



Morning Alert - Wednesday, January 10, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK led with a report that North Korea will send a delegation to the PyeongChang Olympics next month. All commercial networks led with updates on the Japanese canoeist who spiked the drink of a rival competitor before a race held last year in order to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

All national papers gave prominent front-page coverage to the inter-Korean dialogue at Panmunjom and the South Korean Moon administration's announcement on the 2015 comfort women accord with Japan.

## INTERNATIONAL

### DPRK to send delegation to PyeongChang Olympics

All papers gave prominent front- and inside-page play to the inter-Korean talks held at Panmunjom yesterday, during which the two parties agreed on North Korea's dispatch of high-ranking officials, athletes, and a cheering squad to the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, the convening of a meeting by military authorities to ease tension and avoid inadvertent clashes, and continued bilateral "dialogue and negotiations" for resolving issues of mutual concern on the Korean Peninsula. Pointing out that these agreements were released in the form of a "joint press statement," Yomiuri speculated that the phrase "dialogue and negotiations" reflected Pyongyang's intention to exclude the United States. The Kim regime is reportedly set to capitalize on its participation in the Olympics to court its southern neighbor with the goal of evading enhanced international pressure.

**Japan determined to maintain pressure on North Korea in coordination with U.S.**

All papers wrote that in response to agreements reached in the inter-Korean talks yesterday, the GOJ is poised to maintain its hard line toward North Korea in the belief that its latest overtures are probably intended to buy time for completing its nuclear and missile programs. Yomiuri said Tokyo will seek to join hands with the U.S. in asking the international community to step up the pressure on Pyongyang at a UN Command meeting on North Korea to be held in Vancouver next week. Foreign Minister Kono told the press yesterday that he would like to stress the importance of applying maximum pressure. The minister is reportedly seeking to hold a meeting with his ROK counterpart on the margins of the meeting.

Asahi said the Trump administration is worried that South Korea may be tempted to ease pressure on North Korea in the face of its charm offensive, quoting an unnamed State Department official as saying that Washington will carefully watch whether the North will handle future dialogue with South Korea sincerely. Nikkei wrote that the USG is determined to ratchet up the pressure on Pyongyang, predicting it will conduct joint drills with South Korea after the PyeongChang Paralympics. Sankei wrote that Washington is bound to react sharply to the North's statement in the inter-Korean meeting that its nuclear missiles and other weapons are directed at the United States. The daily took up a telephone briefing Monday by Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary of State Brian Hook, in which he explained that the Trump administration is committed to continuing the pressure campaign so as to draw the DPRK to meaningful negotiations with the ultimate goal of achieving the final, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. diplomat reportedly acknowledged that the pressure campaign will probably become prolonged in the face of North Korea's defiance.

### **South Korea asks Japan to offer “voluntary apology” to former comfort women**

All papers reported heavily in their front- and inside-pages on Tuesday's announcement by the South Korean government regarding its position on the 2015 comfort women agreement with Japan, saying that the Moon administration chose not to seek renegotiation on the grounds that the agreement is an official accord reached between the two governments. However, Seoul called for Tokyo to voluntarily offer a genuine apology in the hope that Japan will make efforts on its own to restore the honor and respect of the victims. In announcing the Moon administration's official view on the bilateral pact, Foreign Minister Kang said it does not constitute a “genuine settlement” of the history dispute since it failed to reflect the wishes of the elderly victims. Kang also said the ROK government will disburse to the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation some \$9.1 million in taxpayer money, a figure equivalent to Japan's payment made to the foundation in line with the 2015 accord. The dailies interpreted this proposal as possibly representing Seoul's intention to return Japan's financial contribution.

The GOJ reportedly lodged a strong protest against the Moon administration's announcement by saying that Tokyo will not take additional measures. Foreign Minister Kono told the press last night

that the 2015 pact is an official commitment made by the two sovereign states and that under international and universal principles, this type of accord must be implemented irrespective of a change of government. The Abe administration is reportedly disappointed with the Moon administration's attempt to "move the goalposts," dismissing its call for additional measures such as a letter of apology from Prime Minister Abe. As for South Korea's plan to allocate \$9.1 million for the comfort women foundation, Tokyo reportedly believes that if it is meant to be a "substitute" for Japan's contribution, it would constitute an abrogation of the bilateral accord. Yomiuri said more GOJ officials are becoming distrustful of the South Korean government. PM Abe is reportedly inclined not to accept Seoul's invitation to the PyeongChang Olympics, with Yomiuri quoting an unnamed senior GOJ official as saying: "The premier will be criticized heavily at home if he chooses to visit South Korea at a time when comfort women memorials are being built in South Korea one after another, in addition to the latest announcement."

The Moon administration is reportedly being put in an awkward position, since nobody was satisfied with yesterday's announcement. Some victims and their supporters were angry over the government's decision not to seek renegotiation. Asahi wrote that the ROK government appears to be in internal disarray, explaining that the Blue House under President Moon is distrustful of its Foreign Ministry since the ministry's position of maintaining close cooperation with the U.S. and Japan is not necessarily compatible with the administration's policy of jumpstarting inter-Korean dialogue and improving ties with China.

## SECURITY

### **Okinawa files protest with U.S. military over latest unscheduled landings**

Asahi and Yomiuri reported that Okinawa Vice Governor Tomikawa met with Brig. Gen. Paul Rock, Commanding General of Marine Corps Installations Pacific, at Camp Foster on Tuesday and lodged a protest over the two precautionary landings made by Futenma-based helicopters in Okinawa over the three-day weekend. The U.S. commander reportedly voiced regret over the incidents. In response to the Okinawa official's request for the suspension of all military flights, the Marine general reportedly promised to conduct thorough inspections to ensure flight safety for the entire U.S. military. Sankei and Mainichi wrote that Foreign Minister Kono spoke by phone with Ambassador Hagerty yesterday and conveyed serious concern about the two mishaps.

In a related story, Nikkei attributed the numerous incidents and mishaps involving U.S. military aircraft in Okinawa to insufficient maintenance as a result of defense budget sequestration under the Obama administration and stepped-up operations by the Okinawa-based U.S. military in response to the escalation of tension on the Korean Peninsula. The paper explained that several naval mishaps involving U.S. warships occurred in East Asia last year perhaps on account of increased operations associated with the Korean Peninsula situation. The daily added that a surge in noise pollution

around U.S. bases recorded by the prefectural government is evidence of increased operations by Okinawa-based U.S. military aircraft.

### **Defense Minister Onodera leaves for Hawaii**

All papers except Tokyo Shimbun reported that Defense Minister Onodera departed Haneda Airport last night for Hawaii, where he plans to hold talks with PACOM Commander Harris and visit an Aegis Ashore facility operated by the U.S. military.

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