



Morning Alert - Wednesday, January 31, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK led with a report that more than 3,000 households in Niigata still have no water supply due to pipes that ruptured from the extreme cold. NTV and Fuji TV led with reports that a nine-year-old girl was killed when a vehicle plowed into a group of students in Okayama on Tuesday. TBS and TV Asahi reported on the upcoming election for the board of directors of the Japan Sumo Association.

Major front-page items in national papers included a follow-up report on the theft of virtual money on the Coincheck cryptocurrency exchange, the Abe administration's reluctance to disclose data from email exchanges involving Prime Minister Abe and other cabinet members, a GOJ policy on legalizing the decryption of certain types of software strictly for the purpose of countering cyberattacks, and an Education Ministry plan to improve high school social studies education to teach students to make effective presentations and engage in debate on such topics as national security, territorial disputes, and Japan's contributions to the international community.

## SECURITY

### SDF mechanics to be sent to Okinawa to verify U.S. military aircraft maintenance

Tuesday evening's Mainichi took up press remarks earlier in the day by Defense Minister Onodera who disclosed that he has instructed the SDF to dispatch mechanics to Okinawa to verify the aircraft maintenance performed by the U.S. military in connection with the two unscheduled landings made by Futenma-based AH-1 helicopters earlier this month. Arrangements are reportedly being made for SDF personnel familiar with the aircraft to verify the status of maintenance of the two helicopters.

In a related development, this morning's Asahi highlighted yesterday's debate in the Lower House Budget Committee, in which opposition lawmakers pressed the GOJ to conduct a review of the

SOFA so as to allow the Japanese side to conduct its own probes into incidents and mishaps involving U.S. military aircraft. They also demanded that the U.S. military no longer be exempt from the nation's Aviation Law. Prime Minister Abe, Defense Minister Onodera, and other cabinet ministers all responded cautiously to these calls, simply saying that the GOJ will firmly ask the U.S. military to ensure flight safety. Foreign Minister Kono was quoted as saying: "We would like to address specific issues one by one so that we can respond effectively and swiftly within the current SOFA framework."

### **Roofed facility to be installed on school playground near Futenma**

Tokyo Shimbun reported that arrangements are being made by the Okinawa Defense Bureau and the Ginowan Education Board to install a roofed facility on the playground of the elementary school next to MCAS Futenma where a window fell from a U.S. military helicopter in December so as to protect pupils from falling objects.

### **Abe says restrictions on collective defense to remain despite proposed change in Article 9**

All national dailies except Nikkei highlighted remarks made at the Diet on Tuesday by Prime Minister Abe, who stressed that it would be impossible for Japan to exercise its right to collective defense fully even if Article 9 of the Constitution were revised to make the existence of the SDF explicit as he has proposed. He explained that the SDF would be able to enter collective defense arrangements with the militaries of the U.S. and other key partners only within the scope of the comprehensive security laws. The articles speculated that the premier may have been trying to deflect the opposition bloc's insistence that by amending the war-renouncing provision, he is aiming to allow the nation to exercise collective defense without restrictions.

### **Japan, France to conduct joint naval exercise**

Nikkei wrote the MSDF is planning to carry out joint training with the French Navy in the Pacific off the Kanto region for two days in mid-February. The paper noted that the planned exercise, which will involve a Japanese destroyer and a French frigate, is in line with an agreement forged during the recent 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting on expanding bilateral security coordination.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Japan, Russia to hold vice foreign ministerial meeting next week**

All national dailies except Asahi reported on an announcement by Foreign Minister Kono yesterday that Deputy Foreign Minister Mori will meet with his Russian counterpart Morgulov in Tokyo on Feb. 6, projecting that the two diplomats are expected to discuss measures to implement programs for the bilateral initiative of "joint economic activities" in the Northern Territories.