



Morning Alert - Tuesday, January 16, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

Most networks gave top play to reports on working-level talks between South Korea and North Korea on Monday, during which North Korea agreed to send a 140-member art troupe to South Korea during the PyeongChang Winter Olympics next month. Fuji TV led with a report that poisonous pufferfish liver was sold at a supermarket in Aichi Prefecture.

Major front-page items included a GOJ plan to evacuate Japanese nationals from South Korea via Tsushima Island in the event of a Korean Peninsula contingency, North Korea's efforts to circumvent international sanctions in order to smuggle petroleum, the Land Ministry's decision to permanently delete email stored in its computer server automatically after 12 months, and Kajima Corp.'s refusal to acknowledge its involvement in the alleged bid rigging by major general contractors for a maglev project.

## INTERNATIONAL

### GOJ protests after Chinese submarine spotted near Senkakus

All papers reported on Saturday morning that Vice Foreign Minister Sugiyama spoke by phone with Chinese Ambassador Cheng Yonghua on Friday evening and lodged a protest against the underwater operation by a Chinese submarine on Thursday in the contiguous zone adjacent to territorial waters around the Senkaku Islands. Defense Minister Onodera expressed serious qualms by calling it "an act that unilaterally raised tension" based on the assessment that the Chinese military operation was an attempt to alter the status quo. The GOJ had confirmed earlier that the submarine belonged to the PLA Navy since it surfaced in international waters northwest of the

outcrops and hoisted a Chinese flag on Friday afternoon. Yomiuri said the GOJ strongly called for the Chinese government not to repeat such operations out of concern that the emerging political thaw between the two capitals could be derailed. According to today's papers, Onodera disclosed on Monday that the vessel was a nuclear-powered attack submarine. Sankei wrote that Japan decided to reveal the nationality of the submarine in order to show the international community that China's provocations are escalating.

Asahi speculated that the submarine operation off the Senkakus was perhaps intended to demonstrate to the SDF and the U.S. military the PLA Navy's intention to expand its submarines' scope of operations. The paper said although the Chinese government is interested in improving political ties with Tokyo, the PLA appears to be maintaining its hard line toward Japan with regard to the territorial dispute with Japan.

In a related story, Sunday's Yomiuri asserted that the China Coast Guard, which is currently under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Security, is likely to be moved to the Central Military Commission, which oversees the PLA. The paper speculated that that one of the purposes of the change is to make the coast guard's patrol activities in such sensitive areas as the vicinity of the Senkakus more efficient in coordination with the PLA Navy. The paper added that patrols around the disputed outcrops may be conducted as "quasi-military operations."

Meanwhile, Saturday's Yomiuri reported that the Japan Coast Guard (JCG) has decided to develop as many as four port facilities across Japan to host nine large patrol boats to be procured in the near future to enable the JCG to respond more swiftly to intrusions into territorial waters near the Senkakus by the Chinese and illegal fishing in the nation's EEZ in the Sea of Japan by DPRK fishermen. Such facilities will probably be constructed in Kagoshima Prefecture, the islands of Miyako and Ishigaki in Okinawa, and Tsuruga in Fukui Prefecture starting in FY2019.

### **China exports multiple submarines to Indian Ocean nations**

Monday's Asahi led with a report on the recent purchase of submarines from China by Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Thailand, noting that China plans to provide long-term support for their operations, possibly with the goal of obtaining maritime geographical information in the region. Since China is apparently interested in expanding its influence in the Indian Ocean, the submarine exports may also be intended to secure port facilities where Chinese warships can stop for rest and refueling.

### **Defense secretary to visit China for first time in four years**

Sunday papers reported that Secretary of Defense Mattis will visit China in the spring to meet with President Xi and other senior Chinese officials, saying it will be the first trip to China by a defense secretary in four years. Secretary Mattis is expected to seek Chinese cooperation for defusing the tension on the Korean Peninsula, which may rise again following the conclusion of the PyeongChang Olympics/Paralympics in March. Papers reported he will also probably discuss

China's maritime advancement in the South and East China Seas and bilateral military exchanges.

### **MSDF ships conduct patrol activities in Yellow Sea**

Saturday morning's Asahi reported on the disclosure by several GOJ sources that MSDF ships have been conducting surveillance operations in international waters in the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan since the end of last year to prevent the smuggling of sanctioned items into North Korea. This is reportedly the first time for the SDF to be involved in international activities to enforce UN resolutions. In the Sea of Japan, the SDF and the U.S. Navy reportedly patrol together, each in an assigned area. Photos and other data on vessels recorded by MSDF warships are transmitted to the U.S. military. Other papers ran similar stories, with Tokyo Shimbun saying that the Japanese operation was reportedly launched in response to a request from the U.S. and that it indicates enhanced "synchronization" between the SDF and the U.S. military.

### **U.S. joins 16 other partners to enhance inspections of DPRK vessels**

Saturday morning's Yomiuri took up a joint statement that was released on Friday by the U.S. and 16 other members of the Proliferation Security Initiative's Operational Experts Group in support of the enforcement of UN Security Council resolutions against North Korea. The 17 partners are reportedly committed to taking stronger steps to enforce the sanctions resolutions by inspecting proliferation-related shipments on vessels with the consent of the flag state on the high seas or directing the vessels to proceed to an appropriate and convenient port for required inspection in the absence of consent to inspection on the high seas.

### **Japan wary of possible rise of calls for dialogue with DPRK at Vancouver conference**

Monday's Sankei took up the Vancouver Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Security and Stability on the Korean Peninsula to be held on Tuesday, expressing concern that the participants may not be in sync on applying greater pressure on the DPRK since some of them are emphasizing the need for dialogue. The daily added that Japan is afraid that the conference will be swept up in a chorus of calls for dialogue from conference members such as Colombia and Sweden that do not have a direct stake in the Korean Peninsula situation. Today's Asahi projected that Secretary of State Tillerson will probably ask the participants and the rest of the international community to strengthen naval inspections of ships suspected of carrying sanctioned items to the DPRK.

In a related story, Sunday's Asahi wrote that North Korea and Sweden agreed last month to hold a meeting between their vice foreign ministers, speculating that since the Scandinavian country represents U.S. interests in dealing with North Korea, the accord can be construed as part of international efforts to build momentum for dialogue between Pyongyang and the international community.

Meanwhile, today's Yomiuri wrote that arrangements are being made among the U.S., Japan, and South Korea to hold a foreign ministerial meeting on the sidelines of the Vancouver confab with the goal of affirming trilateral unity in dealing with what the paper characterizes as North Korea's recent charm offensive. Asahi, Sankei, and Nikkei wrote that National Security Secretariat Secretary General Yachi and National Security Adviser McMaster met in San Francisco over the weekend to discuss the North Korea situation and agreed to apply maximum pressure on the defiant regime.

### **False missile warning in Hawaii**

All Monday papers reported that residents and tourists in Hawaii were alarmed on Saturday morning after they received text messages on their mobile devices warning of a ballistic missile bound for the Pacific state. The warning turned out to be a false alarm sent in error by a local crisis management official. Hawaii Governor Ige offered an apology and promised to take thorough measures to prevent a recurrence.

### **Seoul dismisses plan to ask for “additional steps” on comfort women issue**

Saturday morning papers reported on an announcement made by the ROK Foreign Ministry on Friday that Seoul has no intention to ask Tokyo to take additional measures on the comfort women issue. On President Moon's recent statement calling for a Japanese apology to the elderly victims, the ministry explained that he meant that South Korea would welcome it if the GOJ were to express its sincerity voluntarily in line with the spirit of the 2015 bilateral comfort women accord.

In a related story, Monday's Yomiuri front-paged the results of its public opinion survey that showed some 83% supported the Abe administration's policy of rejecting Seoul's purported request for “additional actions” on the comfort women front. Almost four out of five said they cannot trust South Korea.

### **Japan, France to study development of new sonar system**

Friday evening's Yomiuri gave top play to a Japan-France 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting scheduled for Jan. 26 in Tokyo, projecting that the participants are set to agree on the launch of a joint study to upgrade existing sonar systems to detect submarines. The Japanese side is hoping that the MSDF will be able to adopt a new sonar system for detecting sea mines possibly laid by North Korea in the Sea of Japan during a contingency on the Korean Peninsula. The ministers are also expected to agree to accelerate consultations on the proposed signing of a bilateral acquisition and cross-servicing agreement for the two militaries.

### **Abe tours Baltic, Southeast European nations to apply pressure on DPRK**

Sunday's Yomiuri took up Prime Minister Abe's ongoing tour of the three Baltic states, plus Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania, conjecturing that he is keen to enlist cooperation from these states to ratchet up the pressure on North Korea. The tour is also intended to increase Japan's presence at the

eastern edge of Europe, as China is set to expand its economic clout there by promoting its “One Belt, One Road” transcontinental trade promotion initiative.

Sunday’s Nikkei focused on Abe’s trip to Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, insisting that the visit was intended to dispel the image that the Abe administration is taking a soft line toward Russia. Given that the three Baltic states have been critical to Moscow historically, the paper said Abe is hoping to deflect possible criticism in Europe that Tokyo is too conciliatory toward the Putin administration.

### **Foreign Minister Kono holds talks with Aung San Suu Kyi**

Saturday morning papers reported that Foreign Minister Kono met with Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Naypyidaw on Friday and pledged \$3 million in aid for the Rohingya refugee crisis. The Japanese money will be used for repatriating the Muslim refugees from Bangladesh. Mainichi said Kono voiced concern about the Myanmar government’s handling of the Rohingya crisis.

In follow-up reports, Sunday papers wrote that Kono visited Islamic towns in western Myanmar on the Bangladesh border to witness the suffering of the Rohingya people. He told the press afterward that Japan is committed to providing continued support so that the Islamic residents can live peacefully again. Today’s Nikkei wrote that Kono visited Myanmar with the goal of curbing its dependence on China, noting that since Japan has been rather quiet about the Rohingya situation, it may face criticism from the U.S. and Europe for its soft approach to the Southeast Asian nation.

Meanwhile, Sunday’s Yomiuri wrote that Kono has been very active overseas since he was tapped as the nation’s top diplomat last August, noting that he is extremely interested in contributing to Middle East peace by capitalizing on his strong connections with regional leaders, including Jordanian King Abdullah, that he has built since studying at Georgetown University many years ago. He has already visited the region three times.

## **SECURITY**

### **Japanese residents in ROK to be evacuated by ship via Tsushima in contingency**

Today’s Yomiuri led with a GOJ idea to evacuate Japanese and American residents and tourists from South Korea in the event of a Korean Peninsula contingency via Tsushima Island by transporting them from Busan on U.S. Navy and MSDF warships. The evacuees would then be shuttled from Tsushima to ports in Kyushu. Since the ROK government is reportedly hesitant to host SDF vessels in Busan due to the Korean people’s aversion to the Japanese military, the GOJ plans to transport the evacuees by bringing MSDF vessels alongside U.S. warships, which are allowed to moor there.

### **New entity to be launched to collect information on cyberattacks**

Sunday’s Mainichi reported that the GOJ has decided to establish an organization in cooperation with the private sector designed to collect and share information on damage inflicted by cyberattacks

and countermeasures against cyberterrorism. The GOJ will join hands with computer software developers, telecommunications operators, and other commercial entities so that the envisaged panel to be established at the Cabinet Office's National Information Security Center can gather, analyze, and share data on cyberattacks.

## **ECONOMY**

### **U.S., Japan to extend atomic energy cooperation pact**

Tuesday's Mainichi front-paged a story saying that it is now definite that the U.S.-Japan peaceful nuclear cooperation pact will be automatically extended and remain in force beyond the current expiration date of July 30, 2018, since neither party has chosen to terminate it. As a result, Japan will be able to maintain its nuclear fuel recycling policy involving the extraction of plutonium from spent nuclear fuel. The daily said the accord will effectively be renewed without substantive discussions between the two parties, noting that although some USG officials are concerned about Japan's possession of a large amount of plutonium, the Trump administration has endorsed the extension.

### **Final coordination underway to hold TPP signing ceremony in March**

Saturday morning's Asahi reported that final arrangements are being made among the 11 TPP member states to hold a signing ceremony on the regional free trade pact in Chile in early March for effectuation in 2019. The paper said if Canada remains hesitant about signing the final accord, the remaining members are likely to sign it without Ottawa's participation. The daily added that Japan may host a signing ceremony in mid-March or later if holding a ceremony in Chile in early March becomes difficult.

## **POLITICS**

### **Poll: Japanese cautious about constitutional revision under Abe**

Monday's Tokyo Shimbun led with the results of a Kyodo public opinion poll that showed some 54% expressed opposition to constitutional amendment under the Abe administration, up 6.2 points from a month ago. Approximately 53% were also negative about Prime Minister Abe's desire to make the existence of the SDF explicit in Article 9. Support for the Abe cabinet rose to 49.7%, up 2.5 points.

