



Morning Alert - Friday, December 15, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK led with a report on an interview with a North Korean defector about the numerous North Korean wooden boats drifting into coastal areas in Japan. TBS gave top play to a report on an interview with a North Korean expert who said North Korea may launch an SLBM as early as this week. NTV and TV Asahi led with reports that a 20-year-old woman in Kawasaki, Kanagawa, was arrested after causing the death of a pedestrian by bumping into him while riding a bicycle and using a smartphone at the same time. Fuji TV reported on a traffic accident on the Tomei Expressway yesterday.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Foreign Minister Kono to press Secretary Tillerson to apply pressure on DPRK

Nikkei wrote that coordination is underway for Foreign Minister Kono to hold talks with Secretary Tillerson in New York on Friday ahead of the planned UN Security Council ministerial meeting on North Korea on the same day, projecting that the Japanese official is likely to urge the Secretary to uphold the position of not holding dialogue with Pyongyang unless it takes steps toward denuclearization first. Kono is also poised to press the Secretary to apply “maximum pressure” on the DPRK in line with the previous bilateral consensus. The Japanese minister is anxious to remind his U.S. counterpart of the importance of maintaining a hard line toward the Kim regime in view of the Secretary’s recent remarks expressing willingness to start dialogue with the North without preconditions.

### Abe discusses North Korea with UN chief

All papers reported today or yesterday evening that Prime Minister Abe met with visiting UN Secretary General Guterres at the Kantei on Thursday and explained Japan's policy of applying maximum pressure on North Korea. The two officials agreed on the strict enforcement of UN sanctions in order to help realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which they reportedly stressed is critical to ensuring regional peace and stability. The UN leader told the premier that he fully understands Japan's concern about the threats posed by North Korea's nuclear program.

### **Abe mentions trilateral training by U.S., Japan, South Korea**

Nikkei wrote that Prime Minister Abe held a meeting with the leader of South Korea's largest opposition party at the Kantei yesterday and exchanged views on the North Korean situation. The premier reportedly told the visitor that joint military training by the U.S., Japan, and South Korea should be held in the airspace over Japan. Abe also reportedly expressed caution about the Moon administration's willingness to offer humanitarian assistance to its northern neighbor.

### **Japan, UK to deepen security partnership**

All papers reported on a 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting between Japan and the UK that was held in London yesterday, after which the participants issued a joint statement expressing hope for the swift commencement of a bilateral study on the joint development of a new air-to-air missile. The ministers also agreed on holding joint drills, with British Army personnel visiting Japan next year to conduct training and a Royal Navy frigate being dispatched to the Asia-Pacific region for training with MSDF ships. The joint statement mentioned the two partners' commitment to collaboration for ensuring an "open and free Indo-Pacific" region apparently with China's maritime advancement in mind.

Asahi said both parties are keen to deepen bilateral security ties, as Tokyo is worried about the possible weakening of U.S. engagement with East Asia on account of President Trump's "American First" approach. According to the paper, London needs a firm defense partner in East Asia in view of its planned departure from the EU in March 2019. Yomiuri wrote that Japan now treats the UK as a "quasi-ally" that it can collaborate closely with to rein in North Korea and China, highlighting an "action plan" on security partnership that the ministers agreed upon that specifies concrete areas of cooperation, including joint training, international peacekeeping operations, and defense equipment and technology.

### **Poll shows Chinese public views Japan more favorably than before**

All papers highlighted the result of a public opinion survey conducted in Japan and China in the autumn by think tanks of the two nations, noting that the Chinese view of Japan has improved to the level before Japan's nationalization of the Senkaku Islands in 2012. According to the results, the percentage of Chinese who felt bilateral ties were in bad shape declined 14 points from a year ago to 64.2%, while the corresponding figure for Japanese was 44.9%, down 27 points. Some 31% of Chinese had "good impressions" of Japan, up almost 10 points, while Chinese who had "bad

impressions” of Japan declined almost 10 points to 67%. The pollsters attributed the improvement in Chinese attitudes toward Japan to an increase in Chinese tourists to Japan and the diversification of news sources from which young Chinese receive information on Japan. Mainichi speculated that this improved mood will make it easier for the leaders of Japan and China to visit each other’s countries in the near future.

### **Abe bids farewell to Russian envoy to Japan**

Nikkei wrote that Prime Minister Abe on Thursday night attended a sendoff party in Tokyo for Russian Ambassador to Japan Afanasiev, who is expected to leave his post shortly. Pointing out that it is extremely unusual for an incumbent prime minister to take part in this type of event, the article said the attendance reflected Abe’s strong desire to resolve the Northern Territories dispute with President Putin.

### **Abe to visit Eastern Europe**

Asahi wrote that arrangements are being made for Prime Minister Abe to visit the three Baltic states and Eastern Europe in mid-January, noting that although he was initially planning to visit the Middle East, he has elected not to do so in order to assess the regional situation carefully following President Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

## **SECURITY**

### **Okinawa governor lodges protest over helicopter incident**

All papers reported that Okinawa Governor Onaga traveled to Tokyo yesterday and visited the Defense Ministry, Foreign Ministry, and U.S. Embassy to protest the latest incident in which a window fell from a CH-53 U.S. military helicopter onto an elementary school playground adjacent to MCAS Futenma. Several of the papers mentioned that the governor met with Charge d’Affaires Young at the Embassy. In his meeting with Senior Vice Defense Minister Yamamoto, Onaga demanded a temporary halt to all U.S. military flights for safety inspections and the closure of the Futenma airfield in five years. Onaga said: “The local people are infuriated because children’s lives were put in danger.” The MOD official stated in reply that no U.S. CH-53Es are currently flying in Japan.

The dailies said although the U.S. military apparently grounded the CH-53Es in Okinawa on Thursday, other types of helicopters and Ospreys were seen flying at Futenma and other U.S. installations in the island prefecture, noting that this was contrary to Okinawa’s plea to suspend all flights at least temporarily. Governor Onaga told the press that this is unacceptable and called for SOFA revisions.

### **Okinawa police inspect CH-53E involved in incident**

Most papers reported that the U.S. military on Thursday gave local police access to the CH-53E helicopter at MCAS Futenma that was involved in the incident in which a window fell onto an

elementary school playground, underscoring that it is extremely unusual for Japanese police to be given access to a U.S. base for an investigation. Six Okinawa police officers surveyed and took pictures of the helicopter in question. The U.S. military reportedly did not explain to them the cause of the incident. According to the dailies, the window in question, which had been retrieved by local police from the playground on Wednesday, was returned to the U.S. military yesterday since it is classified as a U.S. military “asset” under the SOFA. Nikkei projected that the police probably will not be able to build a case against the incident since the U.S. military has primary jurisdiction over on-duty incidents.

## ECONOMY

### **Dysfunction of WTO becomes pronounced**

Most papers reported from Buenos Aires on the conclusion of the WTO ministerial meeting, noting that the assembled officials were not able to issue a ministerial statement for the first time in six years due to a sharp rift between the United States and developing countries. The dailies said while the U.S. had previously acted as a behind-the-scenes coordinator to iron out differences between developed and developing nations, the Trump administration appeared to have little motivation to play such a role this time as it has been displeased with the WTO’s “failure” to correct unfair trade practices. According to Yomiuri, a senior EU official voiced annoyance with the U.S. during his meeting with Trade Minister Seko on the margins of the ministerial on Tuesday by saying: “The ministerial meeting has run into difficulties due to U.S. procrastination. We cannot issue a statement with the U.S.” Sankei said the WTO has become “dysfunctional” due to U.S. “sabotage,” adding that Tokyo will now be required to persuade Washington not to lose interest in the world trade body.

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