
 **JAPAN MEDIA
HIGHLIGHTS**

Morning Alert - Wednesday, August 30, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All TV networks and national papers led with follow-up reports on North Korea's launch on Tuesday morning of a ballistic missile that flew over Japan. NHK reported from New York that an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council started at around 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday evening. U.S. Ambassador to the UN Haley told reporters ahead of the meeting: "North Korea has violated every single UN Security Council resolution. Something serious has to happen."

Nikkei claimed that the U.S. and Japan were expected to propose a ban on petroleum exports to North Korea during the emergency meeting of the Security Council.

INTERNATIONAL

DPRK provocations continue

All papers reported heavily on North Korea's launch on Tuesday of a medium-range ballistic missile over Japan, noting that it probably represents the Kim regime's intention to continue carrying out provocations until it acquires nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities that can cover the U.S. mainland. Pointing out that the projectile in question appeared to be a "Mars 12" that could fly up to 5,000 km, the dailies speculated that Pyongyang launched it toward an unspecified target in the northern Pacific Ocean east of Japan in order to demonstrate that the missile could reach Guam, some 3,400 km from the Korean Peninsula. The North perhaps concluded that Russia and China would not react strongly if the launch was made in the name of countering the ongoing U.S.-ROK military exercise. The dailies expressed concern that the reclusive regime may escalate provocations ahead of National Foundation Day, Sept. 9.

Japan reacts quickly, sharply

All papers wrote that the GOJ's reaction to yesterday's DPRK missile firing appeared to be fast and strong, quoting PM Abe as telling the press less than two hours after the launch: "As we detected the missile' movement fully from immediately after the launch, we were able to take thorough measures to defend the people's lives." The GOJ activated the J-alert early warning system four minutes after the firing to inform the public of the possible flight of a DPRK projectile over their communities. While quoting a GOJ source as saying that the GOJ "was able to fully implement what had to be done" in response to the launch, Yomiuri said the GOJ may have detected signs of an imminent launch from information provided by the U.S. military.

Meanwhile, several dailies expressed concern that Japan may not be able to defend itself from North Korea which is making rapid progress in missile expertise, noting that all of the country may not be covered by the nation's missile defense platforms, such as ground-based PAC-3s and seaborne SM3s, even if they will be eventually be complemented by "Aegis Ashore" batteries. Sankei stressed the importance of studying the possible acquisition of capabilities to strike enemy bases to forestall impending DPRK missile attacks.

U.S. response measured

Several papers said that despite what the GOJ called an "unprecedented, grave and serious threat" posed by North Korea, the Trump administration's reaction appeared muted. A Pentagon spokesman issued a statement saying the launch did not pose a threat to North America. A White House statement on the provocation was very strong in tone, although it came more than 12 hours after the launch. Asahi said while President Trump reiterated the U.S. defense commitment to Japan in a teleconference with PM Abe that was convened several hours after the launch, his criticism of the latest DPRK provocation appeared less strong than the premier's. Worrying that Washington may be tempted to ease its hardline on the condition that Pyongyang does not pose a direct threat to the U.S. mainland, the daily called for the Abe administration to close any schism with the Trump administration.

While quoting Abe as telling the press after his telephone conversation with President Trump that the U.S. and Japan are "fully in sync," Mainichi said the premier was keen not to leave the impression that there is a gap between the two nations in their approach to the Kim regime. It added that Abe plans to conduct active diplomacy next month to enlist international cooperation for tightening the noose around Pyongyang by visiting Vladivostok early next month for separate talks with President Putin and ROK leader Moon. The Japanese leader is also planning to visit India and New York.

Noting that President Trump and Secretary Tillerson very recently indicated U.S. willingness to resume communications with North Korea, Yomiuri said the latest launch dampened Washington's desire for holding dialogue at least for now. Mainichi said the U.S. may have no choice but to step up military pressure, conjecturing that since a military strike is highly unlikely as it would trigger a full-

scale response from the North, Washington's practical option will perhaps be the frequent deployment of "strategic assets," such as B-1 bombers and aircraft carriers. Sankei said the Trump administration's "peaceful pressure" campaign against North Korea has apparently reached its limit, as the Kim regime went ahead with the missile launch in defiance of repeated warnings.

In a related item, Sankei wrote that Secretary Tillerson has proposed the elimination of a number of senior department portfolios, including the special envoy for the Six-Party Talks.

SECURITY

USMC Osprey makes "precautionary" landing in Oita

Most papers reported that a Futenma-based MV-22 Osprey made an emergency landing at Oita Airport on Tuesday evening, noting that the tilt-rotor plane was allegedly emitting smoke while heading to Okinawa from MCAS Iwakuni. Mainichi said the same Osprey was witnessed emitting smoke while parked at MCAS Iwakuni on Monday. According to the daily, an III MEF spokesperson said: "The aircraft made a precautionary landing at the nearest airport in accordance with instructions on instrument panels." According to NHK, the plane was still at the airport as of 6:30 a.m. today.

U.S. provides Japan with documents related to Fitzgerald collision

Most papers wrote that the Japan Transport Safety Board (JTSB) disclosed yesterday that it has received from the U.S. Coast Guard a number of documents concerning its probe into the fatal collision between the USS Fitzgerald and a container ship off Shizuoka in June, including records of interviews with Fitzgerald crew members and photos of damage to the Aegis warship. This was reportedly the first time for the U.S. side to submit to the GOJ panel documentation regarding an accident involving the U.S. military. JTBS Chairman Nakahashi projected "significant progress" in its investigation into the cause of the mishap as a result of the U.S. documents, although he said the documentation is still "not complete."

Carrier-borne planes conduct training at Atsugi less than a month after relocation to Iwakuni

Tokyo Shimbun reported that several E-2D early warning aircraft, which were moved to MCAS Iwakuni semi-permanently only three weeks ago, conducted landing practice at NAF Atsugi on Tuesday.

ECONOMY

Aso comments on upcoming talks with Pence

Asahi took up yesterday's press remarks by Deputy Prime Minister Aso regarding his planned informal meeting in Washington on Sept. 5 with Vice President Pence. The minister said: "There are a number of issues that need to be addressed so as to convene [the bilateral economic dialogue] later this year. I'll be meeting with the Vice President not to discuss frictions but to deepen bilateral

cooperation.” The daily predicted that Aso is likely to convey to the U.S. leader that Tokyo has no intention to make trade concessions beyond those made when concluding the TPP. According to the article, the Japanese official is expected to hold separate talks with Commerce Secretary Ross, Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, and National Economic Council Director Cohn.

