



Morning Alert - Thursday, August 10, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with a report on President Trump's remarks that North Korea's threats "will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen," saying that Secretary of State Tillerson explained that the President's remarks were meant to convey to North Korea that the U.S. has the ability to fully defend itself. The Secretary reportedly stressed that the U.S. will seek to resolve the issue diplomatically, not by use of force.

Most commercial networks led with reports on the extreme heat in Japan on Wednesday, saying that the temperature in Tokyo reached 37 degrees Celsius. TBS gave top play to a report that Japanese teenage sprinter Sani Brown became the first Japanese athlete in 14 years to advance to the 200-meter final in the World Championships in Athletics.

Top stories in national dailies included a meeting between an aide to Prime Minister Abe and a Kake Gakuen official at the Kantei in April 2015 (Asahi); the spread of "fake news" in the U.S. (Mainichi); President Trump's strongly worded warning to North Korea (Yomiuri); the international financial markets' nervous reaction to the "North Korea risk" (Nikkei); and North Korea's threat to launch a Mars 12 mid-range ballistic missile toward Guam (Sankei).

SECURITY

U.S. military releases statement saying it has confirmed safety of Osprey flights in Japan

NHK reported this morning that in response to the Japanese government's request for the U.S. military to suspend all Osprey flights in Japan following the fatal accident in waters off Australia, the Okinawa Area Coordinator, Lt. Gen. Nicholson, the commander of the III Marine Expeditionary Force, released a statement on Wednesday saying he has confirmed that it is safe to fly Ospreys in

Japan. Lt. Gen. Nicholson also reportedly said in the statement that a thorough investigation into the accident is being conducted and that measures to double-check flight safety procedures have been put in place. He also reportedly expressed the intention to continue Osprey training as the Osprey plays a role in maintaining regional peace and stability. The network added that local opposition will likely escalate because Lt. Gen. Nicholson did not mention the cause of the accident in the statement.

Ospreys not to initially participate in U.S.-Japan exercise

Mainichi wrote that the governments of the U.S. and Japan decided that Futenma-based Ospreys will not initially participate in the U.S.-Japan exercise to be held in Hokkaido starting from Aug. 10, but may join the exercise later if the U.S. submits a new report to Japan on the Osprey accident in waters off Australia. The joint exercise is scheduled to end on Aug. 28.

Meanwhile, Asahi wrote that it has learned from several GOJ sources that the U.S. military plans to forgo having Ospreys fly to Hokkaido for the opening ceremony to be held today for the U.S.-Japan joint military exercise. However, the paper said the U.S. military has not changed its plan to have the aircraft participate in the exercise. Hokkaido Vice Governor Kubota delivered to the Ministry of Defense on Wednesday a letter for Defense Minister Onodera requesting the GOJ urge the U.S. to suspend Osprey flights in Hokkaido.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S., North Korea exchange threats

All papers reported extensively on what they described as an “escalating” exchange of threats between the U.S. and North Korea, saying that President Trump sent a warning to Pyongyang over its repeated provocations by saying that they “will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen.” North Korea responded to the President’s remarks three hours later by saying that it is considering launching a mid-range ballistic missile toward the vicinity of Guam.

Asahi wrote that there is some discrepancy within the USG because Secretary of State Tillerson has expressed the U.S.’s readiness to hold dialogue with the DPRK by saying: “We are not your enemy, we are not your threat.” The paper wrote that members of Congress reacted coolly to the statement by the President, with Senator McCain telling a radio station: “The great leaders I’ve seen don’t threaten unless they’re ready to act.”

Mainichi wrote that the GOJ is reacting calmly to the situation by closely watching developments and monitoring statements by such senior USG officials as Secretary of State Tillerson and Secretary of Defense Mattis. The paper quoted a senior MOFA official as speculating that Washington is taking a carrot-and-stick approach to Pyongyang, with President Trump using tough language and Secretary Tillerson hinting at the possibility of dialogue.

Yomiuri wrote that Japan and South Korea are concerned about the possibility of President Trump ordering a military action without prior consultations or a long-term policy in the event of further provocations by North Korea.

Nagasaki marks 72nd anniversary of atomic bombing

All papers reported on the peace memorial ceremony held on Wednesday in Nagasaki to mark the 72nd anniversary of the atomic bombing. Nagasaki Mayor Taue called on the GOJ to join a recently adopted treaty banning nuclear weapons. Prime Minister Abe stated in an address at the ceremony that Japan will take the initiative in nuclear disarmament by serving as a bridge between nuclear and non-nuclear powers. Abe, however, did not mention any specific measures, such as participation in the treaty. The ceremony was attended by representatives of 58 nations, including six nuclear powers – the U.S., the UK, France, Russia, China, and Israel.

Kono makes smooth diplomatic debut

Yomiuri wrote that Foreign Minister Kono made a smooth debut as Japan's top diplomat, holding bilateral talks with Secretary of State Tillerson and Philippine President Duterte on the sidelines of the ASEAN-related meeting in Manila this week. The paper wrote that Kono's good command of English will be a powerful tool. During a bilateral meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang, Kono rebutted the Chinese official's criticism of Japan's opposition to Chinese activities in the South China Sea. Nikkei ran a similar report.

North Korea releases Canadian pastor

Asahi and several other papers wrote that North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency said on Wednesday that it has released a Canadian pastor who was convicted of subversion in 2015 and sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor. The papers speculated that the release was realized through a special envoy for Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau who was in Pyongyang on Tuesday. The papers also conjectured that Pyongyang agreed to release the detainee to deflect international criticism following the death of Otto Warmbier in June.

ECONOMY

METI begins discussions on revising basic energy policy

Asahi wrote that the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry began discussions on how to revise Japan's basic energy plan at an experts' panel on Wednesday. Concerning nuclear power, several panelists stressed the need to build new reactors or renovate aging plants. Mainichi wrote that the panelists called for a review of the existing energy policy established in 2014, which aims to rely on nuclear power to generate 20 to 22% of the nation's electricity by 2030.



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