



Morning Alert - Monday, December 11, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that papers will be filed with prosecutors against sumo grand champion Harumafuji today for allegedly assaulting a junior sumo wrestler. NTV led with reports on Japanese baseball player Shohei Otani's decision to join the Los Angeles Angels. TV Asahi gave top play to updates on an incident in which the chief priest of Tomioka Hachimangu Shrine was killed by her brother last week. TBS led with a report on the arrest of three crewmembers of a North Korean boat on charges of stealing a generator from an unmanned island in Hokkaido. Fuji TV gave top play to a report that a three-year-old boy went missing in Fukui Prefecture after his father left him unattended in a car for 10 minutes.

No national papers were published today because of a press holiday.

SECURITY

Cabinet to approve Aegis Ashore deployment on Dec. 19

Sunday's Mainichi claimed in its lead story that the Abe administration plans to approve the deployment of Aegis Ashore platforms in Japan, noting that a field survey for the installation will begin this month at two SDF camps in Yamaguchi and Akita. American experts will take part in the survey, which is aimed at checking whether the missile defense batteries will cause any disturbance to radio waves in the neighborhood in order to finalize the installation sites. The GOJ is hoping to deploy the platforms in FY2023.

MOD requests additional funding for procurement of cruise missiles

All Saturday morning papers reported that the Defense Ministry formally asked the Finance Ministry to earmark some 2.2 billion yen in the FY2018 budget in order to procure three types of long-range

cruise missiles to be mounted on ASDF fighter jets with the goal of defending remote islands and enhancing deterrence against North Korea's provocations. Defense Minister Onodera on Friday dismissed the view that the procurement of the Joint Strike Missile, Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile, and Long Range Anti-Ship Missile is intended to enable the SDF to acquire the capability to strike enemy bases, which is prohibited under the Constitution. However, Mainichi said senior MOD officials and many former defense ministers share the view that the procurement of the three types of missiles was decided with the acquisition of such capabilities in mind.

Onaga running into difficulty derailing FRF construction

Sunday's Yomiuri reported that since taking office three years ago, Okinawa Governor Onaga has tried hard to thwart the Futenma relocation initiative by waging court battles and adopting various administrative measures. However, the central government has accelerated reclamation work off Camp Schwab since April this year, putting the governor in a difficult position. Onaga is determined to support incumbent Mayor Inamine in the Nago election next February in order to reaffirm local opposition to the FRF construction in the belief that his own bid for reelection a year from now hinges upon the results of the mayoral race.

U.S. military denies connection between helicopter flight and fallen aircraft part

Saturday morning's Tokyo Shimbun wrote that Marine authorities in Okinawa have told the prefectural government that although the small cylindrical object that allegedly fell onto the roof of a kindergarten near MCAS Futenma was part of a CH-53 helicopter, no such component has been found to be missing from any of the CH-53s based at the installation. The U.S. side thus dismissed local speculation that the object fell from a U.S. military aircraft flying in the vicinity at the time.

Meanwhile, the same daily said a part that has been missing since last week from an aerial flare carried by a Yokota-based C-130J cargo plane contains a toxic substance. The Defense Ministry has explained to the Tokyo metropolitan government that although nobody should touch the part, it will not cause any harm as long as it is left on the ground or in the water.

GOJ elects not to seek reversion of Yokota airspace

Sunday's Tokyo Shimbun led with a report claiming that the GOJ has decided not to ask the U.S. military to return portions of the so-called Yokota Radar Approach Control (RAPCON) area even though commercial aircraft are expected to pass through the Yokota airspace over central Tokyo temporarily when approaching Haneda airport for landing. As two new flight routes over the skies of central Tokyo will be established ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics to accommodate more foreign tourists, some passenger aircraft will need to enter the Yokota airspace briefly for landing at Haneda unless Japan seeks the reversion of the RAPCON area in question. MOFA and MLIT told the daily that the GOJ has no intention to seek the return of the airspace, quoting an unnamed MLIT official as saying: "Reversion would probably be difficult due to operational reasons for the U.S. military." A

USFJ spokesperson also said: “There have been no substantive negotiations regarding the permanent return of any portion of the Yokota airspace.”

GOJ expected to dismiss proposal to establish cyber defense bureau

Sunday’s Sankei front-paged an informal GOJ decision to dismiss an idea pursued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications on launching a ministry bureau on cyber defense on the grounds that only two additional bureaus can be created government-wide under the existing law. While claiming that the Kantei is negative about the proposal, the daily said the decision runs counter to the administration’s policy of enhancing defense against cyberattacks.

GOJ collects information on Syrian refugees in Europe to prepare for Korean contingency

Sunday’s Sankei wrote that a Health Ministry panel has been collecting information from European nations on their acceptance of Syrian refugees in preparation for the possibility of an epidemic occurring due to an influx of North Korean refugees in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula. The ministry plans to study immunization and other medical steps to be taken at refugee camps in order to head off an epidemic by analyzing information from Europe on Syrian refugees.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. representative to Six-Party Talks to visit Japan

Sunday’s Mainichi printed a Kyodo article from Washington on the State Department announcement on Friday that Special Representative for North Korea Policy Joseph Yun will visit Japan and Thailand for five days from Dec. 11 to discuss measures to maximize pressure on the DPRK.

DPRK, UN agree to hold regular dialogue

All weekend papers reported from Seoul that UN Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman completed his North Korean tour on Saturday, noting that he and DPRK officials agreed that the two sides will institutionalize “communications through exchanges at various levels.” The North Korean side justified its pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile technologies on account of U.S. “hostility,” and criticized the UN economic sanctions on it by calling them “unfair.”

In a related development, weekend papers reported on remarks made to the Japanese press corps on Friday by UN Secretary General Guterres, who plans to visit Japan this week. Commenting on Feltman’s tour of Pyongyang, the UN leader said the purpose of his visit was to realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and that the UN is committed to doing whatever it can to promote dialogue.

Foreign Minister Kono to visit South Asia

Sunday’s Sankei wrote that arrangements are being made for Foreign Minister Kono to visit Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and India in early January as part of the Abe administration’s diplomatic

initiative of creating a “free and open Indo-Pacific” region. The top Japanese diplomat is hoping to reduce these nations’ dependence on China.

In a related development, several Sunday papers took up Kono’s speech in Bahrain on Saturday at the Manama security dialogue, in which he reiterated Tokyo’s position of seeking Middle East peace based on the coexistence of Israeli and Palestinian states.

Ceremony held to commemorate Pearl Harbor attack

Several Sunday papers reported that a ceremony to commemorate the 76th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack was held in Honolulu on Friday. During the event that was co-sponsored by the U.S. Navy and the Japanese Consul General, Deputy Commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet Matthew Carter said: “The U.S. and Japan were enemies 76 years ago. Since then, we’ve forged strong bonds and deepened our friendship.”

Japan to assist Vietnam in enhancing cybersecurity

Sunday’s Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ plans to send five ASDF members to Vietnam to help the Southeast Asian nation strengthen its defense against cyberattacks, noting that the Japanese cybersecurity experts will teach classes on the subject for local military and coast guard officials for about 10 days starting tomorrow.

ECONOMY

Japan, EU conclude EPA

All Saturday morning papers reported on the GOJ announcement on Friday that it has successfully completed EPA talks with the EU by setting aside the issue of a trade conflict resolution mechanism over which the two sides are still at odds. Prime Minister Abe, who confirmed the conclusion of the years-long bilateral free trade negotiations during a teleconference on Friday with EU President Juncker, told the press afterward: “We will create a trade zone based on free and fair rules. This agreement will become a model for the international economic order for the 21st century.” The two parties plan to sign the pact officially next summer for effectuation in 2019.

Japanese duties will be abolished on about 94% of imported European items, while the corresponding figure for Japanese imports will be 90%. The two sides will continue discussions on the issue of an investor-state dispute settlement system with the goal of concluding a separate agreement. The papers underscored the significance of the Japan-EU free trade deal, noting that the two sides are committed to promoting trade liberalization in the face of mounting protectionist sentiment in the U.S. and worldwide. Mainichi said Japanese farmers will be called upon to boost their competitiveness since popular European products, such as cheese and wine, will be imported at lower prices.



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