



Afternoon Alert - Tuesday, April 11, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Noon news

Most networks led with reports that Japanese figure skater Mao Asada announced her retirement, saying she is expected to hold a press conference in Tokyo on Wednesday. TBS gave top play to a report that North Korea released through its state-run media a statement in which it strongly condemned the U.S. for sending an aircraft carrier to the Western Pacific near the Korean Peninsula.

## INTERNATIONAL

### U.S. intention behind Syria attack

NHK's "Close-up Gendai+" looked closely into the U.S. intention behind the decision to suddenly launch a missile attack on Syria without the authorization of the UNSC. The program explained that the Obama administration failed to respond firmly to the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime, adding that Brookings Institute Senior Fellow O'Hanlon said the U.S. military strike was a manifestation of the strong will of President Trump, who has been criticizing Obama over Syria. O'Hanlon was quoted as saying: "It was important for President Trump to show how he differs from President Obama. He demonstrated to the entire world that he can make the right security decisions when faced with a crisis." Tsuneo Watanabe from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation said the U.S. attack had three purposes: to punish Syria for the use of chemical weapons, to deflect criticism of his domestic policies, and to keep North Korea, Iran, and China in check. While the media is reporting that the attack will cause U.S.-Russia relations to deteriorate, Watanabe pointed out that the U.S. actually gave consideration to Russia by not attacking Russian military planes or

soldiers. Tokyo University of Foreign Studies Professor Hiroyuki Aoyama pointed out that the U.S. apparently launched the strike without any clear mid-to-long-term vision for the Syrian crisis, adding that the attack could further reduce the U.S.'s influence over Syria. He said Russia could exploit the fact that the U.S. showed it consideration.

The program also reported on North Korea, saying that the U.S. attack was conducted in the midst of the U.S.-China summit. Tokyo Foundation Fellow Bonji Ohara said: "The Trump administration took an action that clearly demonstrated to China's leaders that it means business. This showed that the rules have changed for China and came as a great shock to it....This means that China can no longer do nothing about North Korea and will have to negotiate with the U.S. to make the security situation more advantageous for China." Aoyama University Professor Shunji Hiraiwa said: "The Obama administration failed to launch airstrikes against Syria even though it made the decision to do so. After seeing the latest U.S. response to Syria, North Korea is now fearful that the Trump administration, unlike the Obama administration, will take military action, possibly against North Korea." Watanabe also said the Trump administration must have strongly intended to keep North Korea and China in check by attacking Syria, otherwise it would not have had to launch the attack at that particular time.

### **Defense Secretary Mattis hints at additional measures against Syria**

NHK reported at noon that Secretary of Defense Mattis released on Monday a statement on the U.S. strikes on Syria in which he justified the U.S. military action by saying it was a "measured response" against the Syrian government's use of chemical weapons. Secretary Mattis also reportedly said in the statement that "the strike resulted in the damage or destruction of fuel and ammunition sites, air defense capabilities, and 20 percent of Syria's operational aircraft. The Syrian government has lost the ability to refuel or rearm aircraft" at the base. The network said the Secretary hinted at taking additional measures if Syria chooses to use chemical weapons again by saying: "The President directed this action to deter future use of chemical weapons and to show the United States will not passively stand by while Assad murders innocent people with chemical weapons, which are prohibited by international law and which were declared destroyed."

The network also reported on the results of a nationwide survey carried out by ABC TV and the Washington Post, which showed that 51% of the American public supported the military strikes on Syria, while 40% disapproved of them. Regarding additional strikes, 35% expressed support and 54% expressed opposition.

- [N. Korea, Syria agree on close cooperation following U.S. strike](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Statement by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe after teleconference with President Trump on April 9](#) (Mainichi)

- [CCS Suga says Abe, Trump did not discuss legal basis for Syria attack in teleconference](#) (Akahata)
- [Japan wary of possible demand for more imports at economic dialogue with U.S.](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Ex-USTR calls on Japan to open market further in Japan-U.S. economic dialogue](#) (Nikkei)
- [Keidanren executive calls for exploring possibilities for TPP in Japan-U.S. economic dialogue](#) (Nikkei)
- [Japan has mixed feelings about U.S.'s tough stance against North Korea](#) (Mainichi)
- [Chinese premier voices hope for improved ties with Japan](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Chinese premier says China highly values relationship with Japan](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Editorial: Will China not cooperate with U.S. in pressuring North Korea?](#) (The Japan News)
- [Japan names new ambassadors to Macedonia, 3 other countries](#) (Kyodo News)
- [U.S. Chargé d'Affaires ad interim visits quake-destroyed "Janes' residence" in Kumamoto](#) (Mainichi Online)
- [U.S. does not need to antagonize China](#) (Bungeishunju)

## OPINION POLLS

### Most Japanese disapprove of U.S. attack on Syria

NHK's "News Watch 9" reported on the results of its latest public opinion survey, noting that the public broadcaster reached out to mobile phone users in addition to landline subscribers for the first time ever to hear their views on current affairs. About 37% approved of President Trump's decision to launch an attack on Syria, while 55% did not. Some 24% supported the GOJ's plan to enact the "conspiracy legislation" during the current Diet session, while 21% were opposed to it and close to 43% were undecided. A plurality of 36% approved of a proposal to study the possibility of the SDF acquiring the capability to strike enemy bases, whereas 19% were against it. The poll put support for the Abe administration at 53% and nonsupport at 27%.

## SECURITY

### **Bank protection work to start off Camp Schwab**

Okinawa Times claimed that the Okinawa Defense Bureau plans to commence bank protection off the coast of Camp Schwab as early as April 20, saying that the operation will be the first step toward land reclamation work for the construction of the offshore Futenma replacement facility. The daily projected that Governor Onaga will file a lawsuit to seek a court injunction against the work if it drastically changes the characteristics of the ocean floor since the permit for crushing rock reefs expired on March 31.

- **Former MSDF chief of staff to become professor at U.S. Naval War College** (Yomiuri Kanagawa edition)

## ECONOMY

- **MHLW to launch professional training program for non-regular workers** (Nikkei)
- **Financial Services Agency opens consultation office for foreign financial operators** (Nikkei)
- **Japan Business Federation: No change in recruitment schedule for 2019 graduates** (Mainichi)
- **Nuclear technology expertise power dying out due to stalled plant development** (Nikkei)

## SCIENCE

- **Quasi-zenith satellite Michibiki to be launched on June 1** (Mainichi)

## POLITICS

- **Prime minister's schedule on April 9-10** (Nikkei)
- **Democratic Party shaken by internal uproar** (Yomiuri)

## EDUCATION

- **Modify instruction to improve English skills** (The Japan Times)

## SOCIETY

- [Japan's grim population outlook makes immigration talk inevitable](#) (Kyodo News)
  - [Japan's population projected to shrink 30% by 2065](#) (Kyodo News)
  - [Japan's birth rate still trails government target](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
  - [Shrinking workforce threatens Japan's economy](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
  - [Interfamily crime a reflection of Japan's aging society](#) (The Japan Times)
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