



Afternoon Alert - Thursday, December 28, 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 TV networks except TBS gave top play to a meeting of the Japan Sumo Association concerning the recent scandal involving several wrestlers. TBS led with South Korean President Moon's declaration on Thursday morning that the 2015 comfort women agreement with Japan has failed to resolve the history dispute.

INTERNATIONAL

ROK leader says comfort women pact with Japan “fails to resolve” the dispute

Several broadcasters took up a statement issued by South Korean President Moon this morning concerning the results of a review by an ROK Foreign Ministry taskforce of the process leading up to the conclusion of the 2015 comfort women agreement with Japan. Moon said: "It has been confirmed that there were serious problems both regarding the procedures and content. Despite the gravity of the formal government commitment endorsed by the two nations' leaders, I would like to reiterate clearly that the issue of comfort women cannot be resolved with this pact." He went on to say: "It is extremely regrettable that the agreement is a political accord that excludes the victims and the Korean people." The networks said that with this statement, the South Korean leader effectively declared that the comfort women issue has not yet been resolved, adding that Seoul may ask Tokyo to renegotiate the accord. NHK took up a separate portion of the Moon statement in which he said: "I am hoping that Japan and South Korea will be able to overcome their painful past and become true friends. I will conduct diplomacy toward Japan with this position in mind."

Several newspapers published similar articles online, noting that although Moon did not mention "renegotiation" or "revocation," Japan will react very strongly if he chooses to seek such steps. Yomiuri quoted an unnamed senior MOFA official as saying: "The agreement is final and irreversible."

We would never accept renegotiation."

Secretary Tillerson highlights U.S. diplomacy toward DPRK

NHK reported online on an op-ed written for the New York Times by Secretary Tillerson, in which he underscored that the Trump administration has been successful in isolating North Korea diplomatically and economically in close coordination with foreign partners by stepping up the pressure. He said the pressure campaign will continue until North Korea gives up on its nuclear and missile ambitions. The top U.S. diplomat also indicated that Washington will continue to press China to exert its economic leverage on North Korea so as to realize the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Foreign Minister Kono to visit China next month

Fuji TV reported that arrangements are being made for Foreign Minister Kono to visit China in January for talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang, projecting that he is set to ask for Chinese cooperation in applying greater pressure on North Korea. The two ministers are expected to exchange views on the possibility of Prime Minister Abe and President Xi making reciprocal visits next year to mark the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty.

- [Facing backlash, South Korea panel retreats on 'comfort women'](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Japan dismisses S. Korean criticism of "comfort women" deal](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Gist of FM Kono's statement on ROK's review of agreement on comfort women issue](#) (Sankei)
- [Japan sticking to stance on "comfort women" deal after S. Korea report](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan to reject renegotiation of agreement on comfort women issue](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Editorial: S. Korea should abide by comfort women pact to maintain ties](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Editorial: Avoid destabilizing the Japan-ROK relationship](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Japan's ruling party heavyweight urges new type of ties with China](#) (Kyodo News)
- [LDP's Nikai meets with former Chinese vice premier](#) (Nikkei)
- [Editorial: Building a mutually beneficial relationship between China and Japan](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Japan, Oman seek to ensure maritime order amid China's assertiveness](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Editorial: Japan should help create environment to advance Middle East peace process](#) (The Japan News)

SECURITY

Certain defense officials eager to acquire "defensive aircraft carrier"

TV-Asahi's "Hodo Station" took up growing speculation that the Defense Ministry is considering converting the MSDF's flat-top destroyer Izumo into an "aircraft carrier" where F-35B fighter jets can

take off and land. Although Defense Minister Onodera has stressed that no concrete studies are currently being conducted on the proposal, an MOD source said: "It is an idea that has been pursued for many years by an influential former defense minister and others who insist that Japan needs an aircraft carrier to defend remote islands and counter China's maritime advancement. It would be defensive instead of offensive like those operated by the U.S. military" An unnamed senior MSDF official who is in favor of the proposal said: "Since we don't have enough money to procure F-35Bs that can be used on aircraft carriers, the conversion would make it possible to offer the carrier as a 'fueling station' for U.S. military aircraft.... It would be a mobile runway for the U.S. military."

The broadcaster claimed that mainstream MSDF officials have long been opposed to the idea of turning the Izumo into an aircraft carrier based on the view that in defending the Senkakus, it would make more sense for Japan to purchase ground-based fighters and Aegis warships than to acquire an aircraft carrier. Some SDF officials are also afraid that Japan's possession of an aircraft carrier, even a "defensive" one, would bring about a major change in the nation's defense arrangements with the U.S. military under which the SDF is primarily responsible for deterring the submarine operations of potential enemies. However, according to a former MSDF commander, some MSDF admirals are so skeptical about the effectiveness of the U.S.-Japan security arrangements that they are anxious to acquire a Japanese aircraft carrier. Regular commentator former Kyodo News Managing Editor Goto said the proposed modification of the Izumo is the latest example of the Abe administration's strong interest in introducing state-of-the-art defense hardware by capitalizing on North Korea's ceaseless provocations. The journalist voiced concern that the accelerated military buildup will not only undermine the nation's exclusively defense-oriented policy but also have an adverse effect on the regional security environment. He also criticized the premier for trying to beef up the SDF without holding sufficient discussions at the parliament.

MOD to conduct environmental survey in order to relocate Naha Military Port

Sankei wrote that the Defense Ministry is likely to carry out an environmental impact survey before the current fiscal year ends in March in order to relocate the Naha Military Port to the Urasoe district near the Makiminato Service Area. Pointing out that the transfer of the port facility was included in the 1996 SACO agreement, the daily said the process of implementing the initiative in Japan is finally moving forward after having been stalled for many years due to local opposition. The paper explained that the two governments renewed the accord on the Naha port in 2015 with the goal of returning it to Japanese administration in 2028 after moving its functions to Urasoe.

- [Gov't mulls producing indigenous long-range cruise missiles](#) (Sankei)
- [Editorial: Diplomacy getting lost in shuffle amid Abe gov't push on defense acquisitions](#) (The Mainichi)
- [ANALYSIS: Japan's defense to mark historic change if Izumo becomes flattop](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Komeito to back LDP-affiliated candidate in Nago mayoral race](#) (Mainichi)
- [Japan to introduce facial recognition for departing foreigners](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on Dec. 27, 2017](#) (Nikkei)
- [Koizumi to introduce 'bill' to abandon nuclear energy](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Ex-DP leader Renho to Join CDPJ](#) (Jiji Press)
- [Cartoon: Santa Abe](#) (Akahata)

ECONOMY

- [Gov't says for 1st time in 20 yrs Japan output recovering](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Tepco nuclear reactors pass safety review, 1st after Fukushima crisis](#) (Kyodo News)

SOCIETY

- [Japan's top court decides to "rescind" order to return children](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Japan to limit work permits for asylum seekers from 2018](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan to OK work by 4th-generation Japanese immigrants abroad](#) (Jiji Press)
- [Japan set to revise 25 laws as age of adulthood drops, affecting passports, dual nationality](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Percentages of female managers in prefectural governments](#) (Mainichi)

OPINION POLLS

- [Pollees in Japan and U.S. support use of "pressure" against North Korea, Yomiuri-Gallup poll](#) (Yomiuri)

SCIENCE

- [Gov't plans quantum cryptography to protect secret communications](#) (The Japan News)

EDUCATION

- [Foreign students to Japan reach record high](#) (Kyodo News)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

GOJ considering revising laws to ban drone flights over U.S. bases

Ryukyu Shimpo claimed in its top story that the GOJ is conducting a review of existing laws so as to prohibit drone flights over U.S. military facilities in Japan apparently in response to a request for such a regulation made by PACOM Commander Harris to Defense Minister Onodera on Nov. 16. The U.S. admiral reportedly made the request out of concern that the operation of drones over Camp Schwab by media outlets and other entities may disrupt the flight profiles of helicopters departing from and arriving at the installation. The U.S. military is also worried that terrorists could use drones to strike its bases. An unnamed senior MOD official was quoted as saying: "The Japanese government is responsible for ensuring the U.S. military's safety. We have to look into what is necessary."

- [Flights by fixed-wing aircraft to resume at Futenma following runway repair](#) (Okinawa Times, Ryukyu Shimpo)
 - [Okinawa politicians lodge protest over fallen window incident](#) (Okinawa Times)
 - [Family of victim of crime committed by U.S. service members files suit seeking damages](#) (Okinawa Times)
-

