



Afternoon Alert - Thursday, December 15, 2016

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HEADLINES

Noon news

All networks led with reports on the planned summit between Prime Minister Abe and President Putin in Yamaguchi this evening, saying that President Putin's arrival will be delayed by about two hours. The networks quoted Abe as telling reporters before his departure to Yamaguchi this morning: "I want to negotiate as a representative of Japan with the earnest desires of the former residents (of the disputed islands) deeply engraved in my mind." Most networks noted, however, that it is unlikely that any progress will be made on the issue of the Northern Territories. Noting that the two leaders are expected to hold one-on-one talks, NTV said Abe's diplomatic skills will be tested over the extent to which he can lay the groundwork for the resolution of the territorial issue.

SECURITY

Okinawa media focuses on local rage, anxiety over Osprey "crash"

This morning's two major Okinawa dailies gave exhaustive coverage to the Osprey accident, devoting numerous pages to the anger and dismay rapidly surging in the island prefecture. They used strong rhetoric to highlight local sentiment, with headlines reading: "People shocked and upset by lethal weapon in the air" and "'Flying disgrace' reveals one defect after another." Both papers expressed strong displeasure in response to the press conference by Okinawa Area Coordinator Nicholson, in which the top U.S. military official in Okinawa did not appear very apologetic and instead was busy defending the crew for landing the plane in the water to avoid endangering the Okinawan people. A Ryukyu Shimpo headline said: "Occupier mentality still strong." The paper reported that in a meeting with Okinawa Vice Governor Ageda, who lodged a strong protest, the

Marine general “pounded on the desk” in protest of what he saw as Okinawa’s attempt to “politicize” the accident. The daily quoted an Okinawa official who sat in on the session as saying: “I didn’t know which side was protesting. Nicholson said we should be grateful to the pilot for averting a crash in a residential area. But the pilot’s technique and efforts [to avoid a crash on the ground] and our apprehension are completely separate things.”

The articles also strongly criticized the Japanese government for failing to respond to Okinawa’s concern about the safety of the Osprey. Ryukyu Shimpo noted that the festive mood that had spread in the central government because of the upcoming reversion of the Northern Training Area and the Supreme Court’s imminent decision to rule against the Okinawa governor’s rescindment of the landfill permit was completely shattered by the Osprey mishap. An MOD source said: “Things were going pretty well and we thought we would have a very good new year. But the the worst possible thing happened.”

Okinawa Times wrote that the initial response to the emergency landing by the Okinawa police and the Japan Coast Guard was slow due to the sketchy and sometimes conflicting information provided by the U.S. military, noting that the Japanese authorities had difficulty pinpointing the exact location of the impact. The daily took issue with the lack of coordination between the U.S. military authorities and their Japanese counterparts, quoting a local investigative official as saying: “The U.S. side was too slow to provide information.”

Okinawa reacts sharply to Okinawa Area Coordinator’s remarks

Fuji TV reported at noon that the people of Okinawa are reacting sharply to remarks made by Okinawa Area Coordinator Nicholson to senior officials of the Okinawa government, in which he reportedly expressed the view that people should be thankful that the incident did not harm homes or injure people in Okinawa and praised the decision made by the pilot. One local citizen was quoted as saying in Naha this morning: "It's outrageous. He's looking down on the people of Okinawa." Another said: "It's appalling that he's telling us to be thankful. It shows that they still have an occupier mentality." NHK also reported at noon on Okinawan's growing anger against Lt. Gen. Nicholson, who reportedly reacted sharply to the protest made by the Okinawa prefectural government on Wednesday. The networks also said Okinawa Governor Onaga is expected to visit the Kantei this afternoon to directly lodge a protest over the incident and call for the withdrawal of Ospreys.

Okinawa’s worst nightmare becomes reality

Nightly news programs on Wednesday reported extensively on the Osprey accident, noting that the Okinawan people had feared that an incident like this would occur ever since the deployment of tilt-rotor planes at MCAS Futenma several years ago. All of the programs aired video of Okinawa Area Coordinator Nicholson telling the Japanese press corps in a very forceful tone: “I’m very proud of our young pilot. I’m very proud of the decision he made not to try to get Futenma or Kadena.... We regret this accident. But we do not regret the great work of our young pilot and the decision he made

not to endanger the Okinawan people.... I don't apologize for the hard work we are doing every night offshore in training." Program anchors and commentators expressed dismay over a remark that Nicholson reportedly made to Okinawa Vice Governor Ageda saying that the pilot should be "commended" for not endangering local people. On TBS's "News 23," former Asahi Shimbun columnist Hoshi said the U.S. general's comment revealed that the U.S. military actually thinks that the local people shouldn't complain because it is defending them.

Former Kyodo News writer Goto said on TV-Asahi's "Hodo Station" that the incident is bound to have adverse effects on the planned deployment of U.S. and Japanese Ospreys in Yokota, Chiba, Saga, and elsewhere. He projected that Prime Minister Abe will have no choice but to bring up this subject when he holds his last summit meeting with President Obama in Hawaii in late December. The journalist noted that the U.S. military will decide independently when to resume Osprey flights, adding that the GOJ will probably have no choice but to take a wait-and-see attitude because the SOFA stands in the way of an independent investigation by Japanese authorities.

- [Yokota base-hosting communities call for prompt disclosure of information on Osprey accident](#) (Mainichi)
- [Defense Ministry says Osprey's accident rate not exceptionally high](#) (Mainichi)
- [Japanese, U.S. governments describe Osprey accident as "emergency landing"](#) (Asahi)
- [U.S. military failed to respond to coast guard's request for investigation](#) (Nikkei)
- [Gov't to lift maritime restriction in waters off Henoko in Okinawa](#) (Sankei)
- [Editorial: Supreme Court dodging constitutional questions in Okinawa base case](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Media shown Japan troops' drills to protect Japanese citizens abroad](#) (Kyodo News)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Gen. Nicholson's press conference draws criticism and praise online

Japan's Twitter users have reacted sharply to yesterday's press conference by Okinawa Area Coordinator Nicholson on the Osprey accident, with detractors criticizing his remarks for being not apologetic at all and instead defending the pilot for not endangering the Okinawa people. They said the people in Okinawa were offended by his narrative, which one observer described as a "public relations disaster." According to Yahoo Realtime analytics, 40% of tweets contained negative

language about Nicholson, such as “upset,” “regrettable,” and “unreasonable.” One tweet attempted to explain what Nicholson did wrong in terms of public relations by saying: “Mr. Nicholson made the mistake of delivering a message to a Japanese audience that should have only been directed toward his subordinates or the American people.”

However, a number of Twitter users also defended Nicholson's response to the accident. In fact, the most shared (over 1,200 times) tweet was: “I think Mr. Nicholson is a great supervisor. He apologized for what needed to be apologized for, but instead of being swayed by the mood, he said what he needed say to defend his courageous subordinate unabashedly. His subordinate must trust him.”

INTERNATIONAL

Chinese H-6 bombers make abnormal moves

NHK reported this afternoon that it learned from USG officials that Chinese H-6 bombers have made peculiar moves this month, such as circling Taiwan on Nov. 25 and Dec. 10. In addition, the Chinese military reportedly deployed H-6 bombers to the South China Sea twice on Dec. 7 and 8, and at one time the aircraft flew along the so-called 9-Dash Line. The network said that according to the USG officials, although the Chinese military have flown bombers in the East or South China Seas in the past, it is abnormal for Chinese bombers to repeatedly fly around Taiwan or the South China Sea within the short period of two weeks. The network said President-elect Trump held a rare phone conversation with the Taiwanese leader around this time, adding that according to the USG officials, China could have been trying to send a message to the U.S. The network said the USG is currently analyzing China's intentions.

Abe's special advisor to visit U.S. for talks with Trump transition team

Nikkei reported online that Special Advisor to the Prime Minister Katsuyuki Kawai will leave today for New York and Washington for talks with officials of the Trump transition team. The LDP lawmaker hopes to gain the incoming U.S. administration's understanding for Japan's efforts to strengthen the bilateral alliance by explaining that the premier's planned trip to Pearl Harbor later this month will offer an excellent opportunity to highlight trans-Pacific reconciliation.

China deploys weapons on artificial islands in South China Sea

NHK reported at noon that U.S. think tank CSIS released the results of its analysis of satellite photos of artificial islands built by China in the South China Sea, which show that China has apparently deployed weapons on the artificial islands there. According to the network, anti-aircraft guns and "close-in weapon systems" have been confirmed on five of the islands, and hexagonal structures that appear to be foundations for such weapons have been confirmed on the remaining two islands. The network said DOS spokesperson Kirby urged China once again to stop militarizing the islands

on Wednesday, by saying: "There should be no need for further reclamation or militarization of these man-made features."

- [Japan, Russia plan public-sector joint ventures as part of economic cooperation](#) (Mainichi)
- [Russian official's remarks indicate "hope" for Japan-Russia territorial talks](#) (Shukan Toyo Keizai)
- [Japan-Russia joint venture to start crude oil production in Siberia](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japanese, Russian companies see summit as chance for deals](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Ex-Japanese diplomat calls for rebuilding foundation for negotiations on Northern Territories](#) (Tokyo Shimbun Evening edition)
- [Editorial: Putin's stance conspicuously negative on northern territories / Joint economic activities relate to sovereignty](#) (The Japan News)
- [Developing Egyptian Japanophiles by setting up undergraduate programs](#) (Tokyo Shimbun Evening edition)
- ['Comfort women' statue unveiled at Washington event, but permanent site undecided](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Nagasaki hopes for elimination of nuclear weapons](#) (Asahi)
- [Clear divergence of views on Nuclear Weapons Convention at UN conference](#) (Nishinippon Shimbun)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on Dec. 14](#) (Nikkei)
- [Abe gives up on dissolving Lower House in January](#) (Sankei)
- [Komeito chief, six other party members vote against casino bill](#) (Asahi)
- [CCS Suga's intervention instrumental in passing casino bill](#) (Shukan Shincho)
- [Nippon Ishin votes against opposition's motion of no confidence on the cabinet](#) (Asahi)

ECONOMY

- [Diet enacts law to legalize casino gambling](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Big makers' sentiment improves in BOJ Tankan for 1st time in 6 qtrs](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Both Diet agricultural committees determined to keep tariffs on important items](#) (Mainichi)
- [Opdivo manufacturer files lawsuit against sales of U.S. competition](#) (Asahi)
- [Hokuren to raise wholesale prices of raw milk for the first time in two years](#) (Nikkei)
- [METI panel decides to keep lowering solar power feed-in-tariff rate for seven years](#) (Nikkei)

EDUCATION

- [Gov't to consider limiting establishment and expansion of universities in Tokyo](#) (Mainichi)

TV PROGRAMS

New regulations on curbing smoking

NHK's "Close-up Gendai Plus" on Wednesday reported on a set of regulations for curbing smoking in Japan, looking at a basic plan drafted by the Health Ministry for a bill to regulate smoking. The plan bans smoking in all restaurants and entertainment facilities and imposes penalties for noncompliance. While many nonsmokers welcome the plan, smokers and restaurants are strongly opposed. Since it is customary for Olympic host nations to regulate smoking, Japan needs to tighten regulations on smoking by the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The program also reported on risks associated with secondhand smoke and new types of cigarettes on the market. The program said the GOJ is planning to submit a new bill on the matter next year.