



Afternoon Alert - Tuesday, March 14, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK, NTV, TBS, and Fuji TV gave top play to reports that Defense Minister Inada told reporters this morning that she may have served as legal counsel for Moritomo Gakuen, but insisted that she has no recollection of doing so and therefore she did not give false answers at the Diet. Inada said she has no intention to step down. TV Asahi led with a report that Osaka Prefecture is considering filing a criminal complaint against Moritomo Gakuen for submitting false contracts.

POLITICS

Inada corrects her remarks on Moritomo scandal

NHK reported this afternoon that Defense Minister Inada corrected a remark she made at an Upper House Budget Committee meeting on Monday in which she said that she had never given Moritomo Gakuen legal advice or represented it in a trial. When an opposition member pressed her at the Lower House plenary session this afternoon by saying that her name was on a court record of an oral argument for a trial involving Moritomo Gakuen, she reportedly said : "I received the question suddenly at the committee meeting and my answer was based solely on my memory. I have confirmed that I appeared at the court instead of my husband on Dec. 9, 2004. I would like to correct this and apologize." Inada reportedly rejected the idea of stepping down from her post by saying: "I would like to fulfill my duties wholeheartedly."

Moritomo Gakuen scandal

NHK's "Close-up Gendai Plus" reported on the scandal involving school operator Moritomo Gakuen, saying that its new elementary school was originally approved by the Osaka Prefectural Government

despite various problems, including not having secured the land. The program reported that many people were impressed by the education policy of Moritomo Gakuen President Kagoike, adding that he utilized his personal network with politicians to obtain government approval for the new school.

- [Osaka considers filing criminal complaint against Moritomo Gakuen](#) (Sankei)
- [Editorial: Ruling bloc should agree to summon scandal-hit school operator head to testify](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Renho to seek seat in Lower House](#) (Nikkei)
- [Kishida and the LDP's euphoria](#) (Yomiuri Online)
- [Prime minister's schedule on March 13](#) (Nikkei)
- [Gist of interpellations at Upper House Budget Committee, March 13](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)

SECURITY

[Deployment of Ospreys to Yokota AB to be delayed](#)

NTV reported at noon that the Pentagon announced on Monday that the deployment of CV-22 Ospreys to Yokota AB will be delayed for as long as three years. The deployment was originally scheduled for July to September of this year. The network said the reasons for the delay have not been disclosed.

[Okinawa municipalities call for landing zone's closure following tire incident](#)

Okinawa Times wrote that in response to the recent incident in which tires fell from a U.S. military helicopter at Camp Hansen, the mayors of Kin and Ginoza made a request to the Defense Ministry's Okinawa bureau on Monday for the closure of the base's Landing Zone Falcon, which is near a residential area. This is the first time for the local municipalities to call for the closure of the landing zone. The head of the defense bureau responded by saying: "We will ask the U.S. military to minimize the impact on local communities. External lift training is necessary for their participation in humanitarian assistance and fire extinguishing operations". The Ginoza mayor told reporters after the meeting: "We have asked them not to use the landing zone before, but now we have no choice but to ask for the closure of the landing zone following the accident during external lift training last December, the Osprey crash landing in shallow waters off Nago last December, and the latest incident also during external lift training." The mayors also called for the immediate suspension of external lift training, U.S. military aircraft training over residential areas, and low-altitude and nighttime flights.

- [S. Korea, Japan, U.S. begin missile warning exercise](#) (Kyodo News)

- [Tokyo police stepping up cybersecurity measures](#) (Asahi)
- [Okinawa human rights groups present report on Yamashiro's detention to UN special rapporteur](#) (Okinawa Times)
- [Abe's reasons for withdrawal are contradictory](#) (Mainichi)
- [SDF troops have completed their mission in South Sudan](#) (Mainichi)

INTERNATIONAL

- [U.S. gains Japan's approval of Hagerty as next ambassador](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Kazamidori column: Blind spot in honeymoon of Japan-U.S. ties](#) (Nikkei)
- [Main points of cooperation under Japan-Saudi Vision 2030](#) (Asahi)

ECONOMY

Aso to meet with Mnuchin in Germany

Jiji reported from Washington on the disclosure by an unnamed senior Treasury official on Monday that Secretary Mnuchin will hold talks with Finance Minister Aso on the margins of the G20 financial ministerial meeting to be held over the weekend in Baden-Baden, Germany. According to the official, Mnuchin and Aso will exchange views on such issues as international money laundering and the bilateral economic dialogue to be launched in April when Vice President Pence visits Japan in April. As for the G20 confab, the Treasury official projected that the participants will confirm the importance of avoiding a "currency war."

[Kyodo News](#) also reported that Secretary Mnuchin and Minister Aso will meet in Germany amid market speculation that Mnuchin could raise concern about a possible devaluation in the yen by Japanese monetary authorities.

Trade Minister Seko to visit U.S.

Jiji reported that Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Seko will visit the U.S. on March 15-18 to hold meetings with Commerce Secretary Ross, National Economic Council Director Cohn, and Energy Secretary Perry. Seko plans to discuss such issues as U.S.-Japan cooperation in infrastructure development and a framework for bilateral trade in preparation for the U.S.-Japan Economic Dialogue to be launched in April. Seko and Energy Secretary Perry may discuss the restructuring of Westinghouse, which triggered the current financial crisis of Toshiba. The ministry has already sent its officials to Washington to give the U.S. a briefing on the situation of Toshiba.

- [Can Japan avoid trade conflict with the U.S.? \[Part 2\]](#) (Nikkei)

- [Cutting-edge disaster preparedness technologies being developed using AI, VR](#) (Yomiuri)
- [GOJ to ease restrictions on imports of discarded smartphones, laptops](#) (Nikkei)
- [Prime Minister fails to mention “nuclear accident” in 3/11 memorial speech for first time](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [MHLW says 1,196 firms forced employees to work more than 100 hours of overtime](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Business, labor give nod to Abe’s call for new overtime cap](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Mother of “karoshi” victim slams 100-hour cap](#) (Asahi)
- [Japan eyes unemployment insurance for freelancers](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [2,159 foreigners worked at Japan’s nuclear plants from FY2011 to FY2015](#) (Mainichi)

SCIENCE

- [RIKEN, electronic companies team to develop ways to predict disasters using AI](#) (Asahi)
- [Developers aim for Japan’s fastest supercomputer](#) (Yomiuri Evening edition)

EDUCATION

- [Japanese students are passive, less ambitious, four-country survey of high school students](#) (Asahi)

OPINION POLLS

NHK poll: Cabinet support down 7 points to 51%

An NHK poll conducted from March 10 through 12 showed that support for the Abe cabinet dropped to 51%, down 7 points from last month, while nonsupport rose by 8 points to 31%.

Asked whether they were worried about North Korea’s recent moves, including ballistic missile launches, 48% of respondents said they were very worried and 37% were somewhat worried, while 7% said they were not very worried and 2% were not worried at all. When asked what the GOJ

should focus on in dealing with North Korea, 46% cited stronger pressure from the international community, 29% said Japan's enhanced defense capabilities, and 15% chose dialogue with North Korea.

Concerning the bill to criminalize conspiracy to commit terrorism, 45% supported it, 11% opposed it, and 32% were undecided.

- [55% opposed to restarting nuclear power plants, Mainichi Shimbun poll](#) (Mainichi)
 - [Pollees split on third term for PM Abe as LDP president, Mainichi Shimbun poll](#) (Mainichi)
 - [Opinion poll & results from Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Mainichi)
 - [Support for "conspiracy" bill declines even among supporters of ruling parties, Kyodo News poll](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
 - [Kyodo News opinion poll & results from Tokyo Shimbun](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
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