



Afternoon Alert - Friday, April 7, 2017

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

All networks led with reports that the U.S. launched a military strike against an airfield in Syria on Thursday in response to the deadly chemical weapons attack against Syrian citizens.

INTERNATIONAL

PM Abe expresses support for U.S. government's "resolve"

Prime Minister Abe read out a statement at the Kantei at around 3:30 p.m. today in response to U.S. military strikes in Syria. The premier said: "Once again, a number of innocent civilians fell victim to chemical weapons in Syria. This horrible scene, in which even small children became victims, came as a terrible shock to the international community. It was extremely inhumane and violated UN resolutions. We support the U.S. government's resolve never to allow the use or proliferation of chemical weapons. We understand that the U.S. action was a measure to prevent the situation from further deteriorating. The threat of weapons of mass destruction is becoming increasingly serious in East Asia as well. Japan highly values President Trump's strong commitment to maintaining the international order and the peace and security of the U.S. allies and the world. We will work closely with the international community, including the U.S., and play the role we need to play for the peace and security of the world."

U.S. launches attack on Syria with Tomahawk missiles

All networks carried extensive reports that the U.S. fired 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at an airfield in Syria on Thursday, only two days after Syria allegedly launched a chemical weapons attack against its own citizens. NHK and TBS said it was the first direct American assault on the Syrian government since the country's civil war began. The networks quoted President Trump as saying at

a press conference: "On Tuesday, Syrian dictator, Bashar-al-Assad, launched a horrible chemical weapons attack on innocent civilians. Using a deadly nerve agent, Assad choked out the lives of helpless men, women, and children. It was a slow and brutal death for so many. Even beautiful babies were cruelly murdered in this very barbaric attack. No child of God should ever suffer such horror. Tonight I ordered a targeted military strike on the airfield in Syria from where the chemical attack was launched."

An NHK reporter said President Trump's aim was to send a strong message to the Assad regime and the entire world that the U.S. will not rule out use of military force in response to unforgivable acts. Noting that the President said just yesterday that Syria had crossed a "red line," the reporter said the President wanted to maximize the impact of the military strike by taking action immediately after his remarks without giving Syria time to prepare for the attack. Noting that a U.S.-China summit is currently being held in the U.S., another NHK reporter said that the strike on Syria sent a strong message to North Korea as well. Meanwhile, a TBS reporter said that the U.S. attack on the Assad regime, which is backed by Russia, could add further confusion to the current situation in Syria, adding that attention will be focused on how the U.S. and Russia will respond to the situation.

GOJ, LDP officials comment on U.S. attack on Syria

On the U.S. missile strike against Syria in response to the chemical weapons attack, NHK reported that Foreign Minister Kishida said at a Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee meeting this morning that the GOJ is currently confirming the details. He also said that Japan, as a member of the UN Security Council, needs to contribute to the international community's response and discussions on the matter. LDP Vice President Komura was quoted as saying this morning: "I think this means that the U.S. has solid evidence that the Assad regime crossed a red line by using chemical weapons. This will show rogue states that the U.S. is serious and deter them from committing lawless acts. On the other hand, North Korea may think that Syria was attacked because it doesn't have any nuclear weapons, so North Korea needs more missiles and nuclear weapons. I hope the message that the Trump administration, unlike the Obama administration, will take bold actions against nations that cross red lines will be effective in suppressing rogue states."

Foreign Minister Kishida to hold talks with Secretary Tillerson in Italy

TBS reported that Foreign Minister Kishida announced that he will meet with Secretary of State Tillerson on the sidelines of the G7 foreign ministers' meeting in Italy slated for next week. The network said the two ministers are expected to confirm close bilateral cooperation over North Korea.

- **[Gist of teleconference between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and U.S. President Donald Trump](#)** (Mainichi)
- **[Editorial: Removal of Bannon from NSC should facilitate smooth management of Trump administration](#)** (Sankei)
- **[Former vice finance minister says no need to compromise in economic dialogue with U.S.](#)** (Bungeishunju)
- **[PM Abe meets Spanish king, queen in Tokyo](#)** (Kyodo News)

SECURITY

“All Okinawa” considers referendum to support governor’s campaign against Henoko plan

Okinawa Times gave top play to a report saying that “All Okinawa” -- a group of citizens, political party and labor union members, and local businesspeople who are against the FRF construction at Henoko -- are studying the idea of calling a referendum on the issue. The group is hoping that the poll will support Governor Onaga’s plan to revoke the prefecture’s permit for conducting landfill work at Henoko by demonstrating the Okinawan people’s collective will against the Henoko plan. The vote would take place in September or later at the earliest because it will probably take at least six months to complete preparations, including enacting the necessary ordinance. Although cooperation from local municipalities will be indispensable for conducting the referendum, it remains to be seen whether the group will be able to enlist their cooperation because a majority of the municipal leaders in Okinawa do not agree with the governor’s policy.

U.S. military dissatisfied with Japanese police’s “lukewarm” treatment of Okinawa protesters

In a report on the arrest on Thursday of three protesters at the Futenma gate on suspicion of obstructing official duties, Okinawa Times wrote that the U.S. military has put pressure on the local police regarding their treatment of protesters. The paper quoted a source connected to the Okinawa police as saying: “The U.S. military has strongly called on us to do something about the protesters at the gate, saying that the Japanese police are taking only lukewarm steps. We have told them that we can only act within the law, but they don’t understand our situation.” The paper wrote that internal documents it obtained based on the Freedom of Information Act act show that the Marines in Okinawa have expressed dissatisfaction with the local police.

Okinawa prefecture to make additional requests for SOFA revisions

Ryukyu Shimpo gave top play to a report saying that the Okinawa Prefectural Government has drawn up additional requests for its 11-item request for revising the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement that was compiled in 2000. The prefecture plans to finalize the requests after consulting with local municipalities hosting U.S. bases and submit it to the U.S. and Japanese governments in June or later. In view of the 2004 incident in which a U.S. military helicopter crashed onto a local university campus and Japanese authorities were not permitted to carry out onsite investigation there, the additional requests for SOFA revisions will include allowing Japanese authorities to access to U.S. military assets even outside the bases.

Government Accountability Office report questions Marines’ schedule for relocation from Okinawa to Guam

Ryukyu Shimpo wrote that the U.S. Government Accountability Office said in a report released on Wednesday concerning the consolidation of Marines in Okinawa that a 1,800-meter runway to be constructed at the Futenma replacement facility at Henoko would not meet the same operational

requirement as MCAS Futenma, which has a 2,800-meter runway. The GAO report also said that it is necessary for the Department of Defense to review its cost estimates because the schedule for relocating some 4,000 troops from Okinawa to Guam has been delayed due to delays in infrastructure improvements.

Marines insist flight operations between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. not in violation of agreement with Japan

Ryukyu Shimpo wrote that when asked about noise generated by U.S. military operations around MCAS Futenma, the Marines in Okinawa told the paper that flight operations between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. are not in violation of U.S.-Japan agreements. The paper wrote that the Marines justified their operations at night by saying that it is necessary for them to conduct low-light training later in the evening during spring and summer because it becomes dark later in the day during that period. Under the 1996 agreement between the U.S. and Japanese governments, flight and ground activities between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. are allowed when they are deemed necessary for the operational requirements of the U.S. military.

SDF's daily activity logs

NHK's "Close-up Gendai+" reported on the issue of daily activity logs compiled by the GSDF troops in South Sudan, saying that the Defense Ministry failed to disclose that the electronic version of the daily activity logs was actually maintained by the ministry. The program said the ministry is being criticized for a possible organizational cover-up in order to conceal the deterioration of the situation in South Sudan. The program reported on the relationship between uniformed SDF officers and civilian officials of the Defense Ministry, saying it learned that although the GSDF decided to announce the existence of the logs, civilian defense officials advised against it and uniformed SDF officers had no choice but to obey them. One expert pointed out that the management and disclosure of SDF activity logs is extremely important from the viewpoint of democracy and the people's right to know.

- **Editorial: More responsive defense policy needed to counter North Korea's new threat** (The Japan News)

ECONOMY

- **Abe's Executive Secretary Imai contributed to Toshiba's nuclear plant fiasco** (Shukan Bunshun)
- **Toshiba hit with fresh lawsuit over dodgy accounting** (Nikkei Asian Review)
- **MHLW to promote use of robots at nursing care facilities** (Nikkei)

POLITICS

- **Prime minister's schedule on April 6** (Nikkei)

- [Gist of interpellations at Lower House plenary session on “anti-conspiracy law,” April 6](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Young LDP lawmakers close to Chief Cabinet Secretary meet](#) (Sankei)
- [Former Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary forms new group](#) (Mainichi)

SOCIETY

- [60% of stalkers refuse to undergo psychiatric treatment: NPA](#) (The Mainichi)

EDUCATION

- [Reference to “interest in opposite sex” retained in curriculum guidelines on physical education](#) (Asahi Online)
 - [Asia closes the gap with English-speaking countries in competition for international students](#) (Nikkei)
 - [Japan’s latest English-proficiency scores disappoint](#) (The Japan Times)
-

