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Afternoon Alert - Tuesday, December 19, 2017

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#### HEADLINES

##### Noon news

NHK led with a report on the finding that Obayashi Corporation has admitted to the Japan Fair Trade Commission that it was involved in bid rigging with three other major contractors for a maglev train project. NTV and Fuji TV gave top play to reports on the public debut of giant panda cub Shan Shan at Ueno Zoo today. TV Asahi led with a report on the train accident in Washington State on Monday. TBS led with a report that two death row inmates were executed this morning.

#### SECURITY

##### Cabinet decides to acquire two Aegis Ashore systems

NHK reported that the GOJ decided at a cabinet meeting today to acquire two Aegis Ashore systems in order to substantially enhance Japan's defense capability in preparation for the possibility of a ballistic missile attack by North Korea. The network said Aegis Ashore systems can be equipped with the new interceptor missiles currently being developed by the U.S. and Japan, adding that two systems will be able to cover all of Japan. According to the network, the GOJ is considering deploying the systems at GSDF camps in Akita City and in Hagi City, Yamaguchi Prefecture, and each system is likely to cost about 100 billion yen. The GOJ plans to allocate 2.8 billion yen for receiving technical support from the U.S. in this fiscal year's supplementary budget, and about 700 million yen for basic design and other items in next year's budget. Noting that it will take about five years to deploy the system, the network said the GOJ is hoping to begin operating it by FY2023.

##### U.S. military resumes CH-53E helicopter flights

NHK reported at noon that the U.S. military resumed this afternoon flights by CH-53E helicopters in Okinawa after they were suspended following an incident in which a window fell from a CH-53E onto the playground of an elementary school in Ginowan on Dec. 13. The network said the resumption that came less than a week after the accident is likely to provoke strong opposition in Okinawa. The

network showed a CH-53E helicopter slowly moving from the tarmac to the runway and taking off.

- [Purchases of U.S.-made military equipment inflate Japan's defense budget](#) (Asahi)
- [Abe vows to beef up Japan-U.S. alliance amid N. Korea threat](#) (Kyodo News)

#### **INTERNATIONAL**

- [Japan ready to cooperate with China's Silk Road project](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Abe hopes to visit Russia in May to attend events with Putin](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Cartoon: Japan's continuing humiliation](#) (Akahata)

#### **ECONOMY**

- [Japan exported more to China than U.S. for 2nd month in Nov.](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

#### **POLITICS**

- [Prime minister's schedule on Dec. 18, 2017](#) (Nikkei)
- [Cartoon: Abe at Ueno Zoo](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)

#### **OPINION POLLS**

- [63% in favor of amending Article 9, Sankei-FNN poll](#) (Sankei)
- [Opinion poll & results from Sankei Shimbun](#) (Sankei)
- [LDP support rate at 36%, backing for CDPJ falls to 9%, Asahi poll](#) (Asahi)
- [Opinion poll & results from Asahi Shimbun](#) (Asahi)

#### **AMBASSADOR**

##### **Christmas at the Ambassador's Residence**

Fuji TV's morning infotainment program "Mezamashi TV" aired a five-minute report on how Ambassador Hagerty and his family spend Christmas. It was part of a segment called "Kokoshira," in which announcer Koki Fujii investigates various topics and tries to find answers to people's questions. The theme of today's segment was how foreigners living in Japan celebrate Christmas. The program showed Fujii entering the Ambassador's Residence, where he was greeted by Ambassador Hagerty, Mrs. Hagerty, and their four children. After admiring the three-meter-tall Christmas tree at the entrance, Fujii was welcomed into the Great Room, where he explained that Emperor Hirohito and General MacArthur held their historic meeting right after WWII ended. The Ambassador showed another tree, decorated with real gingerbread cookies and candy canes, and explained the White House Christmas ornaments that his family collects.

The program then reported on a "Christmas mystery"—the disappearance of gingerbread cookies from the base of the tree. But the mystery was solved: Crosbie, the family dog who was a Christmas present for the children last year, had gobbled up the cookies. The program also reported on how the children make gingerbread houses every year and look forward to Christmas morning when they wake up to find Christmas stockings stuffed with gifts. "Every Christmas that we spend in Japan will be a special one for us," said the Ambassador. After a report on how other foreigners spend

Christmas in Japan, Fujii said that the Ambassador's children put out cookies and milk for Santa Claus and carrots for his reindeer on Christmas Eve.

**OKINAWA  
LOCAL PRESS**

**U.S. military to resume CH-53E helicopter flights today**

Okinawa Times and Ryukyu Shimpo gave top play to a plan by the Okinawa Marines to resume flights by CH-53Es as early as Tuesday. The papers reported on Governor Onaga's remarks made on Monday in response to the Marines plan. He reportedly said that the U.S. military is not a good neighbor and the GOJ is not capable of being a responsible party. The papers also wrote that local residents reacted sharply to the decision and expressed strong dissatisfaction with the GOJ for condoning it.

- [GOJ concerned about fallen window incident's impact on Nago election](#) (Okinawa Times, Ryukyu Shimpo)
  - [CCS Suga planning to visit Okinawa on Dec. 29](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
  - [Chopper crash land owner baffled by "letter of appreciation" from U.S. military](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
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