



Afternoon Alert - Wednesday, December 7, 2016

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK and TV-Asahi led with reports that today the Upper House began deliberations on the controversial bill to legalize casinos in Japan. Fuji TV gave top play to a report that a black swan at a zoo in Nagoya was infected with avian influenza. NTV and TBS gave top play to reports on hearings held by the National Assembly in South Korea today with the leaders of powerful conglomerates about their possible involvement in the presidential influence peddling scandal.

SECURITY

Shedding light on U.S.-Japan Joint Committee

TV-Asahi's "Hodo Station" aired a 12-minute report intended to "unravel the mystery" surrounding the U.S.-Japan Joint Committee, which meets twice a month behind closed doors to discuss a broad range of issues related to U.S. military operations in Japan. The broadcaster took issue with some of the agreements reached at the panel that it claimed "go beyond the Japanese Constitution." Such "problematic" agreements include one reached in 1953 that allows U.S. military officials to access Japanese public or private property "without prior approval" for the purpose of protecting U.S. property and another reached in 1953 that says Japan will not enforce its primary jurisdiction over off-duty offenses by U.S. service members with the "exception of cases that are deemed extremely important for Japan." MOFA reportedly told the network that the latter arrangement is still valid.

Pointing out that uniformed officials customarily represent the American side while the Japanese participants are civilian bureaucrats from MOFA and MOD, former Prime Minister Hatoyama

stressed that this “asymmetrical representation makes it seem as though Japan is still occupied by the U.S. military.” The network explained that the GOJ has chosen not to call for SOFA revision based on the assumption that the U.S. would not accept it because of the potential implications for corresponding legal arrangements for U.S. personnel stationed in other countries, such as Germany and South Korea. Regular commentator Goto, a former Kyodo reporter, insisted that it is high time for Tokyo to demand SOFA revision by capitalizing on President-elect Trump’s call for a review of the U.S.-Japan security arrangements.

Secretary Carter, DM Inada confirm cooperation on partial return of NTA on Dec. 22

TBS reported at noon on a meeting between visiting Secretary of Defense Carter and Defense Minister Inada at the MOD this morning, saying that they both stressed the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance at the start of the meeting. According to the network, they also agreed to continue discussions on diminishing the scope of the civilian component to be covered by the SOFA. NHK carried a similar story, saying that the ministers also agreed to cooperate toward realizing the partial return of the NTA on Dec. 22. In light of the severe security environment in the region, they also confirmed that the Senkaku Islands fall under the scope of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and that the U.S.'s extended deterrence remains solid against North Korea's provocations.

- [Japan, U.S. defense chiefs reaffirm alliance, progress on base issue](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Osprey seen flying above residential area with object suspended below](#) (Kyodo News)
- [MOD bureaucracy divides Inada, her political secretary, putting her under control](#) (Sentaku)
- [Naha District Court dismisses order to stop Takae construction](#) (Okinawa Times)

INTERNATIONAL

Pearl Harbor attack survivor welcomes Abe’s visit

TV Asahi reported at noon on a memorial ceremony held on Tuesday in Washington to honor those who perished in the Pearl Harbor attack. The network quoted one of the survivors of the attack as saying in an interview: "I think the purpose of the visit is to make amends. If that's true, that's good...It wouldn't hurt [if Abe apologized] but what has happened is we dropped the atomic bomb on Japan. So if you start apologizing, who knows where it would end."

- [Abe’s Pearl Harbor visit brings closure for Japanese-Americans](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

- [Editorial: What message will Abe deliver on historic visit to Pearl Harbor?](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Newspaper editorials on U.S. presidential election](#) (Mainichi)
- [Cartoon: Abe and Pearl Harbor](#) (Asahi)
- [Russia building “nuclear base” on Etorofu Island ahead of Abe-Putin summit](#) (THEMIS)
- [Environmental protection can be handled “separately from politics,” aide to Russian president](#) (Mainichi)
- [Russia removes entry permit requirement for some parts of Northern Territories](#) (Asahi)
- [Editorial: Trump should persist in stance of blocking China’s reckless acts](#) (Sankei)

POLITICS

Komeito concedes to Kantei on casino bill

Tuesday evening’s TV-Asahi “Hodo Station” highlighted the passage at a Lower House plenary session of the legislation to legalize casinos, noting that the Komeito party had no choice but to go along with the vote since the Abe administration is determined to enact it during the current Diet session. “As the Kantei’s determination was unexpectedly strong, it was now or never,” said an unnamed senior Komeito official, who explained that enacting the bill next year would be detrimental to the party’s campaign for the Tokyo metropolitan assembly election next summer. Regular commentator Goto said the LDP chose to “railroad” the controversial bill by taking advantage of the extension of the Diet term despite protests from the opposition, which had apparently assumed the legislation would be shelved on account of its unpopularity within the ruling coalition. According to the show, even some bill proponents were apprehensive about its “speedy” passage in the lower chamber, with President Kiso of the International Casino Institute Ltd. saying: “Parliamentary discussions have been grossly insufficient on such critical issues as how to prevent gambling addiction. Effective countermeasures must be identified before the GOJ prepares a separate bill on the operation of casinos.

- [Prime minister’s schedule on Dec. 6](#) (Nikkei)
- [Abe’s Pearl Harbor visit draws attention to his strategy for Lower House dissolution](#) (Yomiuri)

- [Gov't to vote on TPP by Dec. 9, but put off the approval of revised ACSA](#) (Nikkei)
- [Nikai meets with Noda](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Editorial: No more 'Abenomics' excuses from long-serving PM](#) (The Mainichi)
- [DP group on casino bill aimed at "deposing" Renho](#) (Sentaku)

ECONOMY

- [Trump welcomes Son's pledge to invest \\$50 bn in US](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Caps on overtime don't worry 45% of major firms surveyed](#) (The Japan News)
- [Everything related to TPP erased from ruling parties' 2017 budget guidelines](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Private-sector members of gov't panel propose drug price revisions up to four times a year](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Government sets May 2019 as deadline for JA Zen-Noh reforms](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Gov't uncompromising on resuming commercial whaling](#) (Yomiuri Evening edition)
- [METI to ask all power companies to pay part of compensation for Fukushima victims](#) (Yomiuri)

EDUCATION

- [Japan's 15-year-olds perform well in PISA global academic survey](#) (The Japan Times)

TV PROGRAMS

[Preventing accidents involving elderly drivers](#)

NHK's "Close-up Gendai Plus" reported on an increase in the number of traffic accidents involving elderly drivers across the nation. Many experienced, elderly drivers are confident of their driving skill and tend to refuse to relinquish their drivers' licenses. The program looked into ways to persuade them to give up driving, such as informing them about alternative means of transportation and delivery services.

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