURITY

### F-35s arrive in Iwakuni

Several papers reported that two USAF F-35Bs arrived at MCAS Iwakuni yesterday evening as part of the modernization of an existing squadron of 12 FA-18s, noting that eight additional stealth fighters are expected to be deployed there in the near future. Defense Minister Inada commented on the arrival by telling the press: “The deployment of America’s most state-of-the art and outstanding defense capabilities will enhance the deterrence of the U.S.-Japan alliance and be conducive to the

stability of the Asia-Pacific region.” According to Asahi, six additional F-35s will also be deployed there in August to replace a fleet of eight AV-8 Harriers.

Tokyo Shimbun said in an accompanying article that MCAS Iwakuni will host as many as 130 aircraft when carrier-borne squadrons are relocated from NAF Atsugi as planned, speculating that since Kadena AB in Okinawa houses only about 100 aircraft, the strategic importance of Iwakuni will grow in the face of China’s rapid military buildup. One Japanese security analyst projected that MCAS Iwakuni will be the U.S. military’s core facility in responding to possible contingencies in the Senkakus, on the Korean Peninsula, and in the South China Sea.

### **Futenma Ospreys to take part in bilateral drill**

Several dailies wrote that arrangements are being made between the GSDF and the USMC to have the Futenma-based MV-22 Ospreys take part in bilateral training to be held at two locations in Niigata and Gunma in early March. The tilt-rotor planes are expected to transport goods and personnel during the training.

### **Think-tanks call for higher defense spending in response to Trump administration**

Asahi wrote that several prominent Japanese defense research institutions have put together lists of recommendations recommending that the GOJ to increase the defense budget apparently in response to President-elect Trump’s calls for Tokyo to pay more for stationing U.S. troops in Japan. The paper conjectured that the incoming U.S. administration’s anticipated demand for its allies to shoulder additional security burdens may embolden defense hawks at home to seek larger expenditures for the SDF.

### **Japan, UK to conclude ACSA**

Asahi noted that the Japanese and British governments are likely to conclude an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) next week, noting that the UK would be Japan’s first European ACSA partner. A signing ceremony will be held in London. As the incoming U.S. administration’s Asia policy is still elusive, Japan is eager to deepen security coordination with Asian and European partners to hold China’s growing presence in check. Japan is also hoping to seal similar defense deals with France and Canada.

### **GOJ prepares legislation to export used weapons systems**

Yomiuri gave top play to a draft bill designed to enable exports of second-hand defense hardware, explaining that the GOJ is aiming to provide the Philippines and other ASEAN members with patrol boats and other defense equipment free of charge or at low prices with the ultimate goal of holding China’s maritime advancement in check. The Abe administration is planning to submit the legislation to the Diet shortly in order to revise an existing law that prohibits the “transfer of national properties at improper prices.” Because of this statute, Tokyo had no choice but to loan to Manila five second-hand patrol planes even though the Philippines initially wanted to purchase them at low prices.

Mainichi ran a similar story, adding that the Abe administration may face mounting criticism over its inclination to actively export weapons.

### **GOJ to urge UNESCO to register forests in Okinawa as World Heritage site**

Asahi reported on a meeting held yesterday at the Kantei between Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga and several municipal leaders in Okinawa, during which Suga explained a GOJ plan to ask UNESCO later this week to register forests in the returned Northern Training Area on its list of World Heritage sites. According to the daily, the Okinawa politicians requested that the U.S. military refrain from conducting Osprey training using the NTA at night and early morning. Suga said in reply that he will coordinate closely with the U.S. military on the Osprey's flight routes over the area.

### **Senior Okinawa official embroiled in political scandal**

Mainichi and Sankei reported on an allegation as reported by an Okinawa media outlet that Okinawa Vice Governor Ageda used his political influence to urge the prefectural educational board to hire his acquaintances as public school teachers in 2015. Given that the vice governor has served as a primary contact between Governor Onaga and the central government on Futenma relocation and other base issues, the influence-peddling scandal may deal a heavy blow to the defiant governor. Although Ageda categorically dismissed the allegation yesterday, he also hinted at the possibility of stepping down depending on how the scandal evolves.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Calls growing in South Korea for “protecting comfort woman memorial in Busan**

Asahi wrote that university students in Busan on Wednesday launched a group intended to “protect” a comfort woman statue installed in front of the Japanese Consulate General. The article projected that as calls are steadily mounting in South Korea for nullifying the comfort women pact with Japan, the comfort women standoff in Busan may become prolonged.

In a related story, Sankei took up press remarks made yesterday by an ROK governor whose jurisdiction covers the Liancourt Rocks, in which he said that it is not appropriate to erect a comfort woman memorial on the contested islets even though they are South Korea's inherent territory.

## **ECONOMY**

### **Japan anxious to forge free trade accord with EU**

Yomiuri wrote although Prime Minister Abe is still determined to pursue the effectuation of the TPP despite the incoming Trump administration's intention to withdraw from the regional trade accord, Tokyo will probably have little choice but to concentrate on other free trade deals, such as an EPA with the EU. Even though the two sides agreed last month to reach a rough agreement ahead of the

national elections planned for later this year in many EU nations, the chances are high that EPA negotiations between Tokyo and Brussels will be suspended once the EU side launches official talks with London on Brexit in the spring. The daily projected that negotiations on the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) initiative may pick up momentum instead, since its primary proponent, ASEAN, is hoping to reach an agreement this year.

## **POLITICS**

### **More than 80 bills to be submitted to Diet**

According to Nikkei, the GOJ plans to submit a total of 83 pieces of legislation to the regular Diet session to be convened tomorrow, including one on penalizing “conspiracy” on account of its connection to terrorism. Other controversial bills include ones on updating the existing ACSA with the U.S. and on the civil nuclear cooperation agreement with India. The Democratic Party and other opposition parties, except Nippon Ishin, are against the two bills.

## **AMBASSADOR**

### **Ambassador Kennedy leaves post**

Mainichi wrote that Ambassador Kennedy departed Japan last night, quoting her as telling the press upon departure at Narita Airport: “I’ll miss Japan.... See you again.”

TV Asahi’s “Hodo Station” carried a 3-minute report on Wednesday evening on the Ambassador’s departure, highlighting her activities over the last three years, including her visits to disaster-hit regions, desire for a nuclear-free world, appreciation of Japanese culture, “koi dance” video, and annual visits to Okinawa.

