



Morning Alert - Monday, May 8, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning News

Most broadcasters gave top play to reports that Emmanuel Macron won the French presidential election, defeating anti-EU, far-right politician Marine Le Pen. TBS led with a report that the U.S. and North Korea are set to secretly hold a meeting at an undisclosed location in Europe, speculating that former State Department officials and experts will exchange views with North Korea's foreign ministry officials on the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs and the possibility of future U.S.-DPRK talks.

No papers were published this morning due to a press holiday.

SECURITY

U.S., Japan to cooperate in evacuating U.S., Japanese nationals from South Korea

Saturday morning's Yomiuri led with a report on a GOJ plan to cooperate with the U.S. in evacuating both U.S. and Japanese nationals from South Korea in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula. Under the plan, the U.S. forces in South Korea will transport U.S. and Japanese civilians via land and Japan will transport them using MSDF vessels from Busan to Fukuoka or other locations in western Japan in the event that civilian airports in South Korea are closed. The GOJ will step up efforts to work out the details of the plan because there are many issues that need to be resolved in order to facilitate the evacuation of over 50,000 Japanese nationals from South Korea.

Sunday's Nikkei also reported on the evacuation plan, claiming that Tokyo is considering implementing a four-step plan: a travel warning, a travel ban, an evacuation order, and evacuating Japanese nationals using MSDF vessels. The choice of step will depend on the level of contingency.

Japanese vessels complete first mission to protect U.S. Navy ship

All Thursday papers wrote that the MSDF helicopter carrier Izumo and escort ship Sazanami completed on May 3 their first-ever mission to protect a U.S. Navy ship based on the new security laws. The MSDF ships escorted the USNS Richard E. Byrd and conducted joint training with the vessel before parting in waters near the Nansei Islands. The navy vessel is expected to provide supplies to other U.S. ships deployed in the Sea of Japan for surveillance of North Korea.

ASDF fighters conduct joint drills with U.S. bombers

Thursday's Sankei led with a report saying that it has learned from several GOJ sources that U.S. Air Force B-1 bombers flew from Andersen AFB in Guam and conducted joint drills with ASDF F-15 and F-2 fighters on April 15 and 25 in airspace near Kyushu based on a scenario in which the ASDF jets escorted the U.S. bombers. Noting that it is unusual for the USAF and the ASDF to conduct multiple joint drills in such a short period of time, the paper conjectured that the exercises were intended to ratchet up the pressure on North Korea by demonstrating U.S.-Japan security cooperation.

Onodera explains idea of Japan acquiring capability to strike enemy bases

Thursday's Asahi wrote that during a symposium on the U.S.-Japan alliance held in Washington on May 2, former Defense Minister Onodera explained his idea for Japan to acquire the capability to strike enemy bases. Onodera stated that Japan should seriously consider this idea in order to prepare for a possible missile attack by North Korea by stressing that the deterrent effect of the U.S.-Japan alliance would be enhanced by Japan obtaining the additional defense capability.

Small portion of MCAS Futenma to be returned in July

Wednesday's Yomiuri, Mainichi, and Tokyo Shimbun wrote that the Ministry of Defense announced on May 2 that a 4-hectare strip of land on the east side of 481-hectare MCAS Futenma will be returned on July 31 as agreed upon at a U.S.-Japan Joint Committee meeting on April 27. Tokyo Shimbun speculated that the move is intended to demonstrate the central government's efforts to reduce the base-hosting burden on Okinawa ahead of the Nago mayoral and Okinawa gubernatorial elections scheduled for next year.

Japan, Israel agree to strengthen cybersecurity cooperation

Thursday's Nikkei wrote that Trade Minister Seko held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in Jerusalem on May 3, during which they agreed on a joint statement regarding their nations' strengthened cooperation in cybersecurity. Seko delivered a letter to the Israeli leader from Prime Minister Abe expressing hope for the two nations to pursue economic cooperation. Asahi wrote that Seko held separate talks with his Israeli counterpart Cohen, during which they agreed that their

nations will enhance cooperation in cybersecurity by accelerating cooperation in both the public and private sectors ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics using Israel's advanced cybersecurity technology.

INTERNATIONAL

North Korea's coal exports plummet

Sunday's Asahi and several other papers wrote that the UN Security Council's committee on sanctions against North Korea announced on May 5 that North Korea's coal exports declined sharply in March to 6,342 tons, valued at about \$580,000. This is about 1/200th of the approximately 1.44 million tons (\$126.39 million) marked in January and the 1.23 million tons (\$104.59 million) recorded in February. The papers wrote that the decline is probably due to China's suspension of coal imports from North Korea to enforce UNSC sanctions resolutions on Pyongyang.

President Trump willing to meet North Korean leader "under right circumstances"

All Wednesday papers reported on remarks made by President Trump during an interview with Bloomberg News on May 1, during which he reportedly stated that he would meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "under the right circumstances." The papers wrote, however, that it appears unlikely that a meeting between the President and the DPRK leader will be realized anytime soon because North Korea has not yet met any of the conditions, including abolishing its nuclear program, for a meeting with the U.S. President. White House Press Secretary Spicer said at a press briefing that the conditions clearly have not been met.

U.S., ASEAN affirm need to fully implement sanctions on North Korea

All Saturday morning papers reported on Secretary of State Tillerson's meeting with the foreign ministers of ASEAN nations in Washington on May 4, during which he urged the ASEAN nations to fully implement UN Security Council sanctions resolutions on North Korea.

U.S. House passes bill to further tighten sanctions on North Korea

All Saturday morning papers wrote that the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill on May 4 to tighten economic sanctions on North Korea by imposing sanctions on foreign entities and persons that employ North Koreans and financial institutions that conduct transactions with North Korea. The bill is aimed at supporting the Trump administration's policy of applying further pressure on the DPRK by preventing its foreign currency earnings from being channeled into its nuclear and missile programs. The bill urged the administration to reinstate North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism.

North Korea accuses U.S., ROK of plotting to assassinate Kim Jong Un

All Saturday morning papers wrote that North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency reported on May 5 that the Ministry of State Security released a spokesman's statement saying that

the CIA and South Korea's National Intelligence Service plotted a terrorist attack using bombs or chemical agents to assassinate Kim Jong Un in June 2014.

Secretary Tillerson says U.S. is prepared to impose new sanctions on North Korea if needed

Friday's Asahi wrote that Secretary of State Tillerson stated in remarks to State Department employees on May 3 that the U.S. is ready to impose additional sanctions on North Korea. The Secretary reportedly said that Washington has been closely watching to see how China will exercise its influence over Pyongyang. The paper wrote that the Secretary also expressed Washington's readiness to hold talks with the Kim regime under the right circumstances.

North Korea detains two more Americans

All Thursday papers wrote that North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency said on May 3 that North Korean authorities detained at Pyongyang's international airport on April 22 a U.S. citizen named Kim Sang Dok, who was invited to Pyongyang University of Science and Technology to teach accounting. North Korea claims that Kim tried to "overthrow the country." Asahi speculated that North Korea intends to use American detainees as bargaining chips in future discussions with Washington.

In a related story, NHK reported this morning that North Korea announced on Sunday evening that North Korean authorities also detained U.S. citizen Kim Hak Song, who worked at Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, on Saturday. The network said a total of four Americans are currently being held by North Korea, speculating that Pyongyang is aiming to rattle the Trump administration, which is increasing its pressure on North Korea.

Kishida calls for dialogue between nuclear and non-nuclear powers

All Wednesday papers reported on a speech by Foreign Minister Kishida at a preparatory meeting for the review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that was held on May 2 in Vienna. Kishida, as the first Japanese cabinet minister to take part in the meeting, called on the international community to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime by citing the growing threat posed by North Korea. Kishida also stressed the need for dialogue between nuclear and non-nuclear powers. Asahi wrote, however, that it remains to be seen whether the U.S. and other nuclear powers will agree to Kishida's idea of hosting a meeting of eminent persons for the purpose of serving as a bridge between the nuclear and non-nuclear nations.

Japanese lawmakers meet with China's fourth highest ranking leader

All Friday papers reported on a meeting between a group of members of the Japan-China Friendship Parliamentarians' Union and China's fourth-highest ranking leader Yu Zhengsheng on May 4 in Beijing. During the meeting, the group led by LDP Vice President Komura called for additional cooperation from China in putting pressure on North Korea. Nikkei added that in view of the 45th

anniversary this year of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and China, Komura expressed Japan's hope to hold a summit meeting with China.

Japanese ambassador meets with acting ROK president

All Friday papers reported on Japanese Ambassador to South Korea Nagamine's meeting on May 4 with South Korea's Acting President Hwang Kyo-ahn for the first time since he was recalled in January to protest the installation of a comfort woman statue in front of the Japanese consulate general in Busan. The papers speculated that the Japanese envoy called for South Korea's implementation of the 2015 agreement on the comfort women.

U.S., Japan agree on cooperation in healthcare sector

Friday's Mainichi wrote that Health Minister Shiozaki and Health and Human Services Secretary Price held talks in Washington on May 3 and signed a memorandum of cooperation between the U.S. and Japan on the development of drugs and medical devices.

ECONOMY

Commerce Secretary Ross says "U.S. can't sustain huge trade deficit with Japan any longer"

All Saturday morning papers reported on a statement released on May 4 by Secretary of Commerce Ross in response to data showing that the U.S.'s trade deficit in good with Japan hit a nine-year high in March, widening by 55% from the previous month to \$7.2 billion. Secretary Ross stated that the United States can no longer sustain inflated trade deficits with its closest trading partners as its trade deficit with Mexico and Japan continues to grow at an alarming rate.

Japan's auto production in North America reaches five million units

Sunday's Nikkei front-paged a report saying that Japanese automakers produced more than five million vehicles in North America for the first time in fiscal 2016. Of the five million vehicles, almost four million were completely manufactured in the U.S., marking a record number for the fourth straight year. The paper wrote that although the trend is favorable for the Trump administration's "America First" policy, Japan's auto exports to the U.S. increased to 1.71 million units, up for the second year in a row.

U.S to impose punitive tariffs on steel products from Japan, seven other nations

Saturday evening's Asahi and Yomiuri and Sunday's Sankei wrote that the U.S. International Trade Commission said on May 5 that it has determined that steel products from Japan and seven other economies, including Germany and South Korea, are being sold in the U.S. at less than fair value and are hurting the U.S. steel industry. The U.S. plans to impose antidumping duties on these products. Asahi wrote that this is the first time for the Trump administration to decide to impose punitive tariffs on Japanese products.

TPP nations fail to agree on future of accord, confirm continued discussions

All Friday papers reported on a two-day meeting of chief negotiators from the 11 TPP member states that was held in Toronto on May 2-3. The 11 nations confirmed their plans to effectuate the TPP agreement to seek high-level trade rules in the region, but failed to agree on the details of outstanding issues due to differences over the future of the TPP. Japan's chief negotiator Katakami told reporters after the meeting that the negotiators shared the view that the 11 countries should keep pursuing the TPP so it will not lose momentum and that the participants agreed to continue discussions on effectuating the accord. The trade ministers of the 11 nations will follow up on the negotiators' talks at their meeting to be held on the sidelines of an APEC trade ministerial on May 20 in Vietnam.

Asahi wrote that Japan proposed minimal revisions to the existing accord agreed upon by the 12 members so as to leave room for the U.S.'s return to the framework and that Australia and New Zealand agreed with Japan's idea. However, Vietnam and Malaysia, which had hoped that the TPP would help boost their exports to the U.S., called for a review of the agreed-upon trade and investment rules following the withdrawal of the U.S. Chile and Peru expressed interest in China's participation in the regional trade framework.

Finance ministers of Japan, China, South Korea vow to counter protectionism

All Saturday morning papers reported on a joint statement adopted by the Japanese, Chinese, and South Korean finance ministers and central bank chiefs on May 5 in Yokohama, stating that their nations will counter "all forms of protectionism." Asahi wrote that the statement was meant to send a message to the Trump administration. The meeting of the three nations was held on the sidelines of an annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank. With the threats posed by North Korea in mind, the three nations also agreed to address any financial instability that arises from geopolitical risks amid regional tensions.

In a related development, all Sunday papers reported that a bilateral finance dialogue was held between Japan and China for the first time in two years on the margins of the ADB. During the meeting, Finance Minister Aso and his Chinese counterpart Xiao Jie confirmed the need for financial cooperation between the two nations.

Japan to donate \$40 million to ADB's infrastructure fund

All Saturday evening's Nikkei and other papers wrote that Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Aso announced on May 6 at an annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank in Yokohama that Japan will donate a total of \$40 million to assist with high-level infrastructure projects in Asia. The funds will be transferred over the next two years to the ADB's newly established High-Level Technology Fund, which is designed to help with cutting-edge projects in Asia in fields such as clean energy and transportation. Nikkei wrote that Japan's donation is also intended to support

Japanese firms' business in emerging economies in Asia and to counter the growing presence of the China-led AIIB.

In a related development, Saturday morning's Yomiuri and Nikkei wrote that Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Aso proposed at a meeting with his ASEAN counterparts the idea of establishing a new currency swap fund for ASEAN to provide up to 4 trillion yen to address short-term liquidity difficulties in times of crisis. Yomiuri conjectured that the proposal is intended to strengthen the presence of the ADB against the AIIB.

POLITICS

Abe expresses desire to amend Constitution, put revisions into effect in 2020

All Thursday papers front-paged reports on a video message by Prime Minister Abe to a gathering marking the 70th anniversary of the enforcement of the Constitution on May 3, in which he unveiled a plan to seek to amend the Constitution and put the revisions into effect in 2020. This was the first time for Abe to mention a specific timeframe for constitutional revision.

Abe's proposals included making the SDF's existence explicit in the language of the Constitution while retaining the first and second paragraphs of Article 9. The first paragraph says: "Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes." The second paragraph states: "In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized." Abe stated: "By making the status of the SDF explicit in the Constitution during our generation's lifetime, we should leave no room for contending that the SDF may be unconstitutional."

Among the other issues to be explored as possible amendments to the Constitution, Abe proposed debate on making public education free by saying "As we discuss the future shape of our country, education is an extremely important topic."

SOCIETY

Tokyo Metro changes regulation on response to North Korean missile launch

Wednesday's Mainichi and Sankei wrote that Tokyo Metro said on May 2 that it has changed its regulation on how to respond a missile launch by North Korea by deciding to halt train services only after the GOJ's J-Alert emergency advisory system has been activated. The company stopped all of its train services for around 10 minutes from 6:07 a.m. on April 29 following media reports of Pyongyang's test-firing of a ballistic missile even though a J-Alert warning was not issued. The suspension affected around 13,000 people.

Ratio of women in managerial positions rises to 8.3%

Friday's Yomiuri led with a report on the results of its recent survey showing that about 80% of major companies in Japan have increased their proportions of female employees in managerial posts at the level of section chief or higher since the Law on Promotion of Women's Participation and Advancement in the Workplace went into force in April 2016. The results reflect the positive effects of companies' programs for female workers, such as measures for work-life balance and training seminars. However, women accounted for only 8.3% of workers in managerial positions in April 2017, far below the government's goal of 30% by 2020.

GOJ to publicize in English Japanese firms' efforts to promote women's empowerment

Nikkei wrote in its evening edition on May 2 that the GOJ is planning to provide in English information about the efforts being made by about 3,600 Japanese firms to promote women's empowerment by setting up an English-language page on the website of the Cabinet Office. The information will include the number and ratio of female executives at these companies. The move is aimed at helping to expand foreign investment in Japan by disseminating this information to foreign investors in view of their increasing interest in the participation of women in the workforce. The GOJ will include the plan in this year's strategy for boosting women's empowerment to be developed in June for implementation in fiscal 2018.

