



Afternoon Alert - Tuesday, December 20, 2016

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

Noon news

NHK, NTV, and Fuji TV led with reports that criminal papers were filed with prosecutors against a dead man on charges of murdering a female university student in Shimane in 2009. The man died in a car accident two days after the body of the woman was discovered. TBS gave top play to a report on the incident in which a truck plowed into a Christmas market in Berlin.

SECURITY

Supreme Court rules against Okinawa over Henoko

NHK reported this afternoon that the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the central government in its dispute with Okinawa over Futenma relocation to Henoko, Nago, saying that the relocation work in Henoko is expected to be resumed. The network also reported on its website that following the ruling, Okinawa Governor Onaga has decided to withdraw his revocation of his predecessor's approval for a landfill work in Henoko as early as Dec. 26.

Japan weak-kneed in face of U.S. hard line on Osprey flights

TV-Asahi's Hodo Station took up the resumption of Osprey flights on Monday afternoon, focusing on the GOJ's failure to have the U.S. military ground the tilt-rotor airplanes for a much longer time and the complete absence of progress on Japanese investigations into the accident on account of the SOFA. Perhaps in an attempt to remind viewers of the U.S. military enjoying privileges under the pact, the program aired footage of U.S. service members at the accident site posing for a group photo and joking with each other even though Japanese officials were prohibited from accessing the area. Former Kyodo News Managing Editor Goto speculated that the Abe administration may have

chosen not to put up strong resistance to the U.S. military's plan to resume Osprey flights quickly so as not to displease Washington ahead of the prime minister's planned visit to Pearl Harbor next week. He also conjectured that the Marines authorities in Okinawa may be trying to take a bullish line with the upcoming inauguration of "pro-military" President Trump in mind, stressing the fact that Okinawa Area Coordinator Nicholson visited Nago City on Monday, not the day after the accident, indicated the U.S. military's hard line. Goto also took issue with Ambassador Kennedy's not having met with Foreign Minister Kishida until Monday evening, arguing that she should have visited the Japanese minister before the resumption of flights.

Resumption of Osprey flights enrages Okinawa

Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times devoted numerous pages about Okinawans' angry reaction to the resumption of Osprey flights, denouncing the central government for "blindly" accepting the U.S. military's logic for the resumption without conducting an assessment of its own. The papers claimed that condoning the U.S. military's timeline for resumption was a "predetermined" policy on the part of the Abe administration, as some GOJ officials acknowledged the necessity of swift resumption so that the Marines can maintain readiness for a quick response to regional contingencies. Noting that Okinawans' fear of the tilt-rotor planes was overrode by the U.S. military's high-handed approach, Okinawa Times projected that local distrust of the central government and the U.S. military will further deepen and hence undercut the trans-Pacific alliance.

- [Top court rules in favor of U.S. base relocation in Okinawa](#) (Kyodo News)
- [U.S. Forces Okinawa commander apologizes to local residents for Osprey accident](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [LDP Okinawa chapter chief demands that Defense Bureau stop resumption of Osprey flights](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Osprey back in sky just days after crash](#) (The Japan News)
- [Okinawa tensions grow as US Ospreys return to air](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Editorial: Why did Japanese gov't allow Osprey flights to resume?](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Editorial: Tokyo ignores Okinawa's fears as Ospreys again take flight](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [LDP members voice criticism of U.S. military aircraft accidents](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Gov't mulls sponsoring "cyberdefense" online course](#) (Sankei)

- [MOD to allocate about 170 billion yen in third extra budget for FY16](#) (Mainichi)
- [Gov't earmarks a record 764.2 billion yen for USFJ in FY16](#) (Akahata)

INTERNATIONAL

PM Abe to visit Russia early next year

NHK reported online that PM Abe said during his speech today in Tokyo that the agreement between Japan and Russia to begin talks on joint economic activities in the Northern Territories is "an important step toward concluding a peace treaty," and that he is hoping to visit Russia early next year to "further accelerate the momentum toward rapprochement" between the two nations. On joint economic activities, the premier reportedly said: "If realized, Japanese people engaged in such economic activities will be able to visit the islands many times and live there. If we deepen our mutual understanding and trust, we can make the four islands islands of co-existence, not islands of conflict."

Japan, DPRK held informal meetings in China

Kyodo reported on the disclosure by several sources involved in Japan-North Korea relations that Japanese diplomats met with North Korean officials informally on at least three occasions in several Chinese cities from September through November perhaps in an attempt to achieve a breakthrough in the stalled abduction talks. According to the story, the DPRK side was apparently represented by officials from the International division of the ruling Workers' Party, which is believed to be closely associated with strongman Kim Jong Un. Pointing out that the North Korean Foreign Ministry has been the official channel of communications with Tokyo over the past ten years, the article speculated that the Kim regime may be trying to renew overtures toward Japan by tapping Workers' Party expertise.

U.S. envoy blasts Japan for hesitation over sanctions on South Sudan

Kyodo took up press remarks on Monday by U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Powers, during which she publicly rebuked Japan for having been unenthusiastic about a draft sanctions resolution against South Sudan put forward by the Obama administration. The U.S. diplomat said: "I can't comprehend [Japan's hesitation to impose sanctions]." According to the article, Tokyo is hesitant because the proposed resolution, if adopted, might exacerbate tensions between the UN and the South Sudan government and hence heighten the risks for SDF personnel deployed there for UN peacekeeping operations.

The wire service separately reported that Washington is displeased with Japan's reluctance given that China and Russia have indicated that they will not veto the draft resolution and that support from at least one additional Security Council member will enable passage of the motion. The article said it is extremely unusual for Japan not to embrace a UN motion drafted by the U.S. government.

- [Abe eyes Russia trip early next year to advance peace treaty issue](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Cooperation with Russia could see Japanese living on isles: Abe](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan grapples with two different faces of US](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Japan-Russia talks on joint economic activities in Northern Territories to start in early 2017](#) (Mainichi)
- [LDP chief dissatisfied with outcome of Abe-Putin talks on territorial issue](#) (Mainichi)
- [ROK Prime Minister Hwang says “Key policies toward Japan remain unchanged”](#) (Sankei)
- [Niigata governor and METI minister exchange views on nuclear power generation](#) (Sankei)
- [Optimism fades for Japan-Russia relations](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Experts comment on outcome of Abe- Putin summit meetings](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Experts assess outcome of Abe-Putin summit talks](#) (Nikkei)
- [Cartoon: Japan-Russia summit](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Cartoon: Japan-Russia summit](#) (Mainichi)
- [Calder predicts Trump may extend Japan-U.S. nuclear power treaty](#) (Nikkei)
- [Gov’t mulls support for nuclear reactors project in UK](#) (Mainichi)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister’s schedule on Dec. 19](#) (Nikkei)
- [Extraordinary session enacts bills at high rate, highlighting LDP’s high-handed approach](#) (Asahi)

ECONOMY

- [Premium for new drug development will be adjusted for cost-effectiveness](#) (Mainichi)

- [Japan's SMBC buying US freight car lessor](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [SBS tender of foreign rice resumes under a new rule](#) (Nikkei)
- [Commentary: Time for gov't to come clean on Monju reactor muck-up](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Upper, Lower House ag committees adopt resolution on EPA](#) (Japan Agricultural News)
- [SoftBank CEO Son eyes investment in Russia](#) (Nikkei)

SCIENCE

- [Editorial: We need vision for future space development program](#) (Sankei)

EDUCATION

- [Monthly financial aid to students set at 20,000 to 40,000 yen: Gov't draft](#) (Asahi)

SOCIETY

- [New law to fight bias against 'burakumin' seen falling short](#) (The Japan Times)

OPINION POLLS

- [70% say no progress made on Japan-Russia negotiations on Northern Territories, Asahi poll](#) (Asahi)
- [63% approve of Japan-Russia summit, Sankei-FNN poll](#) (Sankei)
- [Kyodo News opinion poll & results from Tokyo Shimbun](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Opinion poll & results from Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Mainichi)

TV PROGRAMS

Special on "money"

NHK's "Close-up Gendai Plus" aired on Monday a two-hour special focused on "money." The program reported on the growing trend for salaried workers to invest in real estate and the risks of such investment; "wise-spending" of taxes; the bloated cost of the Toyosu fish market in Tokyo; and

the large number of young people saddled with student loan debt. Journalist Akira Ikegami and other celebrity guests engaged in discussions about these issues.

