



JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Tuesday, February 6, 2018

The following information reflects the reporting of the cited news media and does not reflect the opinions of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. Japan Media Highlights is intended for USG use only and should not be forwarded. Visit the website [here](#). For more information, contact TokyoMATT@state.gov.

HEADLINES

Morning news

All broadcasters and most national papers gave extensive top play to reports that a Japan Ground Self-Defense Force AH-64 attack helicopter crashed into a house in Kanzaki, Saga Prefecture, on Monday afternoon, leaving one of the two crewmembers dead and the other missing. According to the reports, an 11-year-old girl who lives in the house suffered a minor injury.

INTERNATIONAL

Vice President Pence to visit Japan today

Yomiuri wrote that Vice President Pence will visit Japan and South Korea starting today to discuss the North Korean situation with Prime Minister Abe in Tokyo tomorrow, noting that it is unusual for a vice president to visit Japan twice within a year. The article speculated that the purpose of his trip to Asia is to call attention to Washington's strong defense commitment to Tokyo and Seoul in the face of North Korea's relentless pursuit of nuclear and missile programs.

Nikkei ran a similar story, quoting Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga as telling the press yesterday: "Prime Minister Abe and Vice President Pence will reaffirm the need to maintain close coordination between the U.S. and Japan and apply maximum pressure on North Korea using all means available." The article predicted that during tomorrow's meeting with the premier, Vice President

Pence is likely to express Washington's support for the 2015 Japan-South Korea agreement on comfort women. The paper added that the Vice President will tour the Defense Ministry ahead of his meeting with the prime minister on Wednesday and hold talks on bilateral economic issues with Deputy Prime Minister Aso in the evening.

Abe to convey Japanese people's anger to ROK leader over his stance on comfort women pact

Yomiuri and Nikkei took up a Japan Times' interview with Prime Minister Abe, who said that when meeting with South Korea President Moon on Friday, he will convey the Japanese people's anger over recent attempts by Seoul to revisit the bilateral comfort women accord. Abe reportedly stated: "To be frank, many people in Japan find it infuriating that they unilaterally demanded we take additional measures.... By meeting him face to face, I want to convey Japan's official stance as well as the public's sentiment."

Foreign Minister Kono welcomes Nuclear Posture Review

Asahi and Tokyo Shimbun took up remarks at the parliament on Monday by Foreign Minister Kono, who commented on the Nuclear Posture Review released last week by the Trump administration by saying: "It expresses a clear U.S. commitment to nuclear deterrence for its allies. There is no reason for us to say anything other than to appreciate it highly." The minister stressed that the nuclear and missile threat posed by North Korea has become even more serious than it was in 2009 when President Obama made his historic speech in Prague calling for a world without nuclear weapons.

Military exchange between Japan, China to be resumed for first time in six years

Asahi reported from Beijing that an exchange program between the Japan Self-Defense Forces and the Chinese People's Liberation Army is likely to be resumed this year for the first time in six years under the sponsorship of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, a private Japanese think tank. The foundation's president told the press in Beijing yesterday that he has agreed with Chinese military officials to resume the exchange program for SDF and PLA officers. A PLA delegation will reportedly visit Japan in April at the earliest. Other papers ran similar articles.

SECURITY

SDF helicopter crashes in Saga Prefecture

All papers reported heavily on the fatal crash of a Japan Ground Self-Defense Force helicopter in Saga Prefecture early Monday evening, noting that it occurred only seven minutes after the aircraft took off from a nearby SDF installation. The AH-64 attack helicopter had just undergone regular maintenance that takes place every 50 hours of flight. No emergency signals were issued ahead of the crash. The cause of the accident is still unknown. Defense Minister Onodera offered an apology by telling the press last night: "We are extremely sorry about the crash. We take this accident very

seriously.” He disclosed that Prime Minister Abe has ordered the suspension of flights by the same type of helicopter and thorough checks of the status of maintenance of all SDF aircraft.

The GOJ is reportedly taking the accident very seriously because it could have adverse effects on the planned deployment of GSDF Ospreys at Saga Airport, which is close to the crash site. Mainichi speculated that if the Saga Osprey deployment plan is put off as a result of yesterday’s incident, it will hamper the smooth launch of a GSDF amphibious unit to be established in Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture, next month.

GOJ to expedite FRF construction following Nago victory

All papers projected that the Abe administration is likely to accelerate the ongoing construction of the Futenma replacement facility off Camp Schwab following the resounding victory of the LDP-backed candidate in Sunday’s mayoral election in Nago City. The dailies wrote that the GOJ is inclined to offer subsidies to the municipality for U.S. force realignment, with Asahi explaining that the central government has withheld from the city some 13.5 billion yen in subsidies intended to assist local governments that cooperate with force realignment initiatives for the past eight years under the current Mayor Inamine. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told the press yesterday that Tokyo is set to move forward with the FRF project steadily, with Yomiuri predicting that landfill work will probably start in June by pouring sand and dirt into the waters surrounded by the banks now under construction.

The dailies also reported that the election result has dealt a heavy blow to anti-FRF Governor Onaga, who is set to seek reelection in the gubernatorial race in the fall, with Asahi quoting a source close to him as saying: “We can no longer say that Nago residents are opposed” to the present relocation plan. Nikkei claimed that residents in Nago apparently attached more importance to economic revitalization than Futenma relocation when casting their ballots. Asahi wrote that some of Onaga’s key associates are worried about him possibly becoming a “lame duck” unless he adopts a more practical line, although doing so would trigger strong backlash from his rank-and-file supporters. The daily quoted an unnamed senior Kantei official as saying that Governor Onaga will probably be forced to abandon his reelection bid.

On the other hand, the Abe administration and the ruling coalition are feeling buoyed by their candidate’s strong performance in Sunday’s race given the extensive amount of manpower and other resources they mobilized to defeat the incumbent in the election campaign. They are increasingly confident about winning the understanding of Nago residents and other people in Okinawa for the FRF initiative.

