



Morning Alert - Tuesday, August 15, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on the heavy rain in Kumamoto Prefecture, calling for caution against mudslides and flooding. TV Asahi led with a report that the governors of Shimane, Hiroshima, Ehime, and Kochi prefectures met with Prime Minister Abe on Monday and called for strengthened measures against North Korean missiles. TBS gave top play to a report that North Korea will celebrate the National Liberation Day of Korea today. NTV led with a report that a small airplane crashed in a mountainous area of Nara Prefecture on Monday, saying that two people believed to have been on the plane were found dead. Fuji TV reported that Japanese golfer Hideki Matsuyama announced that he got married in January and had his first baby in July.

Major front-page stories in national papers included yesterday's meeting in Seoul between South Korean President Moon and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dunford and Japan's latest GDP statistics pointing to strong economic recovery led by domestic demand.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Trump, Abe to discuss North Korea over phone

All papers took up the White House announcement on Monday that President Trump and Prime Minister Abe are expected to hold a teleconference this morning (Japan time) to exchange views on the situation in North Korea. The two leaders are likely to confirm renewed bilateral and trilateral coordination with South Korea in coping with Pyongyang's relentless provocations, including its threat to launch missiles toward Guam.

### U.S. military leader confirms defense commitment to South Korea

All dailies reported from Seoul on a meeting held on Monday between President Moon and visiting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dunford, in which the two officials agreed to respond firmly in the event that North Korea stages additional provocations, such as launching ballistic missiles toward Guam. The U.S. general affirmed Washington's defense commitment to the ROK by saying: "The U.S. military is preparing for military options in the event that diplomatic and economic pressure on North Korea by the U.S. government fails." He added, however, that he is hoping to resolve the standoff without resorting to war.

In a related development, several papers highlighted an op-ed piece in the Wall Street Journal coauthored by Secretary of State Tillerson and Secretary of Defense Mattis, in which they said the U.S. is willing to negotiate with Pyongyang. The officials stated, however, that it is incumbent upon Pyongyang to signal its desire to negotiate "in good faith." The secretaries stressed that while diplomacy is the U.S.'s preferred means of defusing the crisis, "it is backed by military options."

Meanwhile, Yomiuri wrote that some U.S. experts, such as former National Security Advisor Susan Rice and well-known foreign affairs journalist Fareed Zakaria, are insisting that Washington may have no option but to condone North Korea's possession of a limited number of nuclear weapons. They reportedly believe that U.S. nuclear deterrence is powerful enough to manage the threats posed by North Korean nuclear weapons. Rice stated in a recent New York Times article: "History shows that we can, if we must, tolerate nuclear weapons in North Korea — the same way we tolerated the far greater threat of thousands of Soviet nuclear weapons during the Cold War."

### **Top DPRK diplomat proposed dialogue to Foreign Minister Kono**

Yomiuri front-paged the disclosure by a GOJ source that North Korean Foreign Minister Li proposed holding dialogue when he exchanged greetings with Foreign Minister Kono during an ASEAN foreign ministerial dinner in Manila on Aug. 6. The DPRK official reportedly expressed interest in dialogue in response to a demand made by Kono that Pyongyang take concrete actions to resolve the nuclear and missile standoff and the abductions. The daily claimed that Li apparently had the U.S. in mind when he mentioned dialogue, speculating that the DPRK may be hoping that Prime Minister Abe will capitalize on his close personal bonds with President Trump to serve as a mediator.

The paper added in a separate piece that the Kim regime may have been making overtures to Washington via Tokyo by taking into account growing calls among some American pundits for the Trump administration to launch dialogue with the DPRK in order to curb its rapid acquisition of nuclear and ICBM technology.

### **Abe assures four prefectural leaders of GOJ's defense commitment**

All papers reported that Prime Minister Abe met with the governors of Shimane, Hiroshima, Ehime, and Kochi on Monday and promised that the GOJ will make utmost efforts to ensure security in their jurisdictions in view of the possibility that North Korean missiles may fly over the prefectures on the

way to Guam. Abe said: "It is important not to allow North Korea to stage unwarranted provocations. My gravest responsibility is to defend and protect the people's lives."

### **China to ban imports of selected DPRK items**

All papers reported on the Chinese government's announcement yesterday that beginning today, imports of North Korean coal, lead, iron ore, and marine products will be fully prohibited in line with the latest UN Security Council sanctions resolution. By announcing the implementation of the resolution only 10 days after its adoption on Aug. 5, the Chinese are reportedly hoping to call U.S. attention to their commitment to addressing the DPRK standoff. Noting that coal originating from third countries will still be allowed to be imported from North Korea, Asahi said this may constitute a "loophole."

### **South Korea to extend GSOMIA with Japan by one year**

Most papers wrote that the ROK defense minister explained at the parliament on Monday the Moon administration's intention to renew the existing general security of military information agreement (GSOMIA) with Tokyo. The pact needs to be updated every year in November.

### **More comfort women statues erected in South Korea**

All papers reported from Seoul that over 80 comfort women statues have been built across South Korea, warning that more memorials may be installed in view of the Moon administration's tough approach toward Japan on history issues. According to the dailies, about 500 miniature comfort women statues were installed in a public square in Seoul and a South Korean tour company is operating five buses each carrying a seated statue. On the "rapid spread" of the statues honoring the Korean victims, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga said last night on a TV show: "This is extremely regrettable at a time when the U.S., Japan, and South Korea need to unite in dealing with North Korea. This should not be happening."

### **Families of Japanese abductees to visit U.S. next month**

Sankei wrote that members of the families of Japanese abductees are planning to visit Washington in September to seek the Trump administration's support in bringing back their loved ones from North Korea. The family members, who will be accompanied by Japanese Diet members who have been dealing with the matter for years, are hoping to hold meetings with senior DOS officials and members of Congress who are interested in North Korean human rights issues.

## **SECURITY**

### **LDP members to visit Hawaii to inspect U.S. missile interceptor system**

NHK reported this morning that while the GOJ and the ruling parties are considering the introduction of a new U.S. missile interceptor system in light of the growing threat posed by North Korea, LDP Research Commission on Security chief Imazu and others will visit Hawaii starting Aug. 17 to inspect the test facility for Aegis Ashore and exchange views with senior PACOM officials. The network

added that some members of the delegation will also visit Guam to inspect the THAAD system. The network said members of the party's Research Commission on Security are planning to request that the cost of procuring a new interceptor system be included in the next year's budget.

### **Defense chief meets with Okinawa leader**

All papers reported that Defense Minister Onodera held talks with Okinawa Governor Onaga in Naha on Monday, during which the local politician urged the Abe administration to abandon the FRF construction off Camp Schwab. In reply, Onodera asked for the governor's understanding by saying that the implementation of the project will help remove the danger at MCAS Futenma. While mentioning the recent Osprey crash in Australia, the governor requested that the GOJ press the U.S. military to suspend Osprey flights until the cause of the accident is determined. Onodera said in response that he was told by the U.S. side that no mechanical defects have been found that would hinder safe flights. Regarding the Osprey, he also stated: "We consider it to be extremely important equipment for the defense of Japan. The SDF would like to utilize the same model. We will continue to ask the U.S. military to ensure flight safety." Yomiuri suspected that Onodera visited the southernmost prefecture in preparation for the planned U.S.-Japan 2+2 ministerial meeting in Washington later this week. The entire 35-minute session between Onaga and Onodera was open to the press.

According to Asahi, ahead of his meeting with the governor, Onodera met with the deputy USFJ commander and called for thorough safety measures when operating the tilt-rotor planes.

## **POLITICS**

### **Noda decides not to visit Yasukuni on war anniversary**

Sankei and Nikkei reported that Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Noda has decided not to visit Yasukuni Shrine today, with Sankei saying that although she has paid homage at the Shinto memorial every Aug. 15 for many years, she has chosen not to do so this year perhaps out of deference to South Korea and China with her possible candidacy in the LDP presidential election next autumn in mind.