



Morning Alert - Monday, August 14, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dunford is expected to visit Japan this week to discuss North Korea. TV Asahi led with a report that President Trump's comment that the North Korean threat will boost the number of tourists in Guam is causing controversy. TBS gave top play to a report that Japan won a bronze medal in the men's 4x100 meters relay at the World Athletics Championships in London. NTV led with a report on an incident in which an ANA flight to Itami had to return to Haneda and make an emergency landing on Sunday due to a low pressure warning.

Major front-page items in national papers included Japanese athletes' performance in the World Athletics Championships in London, a GOJ plan to maintain a ban on gambling for people under the age 20, and updates on the situation in North Korea.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Arrangements for President Trump's first visit to Japan in September put on hold

Monday's Sankei claimed in a front-page story that although coordination had been underway between the GOJ and the USG for President Trump to make an official state to visit Japan in September, the idea has apparently been put on hold due in part to scheduling conflicts. According to several sources involved in bilateral relations, Japan proposed that the U.S. leader make a trip to Japan in early September to demonstrate the strong bilateral alliance in order to counter North Korea's provocations. However, this idea was found problematic from the standpoint of crisis management since North Korea may be tempted to conduct a nuclear test around that time to "celebrate" the anniversary of the foundation of the republic on Sept. 9. Arranging a trip in mid- or

late-September was also deemed difficult given Prime Minister Abe's busy diplomatic schedule, including planned trips to Russia, India, and New York.

While it is widely believed that the President will make his first trip to Japan in November when he attends the APEC leaders' meeting in Vietnam, the article claimed that Japan and the U.S. may try to arrange a visit at an earlier date while paying close attention to the North Korean situation. The article added that the White House is cautious about arranging an extended overseas trip for President Trump out of concern for the potential effect on his health.

### **U.S., Japanese foreign and defense ministers to confirm “nuclear umbrella”**

Today's Nikkei front-paged an upcoming 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting between the U.S. and Japan to be held in Washington on Thursday, projecting that the participants are expected to confirm the U.S. commitment to defending Japan through “extended deterrence” in a joint document scheduled for release upon conclusion of the meeting. The daily said the Trump administration is keen to demonstrate that the U.S. and Japan will not succumb to North Korea's relentless provocations. In a separate article, however, the daily voiced concern that President Trump's provocative language may backfire by further emboldening Kim Jong Un, who has probably concluded that the U.S. leader's rhetoric is “empty.”

### **U.S., North Korea engaged in war of rhetoric**

All Friday and weekend papers gave extensive coverage to the strong language exchanged between President Trump and the North Korean state media over the Kim Jong Un regime's relentless provocations, including a proposed missile strike on Guam and the President's tweet saying: “Military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded, should North Korea act unwisely.” The papers speculated that the President's strong language was probably intended to enlist further cooperation from China by calling attention to his administration's readiness to take military action if necessary.

However, the dailies also reported that concern is growing at home and abroad that President Trump's harsh rhetoric toward North Korea may end up unintentionally triggering a military conflict. The papers highlighted comments made by various global leaders and U.S. experts calling for the U.S. leader to tone down his “bellicose” language. The dailies also expressed apprehension that senior Trump administration officials have not issued a unified message toward North Korea, pointing out that Secretary of State Tillerson and Defense Secretary Mattis are apparently advocating dialogue to defuse the tension on the Korean Peninsula.

### **Democratic lawmakers voice concern about President's language on DPRK**

Saturday's Mainichi took up a joint letter sent to Secretary of State Tillerson by some 60 Democratic members of Congress expressing “strong concern” about President Trump's statements that “dramatically increased tensions with North Korea and raised the specter of nuclear war,” calling his

language “irresponsible and dangerous.” They urged the Secretary to make additional efforts to resolve the nuclear and missile standoff through dialogue.

### **Trump to order probe into Chinese trade practices**

Sunday papers reported extensively that President Trump is expected to issue instructions to the USTR shortly on launching an investigation based on Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act into China's trade practices. The papers speculated that the move is intended to step up pressure on Beijing so as to force it to rein in North Korea. The Trump administration may impose punitive tariffs on Chinese imports if the probe identifies intellectual property rights violations by the Chinese. While taking up the disclosure by an unnamed senior USG official on Saturday that the USTR will begin a preliminary probe to see whether a full-fledged investigation is necessary, most Monday papers expressed qualms about a possible trade war between the two economic giants based on the view that China is bound to take countermeasures if the U.S. applies punitive tariffs on Chinese products.

Sunday papers also took up a teleconference held on Friday between President Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi, at which the two leaders agreed that North Korea must halt its provocative behavior immediately. The Chinese leader also cautioned President Trump against resorting to military means, calling for a “political settlement” of the standoff with the DPRK.

### **Top U.S. military official to visit Seoul**

Saturday evening's Asahi wrote that Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dunford will visit South Korea and hold talks with President Moon on Monday, predicting that the two officials will exchange views on the rising tension over North Korea. The daily added that the U.S. military leader's trip to Seoul was not arranged in response to North Korea's alleged plan to launch a missile attack on Guam.

NHK reported this morning that Gen. Dunford will also visit Japan and China this week in order to discuss North Korea. In Japan, he is expected to meet with Adm. Kawano, SDF Chief of Staff, Joint Staff. Gen. Dunford reportedly said that the purpose of his visit is to “exchange views on the situation in Japan, South Korea, and other nations in light of the situation in North Korea.” The network said U.S. media reported that Gen. Dunford is also expected to discuss military options against the North in the event that diplomatic efforts fail. The network said President Trump has been keeping North Korea in check and repeatedly saying that all options are on the table, quoting him as saying: “If anything happens to Guam, there's going to be big trouble in North Korea.” The network added that attention will be focused on Gen. Dunford's meetings in Asia.

### **U.S. carries out freedom of navigation operation in South China Sea**

All Friday morning papers wrote that the USS McCain on Thursday passed through waters within 12 nautical miles of an artificial island built by the Chinese in the South China Sea. The papers explained that this was the third “freedom of navigation” operation under the Trump administration

and may have been intended to step up the pressure on Beijing to exercise its influence over North Korea.

### **Statues honoring victims of forced labor built in Seoul**

Several Sunday dailies took up ceremonies held in Seoul and Incheon on Saturday to unveil memorials honoring Koreans who were subjected to forced labor by Japanese companies during WWII, projecting that the statues will become another thorn in Japan-ROK relations along with the comfort women memorials. The dailies claimed that similar statues may be built across South Korea, given that the Moon administration is taking a tougher approach toward Japan on history issues.

### **Chinese government ships enter Japan's territorial waters off Kagoshima**

Friday morning's Nikkei and Sankei reported that two Chinese government vessels temporarily entered Japan's territorial waters off Kagoshima on Friday, noting that the same ships violated Japan's territorial waters off northern Kyushu and Aomori last month on their way to the Pacific to participate in international fisheries patrol training.

### **British Prime Minister May to visit Japan later this month**

Friday morning's Asahi wrote that arrangements are being made for British Prime Minister May to visit Japan in late August to hold a summit with Prime Minister Abe. Other papers ran similar stories, noting that North Korea and Brexit will be the main topics of discussion between the two leaders.

### **GOJ invites UN chief to visit Japan this year**

Today's Nikkei said the GOJ has been asking UN Secretary General Guterres to visit Japan later this year in a bid to renew global momentum for reforming the Security Council.

## **SECURITY**

### **PAC-3 batteries deployed in Chugoku, Shikoku**

All Sunday papers reported that the Defense Ministry on Saturday deployed PAC-3 missile interceptors at SDF bases in the Chugoku and Shikoku regions, including Camp Izumo in Shimane Prefecture in order to shoot down DPRK missiles in the event that they fall in these areas on the way to Guam. An MSDF Aegis destroyer equipped with SM-3 anti-missile batteries has also been deployed in the Sea of Japan in preparation for a possible missile launch by Pyongyang. Prime Minister Abe said on Saturday that his administration will do everything it can to defend the Japanese people.

### **Onodera's remarks on collective self-defense cause stir**

All Friday morning papers highlighted remarks made at the parliament on Thursday by Defense Minister Onodera, who hinted at the possibility that Japan might exercise collective self-defense to assist the U.S. military in the event of a North Korean missile attack on Guam. While commenting on the DPRK's warning of a missile strike on the U.S. territory, the defense chief said Japan's existence

could be endangered if U.S. deterrence and strike capabilities were damaged as a result of a DPRK attack on the Pacific island. As Japan would be allowed to assist the U.S. militarily in such a contingency under the comprehensive security laws, Onodera suggested that the SDF might choose to intercept North Korean projectiles headed toward Guam. The minister's remarks were intended to hold Pyongyang in check by underscoring the strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

However, Yomiuri pointed out technical difficulties with Japan intercepting DPRK missiles. The paper also said Japan would not be legally permitted to assist the U.S. military if North Korea were to launch missiles while claiming that they were targeted at locations outside of U.S. territorial waters.

### **GOJ endorses resumption of Osprey flights**

All Saturday papers reported on an announcement made on Friday by the Defense Ministry that it has accepted the resumption of flights by the Futenma-based Ospreys given that the U.S. military has implemented the necessary safety measures following the fatal Osprey crash in Australia. In allowing the resumption of the Osprey flights, the ministry reportedly considered U.S. explanations on the latest Osprey accident to be appropriate.

Projecting that the Futenma-based tilt-rotor planes will probably take part in the ongoing U.S.-Japan drill currently being held in Hokkaido, the papers said four MV-22s left Futenma on Friday morning and arrived at Misawa AB later in the day. Sunday's Mainichi said the four Ospreys, along with an additional one that had been at Misawa since July 29, flew to MCAS Iwakuni on Saturday.

In a related development, Saturday evening papers reported on instructions issued by USMC Commandant Neller on Friday that all Marine aircraft will be grounded for 24 hours in the next two weeks in response to a series of fatal crashes, including the one in Australia.

### **Anti-base rally held in Okinawa**

Sunday's Asahi and Tokyo Shimbun reported on a rally to protest the FRF construction off Camp Schwab held in Naha on Saturday, noting that according to the organizer, some 45,000 people attended the event. The participants' anger at the U.S. military has been compounded by the continued operations by the Futenma-based Ospreys, one of which crashed recently in waters off Australia. Okinawa Governor Onaga and Nago Mayor Inamine underscored their determination to block the Futenma relocation initiative at all costs.

The Monday editions of Asahi and Tokyo Shimbun also highlighted a ceremony held at Okinawa International University on Sunday to mark the 13th anniversary of the crash of a Marine helicopter on its campus in Ginowan in 2004. Some 140 teachers and students took part in the event, during which they called for the closure of MCAS Futenma and the suspension of Osprey flights.

## **Poll shows six out of ten do not want Abe to be reelected**

Friday morning's Yomiuri front-paged the results of a nationwide public opinion survey conducted in July jointly with Waseda University showing that a total of 64% said Prime Minister Abe should resign immediately or step down when his current tenure ends in September 2018.

## **Komeito cautious about enacting casino legislation**

Saturday morning's Yomiuri reported that an increasing number of ruling Komeito officials are hesitant to enact a bill on implementing the integrated resort law in view of the decline in public approval of the Abe cabinet, noting that opponents of the controversial legislation on casino are afraid that passing it in the extraordinary Diet session in the fall would draw strong public criticism.

### **ECONOMY**

## **Kono to hold talks with U.S. trade chief**

Monday's Nikkei wrote that when Foreign Minister Kono visits Washington later this week to attend a 2+2 ministerial meeting, he is likely to hold talks with USTR Lighthizer on the sidelines to discuss the safeguard restrictions that Japan has recently adopted to counter a surge in U.S. beef imports. The top Japanese diplomat is expected to justify the measure by explaining that it is in line with international rules. According to the report, Kono may also meet with Commerce Secretary Ross.

### **SOCIETY**

## **Former Marine visits Japan to return flag from WWII**

Most Monday papers wrote that a 93-year-old U.S. veteran is currently visiting Japan to return a rising sun flag that he took from the body of a Japanese soldier on the battlefield in Saipan in July 1944. Marvin Strombo from Montana plans to return the Japanese flag to the owner's bereaved family in Gifu Prefecture tomorrow. The dailies said the Oregon-based NGO "Obon Society" helped to identify the flag owner and arrange the former Marine's trip to Japan.