



Afternoon Alert - Thursday, February 23, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Noon news

Most networks gave top play to the story that North Korea's state media reported for the first time on the murder of Kim Jong Nam, but did not mention him by name. NHK reported on several Malaysian media stories that a second secretary of the North Korean Embassy was spotted on security footage at the airport on the day Kim was murdered.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Russia's plan to deploy military division to Northern Territories to be raised at "2+2" meeting

Concerning Russia's plan to deploy a military division to the Northern Territories, NHK reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told reporters this morning that the GOJ has already lodged a protest through a diplomatic channel and said that the issue will be raised at the "2+2" meeting slated for next month. Suga was quoted as saying: "We are closely following Russia's moves in the Northern Territories, and we are collecting information following the remarks [by a Russian minister on the plan to deploy a military division.]" On the possible impact on the territorial talks, Suga reportedly said: "In order to fundamentally resolve these issues, we need to resolve the territorial issue itself. We will tenaciously negotiate in order to find a resolution that is acceptable to both sides."

### Congressional Research Service releases report on U.S.-Japan relations

NHK reported this morning that the Congressional Research Service (CRS) has released its first report on U.S.-Japan relations under the Trump administration. According to the network, the CRS said in the report that "Abe and Trump displayed a strong personal rapport and issued a joint

statement that echoed many of the previous tenets of the bilateral alliance." The CRS also surmised that "Tokyo was likely reassured" by the joint statement's affirmation that the Senkaku Islands are covered by the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. In addition, the CRS said "a leaders' summit early in Trump's term allayed some of the concerns" that the alliance would suffer under the new administration. However, the CRS pointed out the U.S. withdrawal from the TPP and President Trump's criticism of Japan's trade policy, saying that "the meeting did not resolve what some observers see as the most contentious issues in the relationship." It also noted that doubts remain over how the bilateral relationship will evolve under the Trump administration, and that there are some uncertainties on the next steps for promoting trade between the two nations.

### **[South Korean foreign minister calls for removal of comfort woman statue](#)**

NHK reported at noon that South Korean Foreign Minister Yun sent a letter last week to municipal authorities in Busan, where a comfort woman statue was erected in front of the Japanese Consulate General. He reportedly wrote that the South Korean government, the Busan government, and civic groups need to exchange views on how to relocate the statue. Yun also reportedly wrote that it is not desirable in terms of international relations or protocol to erect a statue in front of a foreign diplomatic mission. The network said this is the first concrete move by the ROK government to address the issue. Meanwhile, the local government reportedly said the issue cannot be resolved by municipal authorities because the issue of the comfort woman statue has become a diplomatic issue and there is strong opposition from the public to relocating the statue.

### **[Murder of Kim Jong Nam](#)**

NHK's "Close-up Gendai Plus" reported on the murder of Kim Jong Nam, saying that it is strongly believed that the act was carried out by North Korean agents. The program looked into why Kim was murdered now, saying while some speculate that Kim was assassinated to "prune" unnecessary branches of power, others suspect that Kim Jong Nam was in control of North Korea's foreign currency unbeknownst to Kim Jong Un. The program also reported on speculation about growing moves among North Korean defectors to establish a "government in exile" with Kim Jong Nam as a leader, quoting an expert as saying: "It would be extremely unpleasant for North Korea if Kim Jong Nam were to become the leader of a government in exile. If the North Korean regime were shaken, Kim Jong Nam, the son of Kim Jong Il, would be a person of great importance. Kim Jong Un needed to get rid of his brother in a hurry."

- **[Analysis: Impact of Trump's foreign policy on Japan's security strategy](#)** (Nikkei)
- **[Cartoon: McMaster and Bannon](#)** (Asahi)
- **[Coordination underway for Abe to visit Italy in March](#)** (Yomiuri)
- **[Former U.S. envoy calls PM Abe "important partner"](#)** (Sankei)

- [Global casino operators looking to broaden their reach in Japan](#) (Mainichi)
- [Head of U.S. casino operator meets with Nikai](#) (Nikkei)
- [Female minorities smashing glass ceiling in congress](#) (Nikkei Evening edition)

## POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on Feb. 22](#) (Nikkei)
- [Major labor union to withdraw support for DP candidates over nuclear plant policy](#) (Sankei)
- [LDP's Nikai, Nippon Ishin's Matsui in sync on promotion of Japan-China friendship](#) (Sankei)
- [LDP, Komeito, Ishin have different visions for coalition](#) (Nikkei)
- [Cabinet to OK changes to crime law to put bite on sex offenders](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)

## SECURITY

### [Scholar explains U.S. military's interest in basic research in Japan](#)

Regarding a recent finding that the U.S. military provided approximately 900 million yen in grants for a total of 135 basic science projects conducted by Japanese scholars from 2007 through 2016, Asahi published a written interview with Osaka University Professor Emeritus Hiroshi Motoda, a science adviser to the Tokyo-based Asian Office of Aerospace Research and Development (AOARD), a field office of the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR) that manages basic research activities for the U.S. Air Force. The academic, who was described by the daily as a “bridge” between the Japanese scientific community and the U.S. military, stressed that AOARD's primary mission is to help accelerate “top level” basic research in Asia, emphasizing that its grants have not and will not be used for R&D of military hardware and that the results of all of the AORAD-financed research programs have been published. He also explained that recipients are allowed to use AOARD money without restrictions, which he stated marks a sharp contrast to other grants and subsidies that usually come with various constraints. Motoda said that more than 70 academics worldwide have been awarded Nobel Prizes after conducting basic research partially financed by AFOSR. The daily added that Motoda is extremely good at pinpointing “talented” Japanese scholars to refer to the U.S. military as potential candidates for grants.

### [Court orders government to pay 30 billion yen for noise pollution in Kadena](#)

All networks reported at noon that the Okinawa branch of the Naha District Court ordered the government to pay about 30 billion yen in compensation to local residents near Kadena AB in Okinawa, marking the largest compensation payment levied against the Japanese government in a suit over noise pollution from a military installation. The presiding judge reportedly said "no fundamental measures have been taken to resolve the noise pollution which became a social issue in the 1970s, and the illegal noise pollution has been left unresolved." However, the networks said a request by 22,000 residents to ban nighttime and early morning flights at Kadena was turned down.

- [\*\*New institution will consolidate data on noise damage from U.S. military aircraft\*\*](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
- [\*\*Editorial: Government should acquire ability to attack enemy bases to protect citizens\*\*](#) (Sankei)
- [\*\*Pedophile sting ops roil U.S. forces on Okinawa\*\*](#) (Japan Times)
- [\*\*Ospreys use identification code for small-size aircraft in Okinawa\*\*](#) (Akahata)

## **ECONOMY**

- [\*\*Toray to boost carbon fiber output in Mexico\*\*](#) (Jiji Press)
- [\*\*Column: President Trump's withdrawal from TPP impacts candidates for next MLIT vice-minister\*\*](#) (Sentaku)
- [\*\*Launch of instructional website to help interpret TPP agreement\*\*](#) (The Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry Online)
- [\*\*RCEP negotiations to start on Feb. 27\*\*](#) (Mainichi)
- [\*\*Trade and investment insurance agency to support export of domestic lumber\*\*](#) (Nikkei)
- [\*\*72% of Japanese "not interested in starting own business," METI poll\*\*](#) (Nikkei)
- [\*\*Gov't to fine firms up to 1 bil. yen for leaking security tech\*\*](#) (Kyodo News)
- [\*\*Insufficient main cable capacity becalms wind power plants\*\*](#) (Nikkei)
- [\*\*Hitachi, Toshiba, Mitsubishi give up on plan to merge nuclear fuel operations this spring\*\*](#) (Mainichi)
- [\*\*Japan's gender wage gap persists despite progress\*\*](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

- [LDP approves plan to expand subsidies for raw milk producers](#) (Mainichi)

## SCIENCE

- [Conditions on newly discovered Earth-like planets too harsh for humans](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Scientists explore the impact of global warming on Japan's sea life](#) (Kyodo News)

## OPINION POLLS

- [Cabinet support rate rises to 53.4%, Jiji Press poll](#) (JJI)
- [44% in favor of, 25% opposed to bill that would criminalize conspiracy to commit terrorism, Asahi poll](#) (Asahi)

## SOCIETY

### [\*\*Police search for American skier missing in Nagano\*\*](#)

Broadcasters in Nagano, including NHK, reported on Wednesday evening on the police search for a missing American doctor from Okinawa, who visited a ski resort in Hakuba with his family from the weekend of Feb. 18. According to the TV stations, the 33-year-old man went skiing on Monday afternoon, but never returned. Although the police mobilized a helicopter to search for him on Tuesday and Wednesday, they were unable to locate him. The police plan to continue the search today.

- [Amnesty report urges Japan to improve treatment of minorities](#) (Kyodo News)