


JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Tuesday, February 13, 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 national dailies other than Nikkei gave top play to reports on the PyeongChang Olympics, focusing on freestyle skier Daichi Hara who won a bronze medal and became the first Japanese to win a medal in the men's moguls, Sara Takanashi who won a bronze medal in the women's ski jumping competition, and Miho Takagi who won a silver medal in the women's 1,500-meter speed skating event.

Nikkei led with a report on a GOJ plan to come up with measures to prevent companies from retaliating against whistleblowers.

INTERNATIONAL

Vice President Pence discusses DPRK in interview with Washington Post

Tuesday morning's Yomiuri and Sankei front-paged reports on Vice President Pence's [interview](#) with Washington Post columnist Josh Rogin aboard Air Force Two on his way home from South Korea. Yomiuri and Sankei wrote that while saying that the maximum pressure campaign will continue and intensify until North Korea takes a meaningful step toward denuclearization, the Vice President hinted at the possibility of direct dialogue with the DPRK by reportedly saying: "If you want to talk, we'll talk."

Rogin wrote in the Post that the Vice President told him that "in his two substantive conversations with South Korean President Moon Jae-in during his trip, the United States and South Korea agreed on terms for further engagement with North Korea – first by the South Koreans and potentially with

the United States soon thereafter.” According to Rogin, “Pence called it ‘maximum pressure and engagement at the same time.’”

In a related development, Tuesday’s Asahi wrote that it has learned from several intelligence sources in Seoul that although the South Korean government tried to arrange a meeting between Vice President Pence and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s sister Kim Yo Jong in Seoul on Saturday, both sides reportedly rejected the idea.

North Korea invites South Korean president to visit Pyongyang

All national dailies on Sunday front-paged reports on South Korean President Moon’s meeting in Seoul on Saturday with North Korea’s high-ranking delegation to the PyeongChang Olympics, including Kim Jong Un’s sister Kim Yo Jong. The ROK government announced that during the meeting, President Moon received an invitation from Kim Jong Un to visit Pyongyang and said he will make efforts to realize the visit by creating the necessary conditions. According to Yomiuri, Kim Yo Jong did not respond to President Moon’s recommendation that the DPRK hold dialogue with the United States. Yomiuri and Mainichi wrote that the GOJ is alarmed by Pyongyang’s invitation based on the view that it is an attempt to drive a wedge into the trilateral coordination between the United States, Japan, and South Korea.

Moon rejects Abe’s recommendation to resume U.S.-ROK military drills

All national dailies wrote on Sunday that it has learned from ROK government sources on Saturday that South Korean President Moon rejected a proposal made by Prime Minister Abe during their talks in PyeongChang on Friday for South Korea to swiftly resume its joint military drills with the United States that have been suspended until the Olympics and Paralympics end in mid-March. Abe reportedly told Moon that it is important to conduct the drills as planned, but the ROK leader reportedly said in reply that he does not want Abe to directly take up the issue because it is a matter of national sovereignty and an internal affair.

Abe, Moon discuss comfort women, North Korea

All national dailies reported on Saturday on Prime Minister Abe’s meeting with South Korean President Moon on the sidelines of the opening ceremony for the PyeongChang Olympics on Friday. Although Abe strongly urged Moon to implement the 2015 agreement on comfort women, the ROK leader reportedly stated that the issue will not be resolved through government-to-government talks. However, according to Yomiuri and Sankei, the ROK president told Abe that his nation will not seek renegotiation of the accord, return Japan’s 1 billion-yen contribution to the comfort women foundation, or dissolve the foundation. Mainichi, Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that the two leaders confirmed the policy of applying maximum pressure on North Korea. Asahi wrote that although PM Abe stressed the importance of trilateral unity with the United States in dealing with the DPRK, President Moon reportedly expressed hope that Japan will seek dialogue with Pyongyang in a proactive manner.

Foreign Minister Kono discusses sanctions on DPRK with Singaporean counterpart

Tuesday morning's Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei wrote that Foreign Minister Kono told reporters in Singapore on Monday that he told his Singaporean counterpart Foreign Minister Balakrishnan that Japan will cooperate with nations in Southeast Asia to prevent them from providing loopholes for North Korea because Pyongyang is becoming increasingly skillful at evading UN sanctions. According to a GOJ briefing, Kono urged Singapore to implement the sanctions thoroughly in view of a Singaporean firm's alleged involvement in the ship-to-ship transfer of goods between a Dominican-flagged tanker and a North Korean tanker.

Foreign Minister Kono issues warning to North Korea

Monday's Nikkei, Sankei, and Tokyo Shimbun ran a Kyodo story saying that Foreign Minister Kono commented on the importance of strong unity between the United States, Japan, and South Korea in dealing with the DPRK by telling reporters in Brunei on Sunday that Tokyo will coordinate firmly with Washington and Seoul to achieve the ultimate goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula by not being swayed by North Korea's "smile diplomacy." Kono pointed out that North Korea's intention to develop nuclear weapons and missiles has not changed because it conducted a military parade on the eve of the opening of the PyeongChang Olympics in an apparent effort to show off its missiles.

MOFA to set up new taskforce to monitor implementation of UN sanctions on DPRK

Monday's Yomiuri wrote that on April 1 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will launch a new taskforce to closely monitor the implementation worldwide of the UN Security Council's sanctions resolutions on North Korea. The ministry will use the information collected by the unit to urge nations around the world to strictly implement the sanctions.

House Speaker Oshima calls on South Korea to implement comfort women accord

Tuesday morning's Asahi wrote that Speaker of the House of Representatives Oshima told reporters that during his meeting with South Korean Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon in Seoul on Monday, he stressed the importance of implementing the 2015 agreement on comfort women because it is a promise between the two governments. Oshima also emphasized the importance of reciprocal visits by the Japanese and ROK leaders, including a visit to Japan by President Moon, and the need for trilateral cooperation with the United States in their efforts to denuclearize North Korea. Lee reportedly said in reply that South Korea will work closely with the United States and Japan.

PACOM Commander Harris tapped as ambassador to Australia

All national dailies wrote in their Saturday evening editions that President Trump announced his intention to nominate Admiral Harry Harris, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, as the next U.S. ambassador to Australia. Asahi speculated that the idea of appointing Adm. Harris as an

ambassador to a key ally of the United States is aimed at demonstrating the Trump administration's policy of attaching importance to the Asia-Pacific region.

Japan increases MSDF ships' port calls in Indo-Pacific

Monday's Sankei wrote that Foreign Minister Kono visited on Sunday the Maritime Defense Force's training ship at Brunei's Muara Port, which was developed with assistance from Chinese firms. The paper said that addition to Muara, China was involved in the development of Chittagong Port in Bangladesh, Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka, and Gwadar Port in Pakistan. Noting that MSDF ships have been increasing their visits to ports developed under China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, the paper conjectured that Kono's visit to the ship in Brunei was intended to send a warning to China in case it intends to use these ports for military purposes.

Japan, EU to conclude strategic partnership agreement

Monday's Asahi wrote that it has learned from several GOJ sources that Japan will conclude with the EU a strategic partnership agreement, under which the two parties will strengthen their cooperation in about 50 areas, including security and economy relations, based on common values such as the rule of law and human rights. Arrangements are being made for Foreign Minister Kono to discuss the matter with EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Mogherini on Feb. 17 on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference to be held in Germany on Feb. 16-18.

SECURITY

Japan mulls procurement of F-35Bs

Monday's Yomiuri led with a report saying that it has learned from several GOJ sources that the GOJ is studying the idea of procuring F-35B stealth fighters with the goal of putting them into operation around fiscal 2026. The paper wrote that the aircraft's capability to take off from short runways will enhance the Japan Self-Defense Forces' ability to defend remote islands. The paper speculated that Japan is also considering the possibility of deploying the aircraft on the Maritime Self-Defense Force's Izumo escort ship, which may be converted to an "aircraft carrier."

Senior GOJ official stresses need for early relocation of Futenma base

Tuesday's Sankei wrote that Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nishimura on Monday visited Futenma Daini Elementary School, where a window fell from a Futenma-based U.S. military helicopter. Nishimura told reporters that the Futenma base should not stay in its current location indefinitely and should be relocated to Henoko swiftly.

GOJ to double economic support for northern Okinawa

Monday's Mainichi wrote that the GOJ is studying the idea of doubling its budget for promoting economic development in 12 municipalities in northern Okinawa, including Nago, in fiscal 2019. The paper speculated that the GOJ is considering the idea because it has become easier to move forward with the FRF construction at Henoko following the municipal election in Nago on Feb. 4, in

which LDP-backed candidate Toguchi defeated former Mayor Inamine, who was opposed to the Henoko plan. The paper also conjectured that the planned increase in funding to the region is intended to keep Governor Onaga in check ahead of the gubernatorial election in the fall since he is opposed to the Henoko plan.

Part falls off Osprey in Okinawa

All national dailies and Tokyo Shimbun reported on Saturday that a part believed to be from a U.S. military Osprey was found washed up on the shore of Ikei Island in Okinawa on Friday morning. The papers wrote that the U.S. military reportedly told the Defense Ministry's Okinawa bureau on Friday that an engine air inlet part had fallen off a Futenma-based Osprey while it was flying over the sea.

Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Tokyo Shimbun wrote that Defense Minister Onodera expressed displeasure by telling the press on Friday that the incident should have been reported to the Japanese side without delay. Mainichi wrote the prefectural government asked the Okinawa Marines to conduct emergency mechanical inspections of all of their aircraft and keep Ospreys grounded until the cause of the incident is determined and measures to prevent a recurrence are taken.

U.S. Navy probes suspected drug sales, use among sailors in Japan

Saturday evening's Asahi wrote that The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday that the U.S. Navy is investigating at least a dozen U.S. sailors based in Japan, some serving on the USS Ronald Reagan, on suspicion of buying, selling, and using LSD, ecstasy, and other drugs. The sailors in question are suspected of buying and selling drugs via the internet and distributing them to Japanese residents. Saturday evening's Nikkei and Tokyo Shimbun and Sunday's Yomiuri, Sankei, Mainichi wrote that U.S. Naval Forces Japan has confirmed that the Naval Criminal Investigative Service is investigating several sailors for alleged drug use and distribution and stated that the Navy has zero tolerance for drug abuse.

