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# JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Thursday, November 16, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave led with a report on the start of the COP23 ministerial meeting in Bonn, Germany, on Wednesday. All commercial networks continued to give top play to the case of alleged assault by sumo grand champion Harumafuji.

Main front-page stories in national papers included a GOJ plan on increasing subsidies for childcare programs, the Health Ministry's policy of allowing smoking at eateries with a floor space of 150 square meters or less in order to protect small businesses, and the San Francisco City Assembly's adoption of a resolution to accept the donation of a set of three comfort women statues.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Security relationship between U.S. and Japan strengthened

Mainichi said the security bonds between the U.S. and Japan have become even stronger following President Trump's recent trip to Tokyo, attributing this to the Trump administration's heavy reliance on "generals" and former U.S. military officials, including National Security Advisor McMaster and NSC Senior Director for Asia Matthew Pottinger. Communications between the SDF and the U.S. military have reportedly been very smooth even though a number of senior positions at many U.S. agencies have not yet been filled. Prime Minister Abe's "free and open Indo-Pacific" diplomatic initiative, which was recently embraced by President Trump, was first relayed to Pottinger and other White House officials by PACOM Commander Harris.

### Suga criticizes San Francisco's decision to accept donation of comfort women memorial

Sankei gave top play to Tuesday's unanimous adoption by the San Francisco city assembly of a motion to accept the donation of a set of comfort women statues from a group of Chinese-Americans. The daily projected that the Osaka city government is likely to end its sister city ties with San Francisco if the memorial officially becomes the property of the city. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga reportedly reacted strongly by telling the press yesterday: "The move runs counter to our position. It is extremely regrettable."

### Abe toned down rhetoric on China during regional summit

Nikkei reported that during Tuesday's East Asia Summit in the Philippines, Prime Minister Abe refrained from using strong language to criticize China's militarization of the South China Sea perhaps in a bid to improve bilateral relations by realizing reciprocal visits to each other's capital by President Xi and himself next year, which will mark the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the bilateral Treaty of Peace and Friendship. While noting that the premier's most significant achievements in his Southeast Asia tour were his meetings with President Xi and Premier Li, during which they affirmed mutual efforts for reconciliation, the article said the Japanese leader may be criticized for exercising a "double standard" if he elects not to criticize China for the sake of conducting "pragmatic diplomacy" given that he underscores the importance of upholding such common values as the rule of law and democracy in pursuing national interests on the foreign policy front.

### **Government plans strict vetting of refugees to prevent infiltration of DPRK agents**

Yomiuri front-paged countermeasures the GOJ plans to take in the event of the influx of a large number of North Korean refugees during a Korean Peninsula contingency, explaining that the Japan Coast Guard will enhance patrols in the Sea of Japan while intense screening will be conducted at Japanese ports to see whether or not refugees should be granted protection. Those who pass the vetting will be housed in temporary shelters to be established in Kyushu. The GOJ is reportedly determined to prevent the infiltration of North Korean spies and other operatives to head off terrorist attacks.

### **Japan Coast Guard rescues North Korean crew members**

Fuji TV and TV Asahi reported this morning that the Japan Coast Guard rescued three men from a capsized wooden boat in waters off the Noto Peninsula at about 1:45 p.m. on Wednesday. The networks said the three men are believed to be North Korean, adding that they apparently have no intention to defect. TV Asahi said the Japan Coast Guard is looking for 12 missing members of the boat's crew.

### **Steve Bannon speaks on Chinese threat**

Asahi reported on yesterday's speech in Tokyo by former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon in which he criticized past U.S. administrations for failing to rein in China by saying: "China's remarkable development has posed a threat to the world. But the American political elites have neglected it... They are foolish." Bannon justified President Trump's "America First" motto, explaining that the administration has decided not to accept a large number of immigrants in order to give jobs to "forgotten people." In remarks to Japanese analysts on human rights issues in China, he also stated: "President Trump is the most talented negotiator in the world. I was honored to be able to work for him." Sankei filed a similar story, adding that Bannon praised the President's recent East Asia tour by calling it "wonderful."

## **SECURITY**

### **Onodera, USFK chief confirm coordination when evacuating noncombatants**

All papers reported that Defense Minister Onodera received a courtesy call from visiting USFK Commander Brooks on Wednesday, noting that the two affirmed coordination in the event of a Korean Peninsula contingency, including the evacuation of Japanese nationals from South Korea. According to the Japanese official, the U.S. general emphasized the importance of stepping up pressure on North Korea. Gen. Brooks separately held talks with Foreign Minister Kono and the two

officials agreed on the importance of strengthening bilateral and trilateral coordination with South Korea. Sankei speculated that the senior U.S. military official's visit to Japan was intended as a message to South Korea, which has been cautious recently about stepping up security cooperation with Tokyo and Washington apparently out of deference to China.

#### **Japanese access to U.S. military bases for environmental surveys forestalled**

Mainichi published a prominent inside-page article claiming that since FY2014, the U.S. military has not allowed access to its installations in Japan by Environment Ministry officials tasked with carrying out inspections for environmental pollution. Japanese access was permitted last at a total of 14 locations across Japan in FY2013, including MCAS Futenma and Yokosuka Naval Base. According to the article, the Okinawa prefectural government was told by the Environment Ministry that it has not been able to obtain consent from the U.S. military. The article speculated that the refusal of Japanese access was perhaps decided at the U.S.-Japan Joint Committee, with the Environment Ministry explaining to the daily that the content of discussions with the U.S. side cannot be disclosed. It expressed concern that the GOJ may not be able to detect possible environmental pollution on bases.

### **ECONOMY**

#### **Keidanren to have new chief next year**

Mainichi wrote in a front-page story that Hitachi Chairman Hiroaki Nakanishi will likely become the next head of Keidanren. Sadayuki Sakakibara, the present leader of the economic organization, plans to step down next June. The engineer-turned executive of the nation's top electronics and engineering conglomerate is well-known for his ample business experience overseas. Nakanishi also has strong connections with the Abe administration, as he is an influential member of a GOJ commission on industrial innovation.