



Afternoon Alert - Friday, December 9, 2016

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HEADLINES

Noon news

All networks led with reports that President Park is expected to face an impeachment vote today. TBS said that if the impeachment bill is passed, the GOJ is planning to cancel a trilateral summit by Japan, South Korea, and China scheduled for this year in Japan.

SECURITY

FA-18 fighter pilot dies

NHK reported this morning that the U.S. Marines announced on Thursday that the pilot of the FA-18 fighter jet that crashed in waters off Kochi on Wednesday evening died after being found and transferred to MCAS Iwakuni by an SDF plane. The network said the U.S. Marines are still investigating the cause of the crash..

U.S. military denies that Osprey flew over residential area in Okinawa

Ryukyu Shimpo gave top play to remarks made to the daily yesterday by a local U.S. Marines spokesperson, who said it is not true that an MV-22 Osprey flew over a residential district in the village of Ginoza on Tuesday with an unidentified cylindrical object hanging from its fuselage. The military official underscored that the flight training took place within a training area and that the Osprey followed a predetermined route taking into account such factors as wind, safety considerations, and the need to minimize flights over populated areas. The spokesman also made it clear that this type of training will be continued in order to maintain readiness. The daily said the remarks contradicted eyewitness accounts by Okinawa Defense Bureau officials, who confirmed that

a tilt-rotor aircraft flew over a residential area with an object suspended from a cable, adding that local municipal officials and residents were extremely upset with the U.S. explanation.

GOJ worried about delay in talks on civilian component

Ryukyu Shimpo reported on Thursday on Secretary of Defense Carter's meeting with Defense Minister Inada a day earlier, noting that although the two officials agreed on continued discussions on narrowing the scope of the civilian component to be covered by the SOFA, they stopped short of specifying when an agreement can be announced. The daily said the GOJ is worried that an accord may not be reached before the Obama administration steps down based on the assessment that the negotiations might be prolonged indefinitely under the Trump administration. An MOD source said: "Negotiations must be restarted from scratch in the event of a change of government. This issue must be resolved under the present U.S. administration." Pointing out that some projected ahead of the ministerial session that the two ministers might be able to reach a consensus on creating a supplementary accord to the SOFA regarding the limited scope of the civilian component, the article noted that no tangible progress was made. A MOFA source reportedly said afterward that there will be discussions for several more months, while a U.S. military source stated: "We don't want to revise the SOFA in the first place. Even a supplementary accord would probably be difficult."

ECONOMY

TPP bills enacted

NHK reported this afternoon that a bill to approve the TPP and a related bill were enacted today after they cleared the Upper House plenary session this morning. Noting that President-elect Trump has expressed his intention to withdraw from the TPP, the network said although the situation has become "extremely tough," the GOJ is planning to work tenaciously to persuade Washington to ratify the trade deal in the belief that it will "establish new trade rules for the 21st century."

Japan to import shale gas from U.S. for first time

NHK reported this morning that Japan will import shale gas from the U.S. for the first time starting next month, saying that this is expected to lead to the diversification of Japan's fuel procurement. According to the network, TEPCO and Chubu Electric Power Co. will import U.S. shale gas starting next month through their integrated company. About 70,000 tons of shale LNG will be imported and will be used as fuel at Chubu Electric's thermal power plant in Joetsu. The network said the utilities are planning to import up to 700,000 tons of shale gas by January 2018. Noting that shale gas prices are set not by crude oil prices but by supply and demand, the network said other power companies and major trading companies are planning to import shale gas from the U.S. because they can control their procurement costs when crude oil prices are high.

- **[JERA announces first long-term contract to procure LNG from U.S.](#)** (Nikkei)

- [Gist of interpellations at Upper House special committee on TPP, Dec. 8](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [European Commissioner says Japan, EU can reach deal on EPA early next year](#) (Nikkei Evening edition)
- [GDP still likely to fall short of 600 trillion yen after revision of standards](#) (Mainichi)
- [Gist of FY 2017 tax reform plans approved by Japan's ruling bloc](#) (Kyodo News)
- [3 million households to benefit from proposed spousal tax deduction review](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Behind the Scenes / PM's Office intervenes to lower Opdivo price](#) (The Japan News)
- [Fukushima cost estimate set to swell to \\$188 billion](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

POLITICS

Casino legislation intended to help Osaka rebuild local economy

TV-Asahi's "Hodo Station" reported on the Abe administration's strong determination to enact the integrated resort bill aimed at legalizing casinos before the current Diet session ends on Dec. 14. The Kantei and the LDP leadership are reportedly hoping to please the Japan Innovation Party (JIP) led by Osaka Governor Matsui, who considers the construction of a casino on an unused artificial island in Osaka Bay indispensable for hosting the World Exposition in 2025. As Osaka has spent some \$63 billion in taxpayer money on the development of the reclaimed island that has been largely vacant for years, the governor firmly believes that hosting a gambling facility and the Expo will "transform a major liability into a profitable asset" that can draw millions of foreign tourists. Because the deadline for submitting an official bid to host the Expo is May 22 of next year, Osaka is desperately hoping that the legislation will obtain parliamentary approval this year.

Strong proponents of the legislation include Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, who wants to reinforce the political foundation of the administration by strengthening ties with the JIP, and LDP Secretary General Nikai, who was recently selected as the chair of a supra-partisan parliamentary group assisting Osaka's World Expo bid. Regular commentator Goto, a former Kyodo News managing editor, said the emerging "political honeymoon" between the LDP and the JIP indicates that the third largest opposition party may join the ruling coalition eventually.

- [Prime minister's schedule on Dec. 8](#) (Nikkei)

- [Editorial: Abe's continued ducking of questions brings shame to the Diet](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Editorial: Abe should do his best to explain bill on casinos in Diet discussions](#) (The Japan News)
- [Editorial: Rush to pass casino resort bill unacceptable](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Abe's Pearl Harbor visit spurs speculations on early Lower House dissolution](#) (Nikkei)
- [Kishida faction has 44 members with addition of Tsuji and return of Kihara](#) (Sankei)
- [Top court rejects SDF flight suspension at Atsugi base](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Importance of Atsugi base grows as Japan ramps up efforts to monitor territorial waters](#) (Yomiuri)
- [SDF engage in first full-fledged training to rescue Japanese overseas](#) (Mainichi)

INTERNATIONAL

- [Abe indicated wish to visit Pearl Harbor in May: Presidential Assistant Rhodes](#) (Asahi)
- [Analysis: China finance chief exit derails Japan hopes for yuan deal](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Cartoon: Abe and Putin](#) (Sankei)
- [Cartoon: Trump and Masayoshi Son](#) (Asahi)

SCIENCE

- [Sea Shepherd, a gang of anti-whaling con men, uses Japanese money to obstruct research whaling](#) (Shukan Bunshun)
- [JAXA to launch world's smallest satellite-launch vehicle on Jan. 11](#) (Mainichi)

TV PROGRAMS

[Asia mourns death of former porn actress](#)

NHK's "Close-up Gendai Plus" on Thursday reported on former porn star Hotaru Akane, who passed away at the age of 32 in August. The program said many Asian media reported her death, adding that after retiring from the porn industry, she had been working hard to raise awareness about safe sexual practices and other issues related to sex not only in Japan but also in other Asian countries. Her activities included giving talks and handing out condoms to young people on streets. She also created a website that provided advice to more than 5,000 women who had concerns about sex with their partners. The program said Akane helped and inspired many young women.

