



Morning Alert - Tuesday, April 25, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning News

Most networks gave top play to reports that today marks the 85th anniversary of the Korean People's Army, saying that Japan and other nations are bracing for the possibility of North Korea conducting another nuclear test or missile launch.

Major front-page items in national papers included reports on escalated tension on the eve of the anniversary of the Korean People's Army, the upcoming French presidential runoff between a centrist and a nationalist candidate, the possibility of Japan and Russia launching a business feasibility study on the Northern Territories, and the GOJ's plan to start bank protection work off Camp Schwab today.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Tensions mounting on Korean Peninsula

All papers reported heavily on the 85th anniversary of the founding of the DPRK People's Army today, noting that all the regional powers, including the U.S., Japan, South Korea, and China, are bracing for a possible nuclear test or other provocation by the defiant Kim Jong Un regime. The dailies took up President Trump's separate teleconferences with Prime Minister Abe and Chinese President Xi yesterday, during which the leaders agreed on the need to enhance mutual cooperation in pressing Pyongyang to exercise restraint. The papers also focused on ongoing joint training in the Philippine Sea between the U.S. Navy and the MSDF, noting that the Trump administration is strongly committed to deterring DPRK provocations by displaying its overwhelming military capabilities. Nikkei said U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Yun held talks with his

Japanese counterpart in Tokyo yesterday, adding that he will attend a meeting of the chief delegates to the Six-Party Talks from the U.S., Japan, and the ROK today.

The papers added that North Korea's bellicose rhetoric is escalating amid growing pressure from its neighbors, highlighting the DPRK defense minister's remarks on Monday that his country will "eliminate the aggressor's stronghold from the earth by a preemptive nuclear strike if the enemy tries to undertake a militaristic adventure."

### **U.S., Japan to carry out naval drills in Sea of Japan**

Yomiuri front-paged an informal decision by the USG and GOJ to continue the ongoing joint training between the USS Carl Vinson Strike Group and MSDF ships in the Sea of Japan in order to ratchet up the pressure on North Korea. The article stressed that joint training involving a U.S. nuclear flattop in the area is extremely rare, as Japan "has long chosen not to participate in such training out of concern for possible negative reactions from its neighbors," in the words of an unnamed senior MOD official.

### **Abe to dispatch top LDP official to Beijing for major economic confab**

Yomiuri wrote in a front-page story that Prime Minister Abe has decided to ask LDP Secretary General Nikai to take part in an international forum to be held in Beijing in mid-May regarding the Xi administration's trans-Asia economic initiative called "One Road, One Belt." Abe chose to send the LDP heavyweight, who has strong connections with senior Chinese officials, to the conference in the hope of persuading China to put more pressure on North Korea.

### **Japan, Russia to launch business feasibility study on Northern Territories**

Yomiuri led with a speculative piece claiming that when holding a summit with Russian President Putin on Thursday, Prime Minister Abe will propose conducting a feasibility study on "joint economic activities" in the Northern Territories in order to identify concrete business plans in such areas as medicine, tourism, fisheries, and the environment. The GOJ hopes to send a team of government officials and businesspeople to the islands on a chartered ship in May or June. Abe is also hoping to reach an accord with the Russian leader on using chartered flights for Japanese who were born on the Russian-controlled islets to visit the graves of their ancestors there.

Mainichi filed a similar story, noting that it will be difficult for the premier to extend economic overtures toward Moscow in order to achieve a breakthrough in the territorial dispute at this juncture because of renewed tension between the U.S. and Europe and the Putin administration over the situations in Syria, Ukraine, and North Korea.

## **SECURITY**

### **Bank protection work off Camp Schwab to start today**

Most papers wrote that the GOJ is expected to commence today bank protection work for FRF construction off the coast of Camp Schwab, noting that because a massive amount of earth, sand, and concrete will be placed on the ocean floor through early next year, it will become almost impossible to restore the area to its original state. According to the dailies, the landfill work will start by the end of this fiscal year in March 2018 for completion in five years. Okinawa Governor Onaga is most likely to try to sabotage the operation by revoking the landfill permit or filing a lawsuit to seek the suspension of the bank protection work.

In a related story, Asahi front-paged the results of its public opinion survey in Okinawa regarding U.S. base issues, highlighting that 65% of local people called the Abe administration's plan to start landfill work "inappropriate" and some 61% expressed opposition to the present Futenma relocation plan. The poll also found that support for Governor Onaga was 58%. Since the corresponding figure two years ago was 70%, the daily said public approval for the Okinawa leader has deteriorated, especially among voters in their 20s and 30s.

### **Latest election outcome deals heavy blow to Okinawa governor**

Most papers reported on the victory on Sunday of an LDP-backed candidate in the Uruma mayoral election in Okinawa. The papers noted that since this was the third straight victory in the island prefecture this year by a mayoral candidate backed by the ruling party over one supported by Okinawa Governor Onaga, the governor will be forced to reexamine his strategy on how to deal with the Abe administration's policy of moving forward with the FRF construction in Henoko given that his grip on power appears to be waning. Pointing out that out of the 11 city mayors in the southernmost prefecture, only the Nago and Naha leaders are close to Onaga, Yomiuri said the LDP is anxious to defeat Nago Mayor Inamine in the mayoral race in January and Governor Onaga in the gubernatorial election in November 2018.

On the latest election results, Asahi quoted Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga as telling the press yesterday: "It has become clearer that the governor's narrative that 'all of Okinawa [is opposed to the FRF construction]' is not true." Prefectural government officials are alarmed by the dwindling public support for the governor, with some projecting that he has few options but to hold a referendum on the FRF construction or call for a snap gubernatorial election to rebuild his political base.

### **U.S. provided email surveillance system to Japan in return for intelligence cooperation**

Asahi took up a report filed by a U.S. online publication called Intercept claiming that according to classified USG documents illegally copied by Edward Snowden, the Japanese government offered land and \$500 million in financial assistance to the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) to operate at least three intelligence gathering stations in Japan over 60 years. In exchange, Tokyo received classified information and data surveillance platforms, including XKEYSCORE which reportedly enables "almost all electronic data that ordinary Internet users send and receive" to be collected and

searched, in the words of the NSA. In reply to an Asahi query, a MOD spokesman refused to comment on the allegation by citing the “uncertain nature” of the U.S. report. Other dailies ran similar articles.

### **SDF, USFJ rely on social media for public messaging**

Monday evening’s Asahi ran a prominent inside-page article on the increasingly active use of Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking platforms by SDF and USFJ components. The paper highlighted the Japanese Twitter account managed by the CNFJ, which has 191,000 followers. The account drew attention following 3/11 when it published numerous messages and photos of U.S. service members engaged in Operation Tomodachi. Cmdr. Ronald Flanders, the CNFJ spokesperson, said: “SNS is now indispensable for public relations.... It is useful to correct groundless rumors immediately.” The daily said that after Lt. Gen. Nicolson, the Okinawa Area Coordinator, was criticized heavily for defending the pilot of a Futenma-based Osprey that landed in shallow waters off Henoko in December last year, the public’s impression of him apparently improved when the USMC posted on its Facebook account a photo of the general smiling.

