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Afternoon Alert - Wednesday, December 20, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

All networks gave top play to reports on a meeting of the crisis management committee of the Japan Sumo Association over the alleged assault by sumo grand champion Harumafuji.

INTERNATIONAL

Secretary Tillerson announces ministerial meeting on North Korea in January

NHK reported at noon that Secretary of State Tillerson held a press conference with his Canadian counterpart Freeland on Tuesday in Ottawa, during which he announced that the USG will jointly host with the Canadian government a ministerial meeting in Vancouver on Jan. 16 to discuss ways to increase pressure on North Korea. The network said in addition to nations that deployed troops to the U.S.-led UN forces during the Korean war, nations such as Japan, South Korea, and Sweden will be invited to the meeting. The Secretary was quoted as saying: "What's important for North Korea to know is that this pressure campaign will not abate... It will be intensified as time goes by." The Secretary also reportedly said that increasing pressure on North Korea is aimed at realizing dialogue, explaining that the Trump administration is unified on the plan to resolve the issue diplomatically by forcing North Korea to change its policy through pressure.

- [Gist of ROK foreign minister's courtesy call on PM Abe, meeting with FM Kono, Dec. 19](#) (Yomiuri)
- [North Korea may have begun tests to load ICBM with anthrax](#) (Asahi)
- [Editorial: Take steps to strengthen security cooperation with 'quasi-ally' Britain](#) (Yomiuri)

- [Pakistan and Japan agree to boost cooperation against terrorism](#) (Kyodo News)

ECONOMY

- [Mizuho researcher talks about mega FTAs, U.S. return to TPP](#) (Nikkei, Evening edition)
- [TPP 11 to cut Japan's farm output by up to 150 bil. yen: estimate](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan to release new PCI from March](#) (The Japan News)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on Dec. 19, 2017](#) (Nikkei)
- [Key bills to be deliberated at Diet session opening on Jan. 22](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Animosity rekindled between LDP Nikai, Kishida factions](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Abe renews resolve to effectuate revised Constitution by 2020](#) (The Japan News)

OPINION POLLS

- [Yomiuri-Gallup poll results show positive future for Japan-U.S. relationship: U.S. expert](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Abe administration given rating of 5.2 points out of 10 for overall performance over past five years, Asahi poll](#) (Asahi)

SCIENCE

- [Up to 40% chance of M9 quake off Hokkaido within 30 years: researchers](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Indian and Japanese teams in unique collaboration for lunar probe contest](#) (The Japan Times)

SOCIETY

- [Taiwanese man struggles to keep life with same-sex partner](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan bar association wants discrimination against disabled banned in Diet](#) (The Mainichi)

SECURITY

Suga says North Korea behind cyberattacks in May

NHK reported at noon that in response to the announcement by a senior White House official on Tuesday that the major cyberattacks that occurred in May were ordered by the North Korean regime, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told a press conference this morning: "We believe that North Korea was involved in the 'WannaCry' incident. I would like to refrain from explaining how we reached that conclusion due to the nature of the incident, but I want to make clear that North Korea was indeed involved." Meanwhile, the network said MOFA released a spokesperson's statement this morning saying: "We support the United States' demonstration of its strong commitment to ensuring safety in cyberspace from the viewpoint of maximizing pressure on North Korea and making it change its policy. We condemn North Korea's involvement." It also reportedly said: "We will work closely with the international community, including the United States, and promote measures to create and develop free, fair, and safe cyberspace."

Okinawa school receives harassing phone calls after fallen window incident

Asahi wrote that the elementary school near MCAS Futenma where a window fell from a U.S. military helicopter has received dozens of phone calls from anonymous callers accusing the school of overplaying the damage. Some of them have even said to school officials that the incident must be "fake news" and others said that since Okinawa is dependent on the U.S. bases, it is inevitable that students will be wounded as a result of things falling off aircraft and Okinawans have chosen to live in the vicinity of fighter jets. The daily added that similar harassing phone calls have also been made to a nearby daycare center where a cylindrical object apparently belonging to a U.S. military helicopter was discovered in early December.

In a related item, Ryukyu Shimpo wrote that the U.S. military has denied that the cylindrical object in question fell from a CH-53E during flight on the grounds that the retrieved component was an outdated version that is no longer being used for the aircraft.

- [LDP to study whether it is necessary to revise SOFA to ensure safety](#) (Mainichi)
- [Gov't approves revised guidelines for citizens' protection in armed attacks](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Coast Guard to be given more patrol boats, jet planes](#) (Nikkei)
- [U.S. Navy "fully prepared" for N. Korea threat: top official](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Editorial: Long-range cruise missiles for the SDF's arsenal](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Japan's missile defense system is costly but not fail-proof](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Japan gov't to draw up 6-level cyberattack severity criteria](#) (The Mainichi)

- [Taiwan, Japan begin maritime cooperation talks in Taipei](#) (Kyodo News)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

Okinawa enraged by swift resumption of CH-53E operations at Futenma

Okinawa's two major papers gave prominent front- and inside-page coverage on Wednesday to the anger and disappointment expressed by local officials and citizens over the resumption of flights by CH-53Es at MCAS Futenma, emphasizing that it came only six days after the fallen window incident occurred. Ryukyu Shimpo claimed that its reporters witnessed U.S. military aircraft flying over the elementary school where a window fell off a helicopter last week.

In a related story, Ryukyu Shimpo took up remarks made to the daily on Tuesday by an Okinawa-based USMC spokesperson, who said that the local Marine authorities are conducting a careful review of flight routes at the Futenma Air Station with the goal of “creating patterns for safe takeoff and landing while taking into account such sensitive areas as schools in the vicinity.” The spokesperson said it is unclear when the new flight routes will be established, adding that they probably will not be made public for security reasons.

The daily wrote in an accompanying piece that the ongoing review of the flight patterns may reflect the U.S. military’s serious concern about the adverse effects of the recent fallen window incident. Pointing out that the following the mishap, although the U.S. military has promised to avoid flying aircraft over schools around Futenma “to the fullest extent possible” instead of using the phrase “as much as possible” as it did in the past, the daily insisted that the new flight routes will be meaningless in terms of safety without any assurance of compliance.

- [Two municipalities in Okinawa form council with U.S. military on garbage collection](#) (Okinawa Times)
- [Victim of robbery involving two Okinawa Marines to file suit for damages](#) (Okinawa Times)
- [Saga city council approves of Osprey deployment](#) (Okinawa Times)