


JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Monday, November 20, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All networks continued to report on the case of alleged assault by sumo grand champion Harumafuji, who was questioned by police on a volunteer basis on Friday.

Major front-page items in national papers included a GOJ plan to develop a new cruise missile, a decision by the National Institute of Informatics to allow the use of a prototype of a new quantum computer free of charge, and a finding by an information security company that a large number of computers used by North Korean government entities have been infected by viruses and other malware.

SECURITY

Okinawa man killed in accident caused by U.S. Marine driving under influence of alcohol

All Monday papers reported in their city news sections that a 61-year-old Okinawa man died when his car was struck by a U.S. military truck at an intersection in Naha on Sunday morning. The papers noted that the driver of the truck, a 21-year-old Marine stationed at Camp Kinser, was intoxicated at the time of the accident and the alcohol level detected on his breath was three times the permissible limit. The serviceman, who was arrested later for negligent driving resulting in death and driving under the influence of alcohol, has reportedly admitted to the charges. The suspect was not on duty while driving the military vehicle. According to several eyewitness accounts, the Marine ran a red light and entered the intersection. Okinawa Area Coordinator Nicholson issued a statement expressing "deep regret and heartfelt condolences" to the family and friends of the victim. According to Asahi, in response to a call from Vice Foreign Minister Sugiyama for the U.S. military to tighten discipline, Ambassador Hagerty pledged to cooperate with the investigation and vowed to prevent a recurrence.

U.S., Japan defense ministerial meeting being planned for January

Sunday's Sankei wrote that arrangements are being made for Defense Minister Onodera to visit Washington in early January to exchange views with Defense Secretary Mattis on North Korea and bilateral defense cooperation, including noncombatant evacuation operations during a Korean Peninsula contingency. The Japanese minister is also likely to visit Hawaii to take a look at the Aegis Ashore platforms that the GOJ plans to procure in the near future.

B-52 conducted joint training with ASDF

Sunday's Asahi front-paged the disclosure by several GOJ sources that an ASDF jet fighter unit carried out a joint drill with a USAF B-52 over the Sea of Japan in late August, saying that the operation was one of the "concrete actions" that the two governments decided during the bilateral summit in May to display in dealing with North Korea's provocations. When undertaking the joint training, the GOJ confirmed that the U.S. strategic bomber was not carrying nuclear weapons to ensure that the operation was compatible with the nation's three non-nuclear principles. The paper said the drill signifies increased synchronization between the two militaries. Other papers filed similar stories today.

Yokosuka-based Aegis destroyer collides with Japanese tugboat

Sunday's Sankei, Yomiuri, and Tokyo Shimbun reported briefly in their city news sections on a 7th Fleet announcement on Saturday that the USS Benfold collided with a Japanese tugboat while they were engaged in towing training together in Sagami Bay. The Navy has launched a probe to determine the cause of the mishap and learn the scope of damage to the destroyer. No crewmembers of either vessel were injured.

Japan to develop its own version of Tomahawk missile

Today's Yomiuri led with a GOJ idea of developing a cruise missile that can hit targets on the ground with the goal of enabling Japan to take back remote islands controlled by an enemy, potentially China. The paper noted that a Japanese version of the U.S. Tomahawk missile would also deter North Korea as it could be used to attack enemy bases. According to the article, the Defense Ministry is considering adding ground-to-ground strike capabilities to an anti-ship missile that can be launched from special vehicles, destroyers, or fighter jets. The ministry plans to start developing the missile in FY2018 and is hoping to produce a prototype in FY2022.

The daily wrote in an accompanying story that some GOJ officials are somewhat cautious about having the SDF possess enemy strike capabilities due to constitutional restrictions. Some of them are apprehensive that Prime Minister Abe's goal of amending Article 9 of the Constitution to make the existence of the SDF explicit may be derailed if the SDF is allowed to possess enemy strike capabilities at this stage since the opposition camp is likely to criticize the Abe administration for encouraging the SDF to "wage war."

GOJ determined to expedite FRF construction

Tokyo Shimbun wrote on Sunday that the Abe administration is set to accelerate the ongoing FRF construction off Camp Schwab, highlighting the recent commencement of operations to transport by sea massive volumes of sand and dirt to the area for reclamation. While quoting Defense Minister Onodera as saying that the operation is designed to reduce the impact on the environment and speed up the construction, the article conjectured that the central government is poised to make the FRF initiative a "fait accompli" ahead of the Okinawa gubernatorial election scheduled for next autumn.

Family of woman murdered by U.S. serviceman in 2006 reaches out-of-court settlement

Saturday morning's Asahi wrote that the family of the Japanese victim of a murder committed by a Yokosuka-based U.S. sailor in 2006 accepted on Friday a USG offer for an out-of-court settlement. The USG will reportedly pay about 28 million yen in "condolence money," which is only 40% of the 65 million yen in compensation that the Japanese court ordered the service member to pay in a civil suit. Under the SOFA, the USG pays compensation to Japanese victims of off-duty incidents and accidents caused by U.S. service members who are deemed incapable of paying. The remainder of the compensation will be borne by the Japanese government in accordance with the 1996 SACO accord. In accepting the out-of-court settlement, the family also grudgingly acceded to a USG demand that the sailor, who is currently imprisoned in the United States, be given "permanent immunity."

Environment minister voices no objection to lack of Japanese access to U.S. military bases

Saturday morning's Mainichi took up press remarks on Friday by Environment Minister Nakagawa, who commented on the fact that ministry officials have not been allowed to access U.S. military installations for environmental surveys since FY2014 by saying: "We are conducting surveys in the vicinity [of bases]. As we are able to survey broader areas, appropriate estimates can be made for the level of pollution at bases."

Six Chinese military planes fly near Okinawa

Monday's Sankei reported on the Defense Ministry's announcement on Sunday that six PLA aircraft, including four bombers, flew back and forth over international waters between the main island of Okinawa and Miyako Island on the same day, noting that although ASDF fighter jets scrambled in response, there were no violations of Japanese airspace.

Okinawa public art festival decides not to display anti-U.S. military graffiti

Saturday morning's Asahi reported that the municipal government of Uruma in Okinawa decided Friday not to publicly display graffiti warning of the possibility of a U.S. military plane crash painted by a Kyoto-based artist on the wall of a local store as part of a city-sponsored art festival. The city will cover the graffiti during the festival. The decision was made in response to the opinion voiced by some local residents that the artwork is inappropriate given that the event is designed to revitalize the local community.

Japan to expand SDF base in Djibouti

Several Sunday papers took up the announcement by Defense Minister Onodera on Saturday that the GOJ has reached an agreement with the government of Djibouti to rent three additional hectares of land adjacent to the existing SDF base there so that SDF personnel can provide training to the local military. The papers speculated that the move is intended to hold China in check as it appears to be rapidly increasing its military presence in Africa.

INTERNATIONAL

Prolonged vacancies at State Department weaken U.S. leadership abroad

Saturday morning's Nikkei reported that the prolonged hiring freeze and vacancies in many key posts at the State Department has weakened the U.S.'s negotiating leverage vis-à-vis foreign countries. The paper took up a recent letter sent to Secretary of State Tillerson by a group of influential lawmakers, including Senator McCain, expressing concern about the "health and effectiveness" of U.S. diplomacy being undermined over the long term. The daily said a 30% budget cut would be particularly damaging to the department given that human resources hold the key to designing and implementing foreign policy. Claiming that the USG "readily" accepted Japan's request for the U.S. to express its defense commitment to the Senkaku Islands in the joint statement issued when Prime Minister Abe met with President Trump in the U.S. in February, the daily quoted a GOJ source as saying: "We were able to take the lead in drafting the statement due to the absence of Trump administration officials who are well-versed in diplomatic documents." The daily added that President Trump failed to present a coherent Asia strategy during his recent tour of the region.

San Francisco to make decision on comfort women memorial this week

Sankei wrote from Los Angeles on Saturday that the mayor of San Francisco is likely to make a final decision on whether to accept the proposed donation of a set of comfort women statues erected by a Chinese-American civic group this week. The article speculated that the mayor will probably not veto the motion that was adopted unanimously by the city assembly to accept the donation. As a result, Osaka Mayor Yoshimura may decide to end the sister-city relationship between San Francisco and Osaka as he has warned.

ROK refuses to share military information with Japan not related to DPRK

Sunday's Asahi took up the disclosure by several military sources that despite the conclusion of a bilateral general security of military information agreement (GSOMIA) a year ago, South Korea has avoided sharing defense intelligence with Japan except for information related to North Korea's nuclear and missile development. South Korea's refusal to share information is reportedly attributable to the Moon administration's reluctance to build a "military alliance" with Tokyo. Japan has refrained from asking for ROK intelligence on such issues as the People's Liberation Army so as to avoid political friction with Seoul. Discussions on the conclusion of a bilateral ACSA and the evacuation of Japanese nationals from South Korea in the event of a Korean Peninsula contingency have also reportedly been stalled.

DPRK denounces President Trump's Tokyo meeting with families of Japanese abductees

Mainichi, Sankei, and Nikkei wrote today that a DPRK newspaper published a commentary on Sunday criticizing President Trump's meeting in Tokyo on Nov. 6 with family members of the Japanese abductees. The commentary said the meeting was a shrewd attempt by the U.S. leader to prompt Tokyo to impose stronger sanctions on North Korea.

Japan to support strawberry farming in Northern Territories

Sunday's Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ plans to transfer its strawberry farming expertise to Russia so that local farmers in the Northern Territories can produce strawberries as part of "joint economic activities" between Japan and Russia.

Foreign Minister Kono expresses gratitude to Bangladesh for accepting Rohingya refugees

All papers reported today from Dhaka on visiting Foreign Minister Kono's meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart on Sunday, during which the Japanese official conveyed Tokyo's decision to offer emergency humanitarian relief worth \$18.6 million in appreciation for its acceptance of a large number of Rohingya Muslim refugees from neighboring Burma (Myanmar). Yomiuri said although the U.S. and the Europeans are highly critical of Burma's handling of the refugee crisis, Japan will not take a concerted line with them because it does not want to allow China to enjoy an even greater say in the Southeast Asian nation, which relies heavily on the Chinese for economic development.

ECONOMY

GOJ must clear "three hurdles" for early effectuation of TPP, Japan-EU EPA

Saturday morning's Nikkei wrote that the GOJ needs to clear three hurdles to effectuate the TPP and the Japan-EU EPA in 2019 as planned, including adopting measures to support the domestic farmers who will be hit hard by trade liberalization and defending the agreements in the Diet where the opposition bloc is likely to question their viability. The GOJ will also be called upon to step up its diplomatic efforts to ensure that its partners in the two trade pacts complete their domestic procedures for effectuation without delay. The daily added that even if the two agreements are effectuated, the GOJ will continue to seek the U.S.'s return to the TPP because the benefits of the regional free trade pact would be relatively limited without its participation.

SCIENCE

Abe may not attend Paris climate meeting out of deference to U.S.

Monday's Sankei highlighted the disclosure by several GOJ sources that Prime Minister Abe is disinclined to attend a climate change summit to be held in Paris on Dec. 12 out of deference to President Trump, who has denounced the Paris climate accord. As the conference will be hosted by French President Macron, who is highly critical of the U.S. leader's decision on withdrawing from the landmark pact on global warming, the premier will probably skip the confab so that the President will not appear to be isolated internationally. Foreign Minister Kono is expected to represent Japan on behalf of Abe.

AMBASSADOR

Ambassador Hagerty speaks at JNPC

Saturday morning's Asahi, Mainichi, Sankei, Nikkei, and Yomiuri gave moderate inside-page coverage to Ambassador Hagerty's press conference at the JNPC on Friday, during which he commented on President Trump's recent visit to Japan. Sankei and Mainichi wrote that the Ambassador gave high marks to the President's Japan trip by saying that it was a "great success" and that the bilateral relations have never been closer.

All the papers highlighted the Ambassador's disclosure that the President and Prime Minister Abe discussed a bilateral FTA when they held a summit on Nov. 6. The Ambassador was quoted as saying: "We discussed a full range of tools that can be used to address the trade deficit, including a free trade agreement." He added that a bilateral FTA is "very possible." The dailies said these remarks are inconsistent with the Japanese government's explanation that an FTA was not taken up in the summit. Speaking on the TPP, the Ambassador stated: "Let me be clear. The United States will not come into this agreement under the terms as they are laid out now."

Asked about the President's call for Japan to purchase more American defense hardware to reduce the U.S. trade deficit, the Ambassador said: "There may be a bit of confusion around the President's goal. The President has stated very clearly that our overarching goal is to increase Japan's [defense] capability.... Some byproduct of that may impact the trade deficit in a positive way, that's true, but that is not the goal."

The Ambassador spoke on the two leaders' agreement on applying maximum pressure on North Korea, underscoring that major progress was made toward the goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. According to Sankei, he referred to Japan's announcement on its unilateral sanctions against 35 entities and individuals in North Korea, and said it is important to curb Pyongyang's provocations by stepping up pressure on the Kim Jong Un regime. Regarding the fact that the DPRK has not staged any military provocations since Sept. 15, the

Ambassador said he would like to refrain from reading anything into this.

All networks reported online on the Ambassador's speech, with TV Asahi highlighting his remark that the U.S. will not participate in the TPP under the current framework. TBS said the Ambassador expressed hope for the commencement of talks on a U.S.-Japan FTA. All networks also reported that the Ambassador gave high marks to President Trump's recent visit to Japan.

