
 **JAPAN MEDIA
HIGHLIGHTS**

Afternoon Alert - Tuesday, April 4, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

All networks led with reports on the explosion on a subway train in St. Petersburg that killed 11 people and injured many others on Monday, saying that Russian media outlets have reported that the attack may have been carried out by a suicide bomber from Central Asia. Prime Minister Abe reportedly told reporters this morning: "I would like to offer my condolences for those who have lost their lives. We will never tolerate terrorism. Our hearts are with President Putin and the people of Russia at this difficult time." The premier also reportedly said Japan will cooperate with the international community to combat terrorism.

INTERNATIONAL

UNSC to hold minister-level meeting on North Korea

TBS reported at noon that U.S. Ambassador to the UN Haley told reporters on Monday that the UNSC is planning to hold a minister-level meeting on North Korea on April 28, with Secretary of State Tillerson as the chair. She was quoted as saying: "North Korea is a threat. At any given day, we are waiting for another ballistic missile test." The network said Ambassador Haley also urged UN member states to implement the sanctions resolutions against North Korea.

In a related story, the network said the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bipartisan bill urging the State Department to put North Korea back on the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Abe orders Nagamine to work on implementation of comfort women agreement

NHK reported that Prime Minister Abe met with Japanese Ambassador to South Korea Nagamine at the Kantei this morning before Nagamine's departure for Seoul later today and instructed him to make an all-out effort to press South Korea to implement the comfort women agreement.

Ambassador Nagamine was quoted as telling reporters after the meeting: "As I will be returning today, I met Prime Minister Abe and received instructions from him. As the Japanese ambassador to South Korea, I will do my best to work on the issues." When asked how he will urge the South Korean side to implement the Japan-ROK agreement, Nagamine reportedly said: "I am making arrangements to directly meet with the acting president."

90% of political appointee posts in USG still vacant

Asahi wrote that although more than 70 days have passed since President Trump took office, many senior posts in U.S. government agencies are still vacant. Nominations have yet to be announced for nearly 90% of the 553 senior political appointee posts that require congressional confirmation. At the Department of State, only three of the 119 political appointee positions – secretary of state, ambassador to the UN, and ambassador to Israel – have been confirmed. Six nominees, including William Hagerty for ambassador to Japan, are awaiting confirmation, but the remaining 110 posts, including deputy secretary and assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, are still vacant. Noting that many of the USG officials who accompanied Secretary Tillerson on his trip to Japan in March were apparently only filling in temporarily, the paper quoted a senior MOFA official as expressing concern that the situation could affect diplomatic continuity.

- **Gov't forced to make tough decision on returning Japanese ambassador to South Korea** (Asahi)
- **METI mobilizing former officials for Japan-U.S. economic dialogue** (Sentaku)
- **Editorial: Uncertainty grows over Trump's ability to implement policies** (The Japan News)
- **MOFA to require new hires to study more international law, diplomatic history** (Nikkei)

POLITICS

- **Prime minister's schedule on April 3** (Nikkei)
- **Internal "cold war" at MOFA could affect upcoming personnel reshuffle** (Sentaku)
- **Trends in people PM Abe met with at start of first and second administrations and last year** (Asahi)

- [Abe, MOF in behind-the-scenes feud over Moritomo Gakuen scandal](#) (Sentaku)
- [Analysis: Abe pushing boundaries with his stand on imperial rescript on education](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Ocean policy secretariat set up in Cabinet Office](#) (Nikkei)
- [Eight DP Tokyo chapter members defect ahead of Metropolitan Assembly election](#) (Nikkei)
- [Labor group calls for DP-led opposition alliance](#) (Nikkei)
- [Former TPP Minister Amari wants to speak to President Trump](#) (Seiron)
- [LDP local chapter head supports DP Deputy President Hosono's running for Shizuoka governor](#) (THEMIS)
- [Gov't keeps spending budget for stalled capital relocation plan](#) (Asahi)

ECONOMY

Minister Seko says latest executive orders to have no impact on U.S.-Japan trade

NHK reported this afternoon that Minister for Economy, Trade, and Industry Seko commented on the executive orders signed last week by President Trump calling for extensive investigations into countries that have trade surpluses with the U.S. Seko was quoted as telling reporters today: "I would like to continue to closely monitor how the executive orders affect U.S.-Japan economic relations." Seko added: "The Japanese market does not discriminate against foreign products. There are no trade barriers and the market is sufficiently open. I don't think Japan will face problems as a result of the executive orders."

- [U.S. trade deficit review won't affect Japan: trade minister](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Auto sales in Japan rebound to 5m, led by Toyota](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Editorial: Improve working conditions through joint efforts of labor, management](#) (The Japan News)

SECURITY

F-15 fighters scrambled more than 1,100 times

NHK's "News Watch 9" carried an extensive report on an increase in the number of ASDF scrambles, saying that ASDF F-15 fighters were scrambled more than 1,100 times in FY2016, mostly against Chinese aircraft, saying that there is unprecedented tension in the airspace over the East China Sea.

The program also said Chinese planes are stepping up their activities in the Pacific Ocean. According to the network, ASDF members are being extremely careful not to threaten Chinese aircraft in order to avoid accidental encounters, which could develop into a state of war. The program said that the GOJ and the Chinese government need to work together to swiftly ease the tension.

Defense bureau conducts drilling survey off Camp Schwab

Okinawa Times and Ryukyu Shimpo gave top play to reports saying that Defense Ministry's Okinawa bureau conducted a seabed drilling survey off Camp Schwab on Monday for the FRF construction at Henoko. This was the first offshore work carried out by the GOJ since the prefectural government's permit for crushing rock reefs there expired on March 31. The papers wrote that although the prefectural government argues that the central government should have consulted with the prefecture before it carried out the work, the ministry insists that prior consultation was not necessary because fishing rights are no longer an issue.

- [Former Okinawa Governor Ota nominated for Nobel Peace Prize](#) (Okinawa Times)
- [Olympics: Japan approves security plan for 2020 Games](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Editorial: Gov't responsible for settling state-Okinawa clash over U.S. base relocation](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Security laws 1 year on / Approval of SDF rescue missions 'a step forward to next stage'](#) (The Japan News)

OPINION POLLS

- [74% support Gov. Koike, Asahi Shimbun survey of Tokyo voters](#) (Asahi)
- [Opinion poll & results for Asahi Shimbun survey of Tokyo voters](#) (Asahi)
- [Opinion poll & results for Kyodo News survey of 104 major companies](#) (Mainichi)

SCIENCE

- [International Whaling Commission says Japan's new whaling plan needs more work](#) (Mainichi)

SOCIETY

Sumo wrestler Kisenosato

NHK's "Close-up Gendai+" reported on sumo wrestler Kisenosato, who became the first Japanese national to reach the sport's highest rank of "yokozuna" in 19 years. The program aired an interview with Kisenosato after he won the spring sumo championship despite suffering a shoulder injury. The program also reported on the enormous pressure placed on him as a Japanese yokozuna and his obsession with victory.

- [89% of companies are advancing initiatives to promote women's participation, poll](#) (Mainichi Evening edition)

