


JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Thursday, August 24, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with a report that North Korea once again threatened the Trump administration by releasing a statement that it will “not simply idly watch the U.S. take the foolish action of playing with fire on top of a nuclear warehouse.” NTV and Fuji TV led with reports that two people were found infected with O-157 E. coli after dining at a BBQ restaurant in Yokohama last month. TBS gave top play to a report on the blueprint for Kake Gakuen’s new veterinary medicine school building, which showed that “beer servers” and a “wine cellar” will be installed on the top floor. TV Asahi reported on the extreme heat in Tokyo on Wednesday.

Top stories in national dailies included Russia’s designation of a special economic zone in the Northern Territories (Sankei); an increase in the number of manufacturers returning to Japan (Nikkei); a survey showing that there is not a single bookstore in 20% of Japanese municipalities (Asahi); and a Transport Ministry plan to use artificial intelligence to ease traffic congestion at tourist sites (Yomiuri).

SECURITY

Navy relieves 7th Fleet commander

All papers wrote that the U.S. Navy relieved the 7th Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Aucoin, on Wednesday following the two recent fatal collisions between 7th Fleet destroyers and civilian vessels, saying that the Navy lost confidence in his ability to lead. Vice Admiral Aucoin was scheduled to retire in a few weeks.

Onodera visits MSDF Aegis ship

Asahi, Mainichi, and Nikkei wrote that Defense Minister Onodera on Wednesday visited the MSDF's Aegis ship Chokai, which is part of the surveillance mission against North Korea in the Sea of Japan. The defense minister told reporters upon returning from the visit that he saw crew members serving around the clock on the frontline in the ocean. The papers wrote that this is the first time for a defense minister to visit an Aegis ship engaged in the surveillance mission against North Korea.

According to Mainichi, Onodera commented on the concern that the accidents involving the two 7th Fleet vessels may impair the U.S.-Japan missile defense against North Korea by saying that Japan will ensure seamless surveillance by operating its four Aegis ships in coordination with the U.S.

Investigative report to rule out defects in Osprey

Mainichi wrote that it learned from a GOJ source on Wednesday that the U.S. military has compiled an investigative report on the Osprey mishap last December. The report concludes that the Futenma-based Osprey made an emergency landing in waters off Nago owing to factors such as foul weather and human error rather than to defects in the aircraft itself. The GOJ plans to make public the document to be provided by the U.S. in the near future.

Inamine to seek third term as Nago mayor

Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Sankei wrote that Nago Mayor Inamine officially announced on Wednesday his intention to run in the mayoral election on Feb. 4, 2018, to seek a third term. The mayor told the press that he will use every possible means to stop the construction of a new base at Henoko by working together with Governor Onaga. The paper wrote that the outcome of the election will likely have a major impact on the ongoing FRF construction and the Okinawa gubernatorial election in the fall of 2018.

INTERNATIONAL

Russia designates Northern Territories special economic zone

All papers wrote that the Russian media reported that Russian Prime Minister Medvedev on Wednesday signed a document designating the Northern Territories a special economic zone. Asahi speculated that in view of ongoing bilateral negotiations on the planned joint economic activities on the islands, the move is intended to apply pressure on Tokyo. Mainichi conjectured that the designation is intended to underscore Moscow's claim over the territories. Yomiuri and Nikkei wrote that the move will likely affect the negotiations on the joint development projects and that the GOJ is alarmed by Moscow's move, which it views as an attempt to apply pressure on Tokyo ahead of Prime Minister Abe's visit to Russia in early September. Sankei wrote that Japan will likely react strongly to the designation because the move runs counter to the bilateral talks on joint economic activities in the region. The paper quoted a senior MOFA official as expressing bewilderment by saying that it is difficult to understand why Russia made the move ahead of Abe's summit meeting with President Putin next month.

ECONOMY

Japan proposes U.S.-requested concessions on TPP be placed on hold

[Nikkei](#) front-paged a report saying that Japan has sounded out its TPP partners about the idea of suspending trade concessions made to the U.S. during the TPP negotiations in an attempt to effectuate the accord with the 11 remaining members. These concessions include the protection of proprietary pharmaceutical data. Chief negotiators of the 11 countries will cite items they wish to see shelved during their meeting to be held in Australia on Aug. 28-30. If there is unanimous agreement among the 11 participants, such concessions would be put on hold, and national regulations governing those elements of the pact would remain in place. But the suspension would be lifted if the U.S. decides to return to the partnership.

Japanese firms closely watching fate of NAFTA

Asahi wrote that in response to President Trump's remarks on Tuesday indicating the possibility the U.S. might eventually terminate NAFTA, Japanese automakers and other companies with plants in Mexico are becoming increasingly worried about the future of the accord.

