



Morning Alert - Monday, February 13, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

There were no papers published this morning because of a press holiday. NHK gave top play to a report that North Korea announced this morning through state media that it successfully test-launched a ballistic missile on Sunday. Most networks led with reports on the first summit between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe and their “golf diplomacy.”

## INTERNATIONAL

### North Korea test-fires ballistic missile

All broadcasters reported on Sunday and this morning on North Korea’s launch of what appeared to be a Musudan ballistic missile into the Sea of Japan on Sunday morning, noting that Japan, South Korea, the U.S., and other nations reacted strongly to the latest provocation by the reclusive regime. The projectile was reportedly fired from a site in western North Korea, flew east over the Korean Peninsula, and landed in the Sea of Japan. This was the first missile launch by Pyongyang since President Trump was elected last November.

According to the local media, Prime Minister Abe, with President Trump standing beside him, spoke with the press in Palm Beach, Florida, late Saturday evening and denounced the missile test by saying: “North Korea’s most recent missile launch is absolutely intolerable. President Trump and I completely share the view that we are going to promote further cooperation between the two nations and also we are going to further reinforce our alliance.” President Trump seconded Abe’s remarks by simply saying that the United States stands behind Japan “100%.”

NHK claimed that the DPRK apparently fired the projectile in response to the first U.S.-Japan summit between President Trump and PM Abe, during which they affirmed taking a stern and concerted approach toward North Korea. The network noted that the premier and the President chose to speak to the press jointly and without delay in order to display that the two nation's unity remains ironclad irrespective of DPRK provocations.

Pointing out that the brief press availability was "dominated" by the prime minister, NHK's Washington bureau chief said that President Trump failed to demonstrate strong leadership in ensuring peace and stability in East Asia.

### **U.S., Japanese leaders affirm strong alliance**

All Sunday papers reported extensively from Washington on visiting Prime Minister Abe's summit with President Trump at the White House on Friday, underscoring the two leaders' agreement on strengthening bilateral relations on the security and economic fronts. The President affirmed the U.S. commitment to the defense of Japan, including the Senkaku Islands and extended deterrence. The two leaders agreed that the current plan to build the FRF off Camp Schwab is the only option for Futenma relocation. They also agreed to establish a new economic dialogue co-headed by Vice President Pence and Deputy Prime Minister Aso to discuss fiscal and monetary policies and bilateral trade. The papers said the President chose to continue attaching importance to Japan as part of his administration's policy of deepening engagement with Asia so as to address growing apprehension that the U.S. may adopt an isolationist approach during his administration.

The two leaders agreed that the Vice President will visit Japan at an early date and that the President will also travel to Japan sometime this year, with Nikkei speculating that the GOJ may invite the Vice President to Japan as early as April to reaffirm bilateral policy coordination ahead of PM Abe's possible trip to Russia during the Golden Week Holidays in late April. The daily added that a visit to Japan by President Trump may be arranged as part of his trip to East Asia in November to attend the APEC leaders' meeting in Vietnam.

### **President chooses not to "bash" Japan, yet Tokyo remains wary**

All dailies wrote that Japanese officials were relieved that President Trump did not make any unreasonable demands during the summit. He pledged Washington's full security commitment and apparently did not use this as a quid pro quo to obtain concessions on the economic front. The President did not reiterate the complaints he had often made on the campaign trail about Japan's host nation support and even expressed gratitude for it. Asahi said that "without hesitation" the President gave the green light for the release of a joint document spelling out the U.S. commitment to the defense of the Senkakus, which the Japanese side had strongly hoped for to preempt the possibility of his posting contradictory statements on Twitter. Nikkei speculated that Japan may eventually be pressed by the Trump administration to take on a greater security burden, quoting the

President as saying: "It is very important that both Japan and the U.S. continue to invest very heavily in the alliance to build our defense capabilities."

The dailies stressed that Japanese officials are still bracing for the possibility that the "erratic" U.S. leader may suddenly shift gears and take a tough stance toward Tokyo on the security front especially if it becomes difficult for the U.S. to obtain the desired deliverables on trade. Mainichi said the President perhaps decided to tone down his extreme rhetoric to alleviate Japan's concern about his administration's security policy in East Asia so that Tokyo feels obligated to offer something in return, especially on the trade front, because his foremost policy goal is to create jobs at home.

The papers said it was surprising that President Trump did not address the auto and currency issues during the summit or the following working lunch. However, because the two agreed to take up the issue of a "framework for bilateral trade" in the planned economic dialogue, the Japanese side is still concerned that the Trump administration will demand negotiations for a bilateral free trade accord in order to seek greater concessions from Japan on autos and agriculture than under the TPP. Asahi quoted a GOJ source as saying that it is still premature for Japan to conclude that Washington has given up on seeking an FTA.

### **Smooth accord unlikely in economic dialogue**

Nikkei projected tough negotiations in the planned economic dialogue, pointing out that the Japanese side will try to avoid entering bilateral free trade talks and instead highlight the importance of broad economic coordination to counter China's rapid economic rise. However, the daily said Tokyo may ultimately be pressured to accept Washington's possible demands in specific sectors, such as autos, agriculture, and currency, adding that U.S. trade groups, including cattlemen's associations, are stepping up their lobbying of the Trump administration to start FTA talks with Japan.

Yomiuri said the outlook for trans-Pacific ties under the Trump administration may hinge upon progress in the economic dialogue, as it offers Japan a great opportunity to build a stable communication channel with the White House since it will be co-led by Vice President Pence, a veteran politician who is known for his mild temperament. The paper said Japan's primary goal for the economic dialogue is to create trade rules to rein in China's growing economic presence, while the U.S. is set to seek "practical benefits."

Sankei said although the U.S. side had initially insisted that either Commerce Secretary-designate Ross or National Economic Council Chairman Navarro represent the U.S. side in the dialogue, President Trump agreed to Abe's proposal during the summit that it be chaired by their top deputies. The Vice President, who sat in on the session, reportedly said: "I am very honored.... However, I don't have much experience in the trade field."

## **Abe refrains from criticizing U.S. leader, prioritizes building rapport**

Asahi took up the fact that Abe did not criticize the President's controversial executive order on immigration, speculating that he was keen for a "political honeymoon" with the U.S. leader with the goal of encouraging the U.S. administration to maintain its engagement with Asia. The paper said President Trump must have been very pleased with the Japanese leader's "praise," adding that many U.S. media outlets ridiculed Abe for being skillful at "flattery."

Yomiuri said the prime minister chose to "embrace the President wholeheartedly" despite the global uproar over his controversial policies in order to remind China that U.S.-Japan unity is too strong for it to drive a wedge between Tokyo and Washington.

## **Domestic reaction to U.S.-Japan summit**

All papers reported that LDP politicians welcomed PM Abe's accomplishments in the summit with President Trump, with Policy Research Council Chairman Moteji telling the press: "It turned out to be the best summit that anyone could have imagined." They were especially pleased that the U.S. leader did not make any specific requests on either security or economic issues. The local business community was also relieved by the absence of any criticism of Japan's trading practices by President Trump, with Toyota President Toyoda saying: "We were encouraged by the two leaders' confirmation of building a fair and free trade relationship between the U.S. and Japan."

On the other hand, the Japanese Communist Party and other opposition parties were by comparison critical of the summit. JCP Chairman Shii said: "The prime minister went too far in following Trump's lead."

## **TV coverage of Abe-Trump summit**

Japanese broadcasters reported extensively on Prime Minister Abe's first summit meeting with President Trump and related activities in Florida over the weekend. NHK aired a live broadcast of the two leaders' joint press conference starting at around 3:00 a.m. (Japan time) on Saturday. NHK and all commercial networks broadcast on their regular news programs from Saturday through Sunday detailed reports on the summit, the joint press conference, and the two leaders' apparent efforts to develop close personal bonds during dinner and golf in Florida.

Fuji TV's Sunday morning news show "Hodo 2001" (7:30-8:50) dedicated 40 minutes to a report on Abe's U.S. visit, saying that the Japanese leader was given red carpet treatment. Sophia University Professor Kazuhiro Maeshima commented that the demonstration of close ties between them sent a strong message to China.

NHK's "Nichiyō Toron" Sunday debate program (9:00-10:00) aired a live discussion by six experts. All of the panelists welcomed the summit as a success for Japan because it showed that the Trump administration is ready to uphold the existing arrangements under the U.S.-Japan security alliance. The participants also stated that the planned establishment of a new economic dialogue between Vice President Pence and Deputy Prime Minister Aso will be an effective venue to address bilateral economic issues.

### **President rolls out red carpet for Abe**

All Sunday papers reported that Prime Minister Abe was accorded a very warm reception by President Trump, highlighting that the President appeared to be extremely pleased to escort the Japanese visitor during their meeting and press conference in Washington as well as their trip to West Palm Beach on Marine One and Air Force One to play golf.

### **Kishida, Tillerson agree to deepen bilateral ties**

Saturday's Asahi and Mainichi reported from Washington on visiting Foreign Minister Kishida's meeting with Secretary of State Tillerson on Friday, during which the Japanese official underscored the importance of pursuing the TPP. In response, the Secretary said: "It is important to build close economic relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region by developing U.S.-Japan economic relations first." The two top diplomats agreed to enhance the trans-Pacific alliance and trilateral coordination with South Korea for ensuring regional stability in view of China's maritime advancement and North Korea's nuclear and missile development. They also affirmed that the Henoko plan is the "only solution" for Futenma relocation. The Secretary stated that the Senkakus fall under the scope of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty.

Several Sunday papers reported on Vice President Pence's meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Aso held ahead of the U.S.-Japan summit, highlighting their accord on deepening economic relations by launching a new economic dialogue.

### **Japan struggles to build rapport with key Trump administration officials**

Saturday's Nikkei highlighted the fact that Deputy Prime Minister Aso accompanied Prime Minister Abe on his U.S. trip, noting that he was tasked with building close bonds with Vice President Pence so that the Abe administration can set up a "solid" communication channel with the White House because President Trump is "unpredictable." The article wrote that although the GOJ may have already established working relationships with some of key U.S. administration officials, including National Security Advisor Flynn, Defense Secretary Mattis, and Jared Kushner, the President's son-in-law, it has not been able to establish contact with Chief Strategist Bannon, who wields strong influence within the White House. The GOJ is also not sure whether National Economic Council Chairman Navarro or Commerce Secretary-designate Ross will be the Trump administration's economic czar.

Yomiuri ran a similar article, noting that the GOJ has decided not to establish contact with Bannon or Navarro based on the assessment that it is uncertain whether the two officials' "extreme" policy lines will be sustainable in the long run. The paper added that Deputy Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs Kenneth Juster is a key contact for the GOJ on trade and economic issues.

### **President declares "one China" policy**

All Saturday papers reported that President Trump spoke by phone with his Chinese counterpart Xi on Thursday and stated that his administration respects the "one China" policy. Pointing out that the two leaders agreed to meet at an early date, the papers said that although previous indications by the U.S. leader that Washington might conduct a review of its traditional approach toward cross-strait relations had upset the Chinese government, Sino-U.S. relations are now back on track. The papers noted that by reaffirming the one China policy just ahead of his meeting with Prime Minister Abe, the President tried to strike a balance between Japan and China.

Sunday's Sankei claimed that Secretary of State Tillerson successfully persuaded the President to honor the One China policy, predicting that he will probably play a key role in shaping U.S. foreign policy from now on by capitalizing on his strong expertise in international business.

### **Japanese, ROK foreign ministers to meet in Bonn?**

Saturday's Asahi claimed that arrangements are being made for Foreign Minister Kishida to hold talks with his South Korean counterpart Yun on the sidelines of the G20 foreign ministerial in Bonn Germany this week. The paper said, however, that it is uncertain whether the proposed meeting will take place because the Korean side may not be able to take any concrete steps toward responding to Japan's steadfast demand to remove the comfort woman statue erected in front of the Japanese Consulate General in Busan.

## **ECONOMY**

### **Japanese firms encouraged by Trump's remarks praising shinkansen system**

Saturday's Yomiuri took up a statement by President Trump on Thursday commending Japan's high-speed train technology, noting that JR Central, train car manufacturers, and other Japanese companies are hoping that the Trump administration will decide to promote high-speed train projects in California, Texas, and the East Coast. The paper added, however, that they are trying not to be overly optimistic about the prospects on account of the U.S. leader's "unpredictability."

## **POLITICS**

### **Pro-Onaga candidate defeated in mayoral election in Okinawa**

The local media reported online that incumbent Mayor Matsumoto was reelected in Sunday's mayoral race in Urasoe, Okinawa, defeating the rival candidate who was supported by Governor Onaga. This was the second time for a candidate backed by the governor to lose a municipal election this year.

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