



Afternoon Alert - Thursday, May 24, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Noon news

NHK led with a report on the announcement by the Trump administration that it has launched an investigation into whether auto imports threaten the national security of the United States. TV Asahi and TBS led with reports on a statement issued by Choe Son Hui, a North Korean vice foreign minister in charge of negotiations with the United States, saying: "If the United States offends us and commits outrageous acts, we will put forward to our supreme leadership a suggestion to reconsider the U.S.-DPRK summit." NTV and Fuji TV continued to give top coverage to reports on a press conference by Nihon University's football team coaches

## INTERNATIONAL

### North Korea again hints at cancelling U.S.-DPRK summit

NHK, TV Asahi, and TBS reported that North Korea's vice foreign minister Choe Son Hui released a statement through the state-run Korea Central News Agency on Thursday indicating the possibility of the DPRK reconsidering its planned summit with the United States. Choe reportedly said: "If the United States offends us and commits outrageous acts, we will put forward a suggestion to our supreme leadership for reconsidering the U.S.-DPRK summit." NHK said that Choe strongly criticized remarks made by Vice President Pence in an interview with a U.S. media outlet on May 21 in which he indicated that the U.S. will not rule out military options against North Korea. The North Korean official added in the statement: "We will not beg the U.S. for dialogue. Whether the U.S. will meet us at a meeting room or encounter us in a nuclear-to-nuclear showdown is entirely dependent upon the decision and behavior of the United States." The network noted that this is the second threatening statement made by a senior DPRK official following the one made by First Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan on May 16.

## **Secretary Pompeo, FM Kono confirm close cooperation for DPRK denuclearization**

NHK reported that Foreign Minister Kono held talks with Secretary of State Pompeo in Washington on Wednesday, saying that the two officials agreed on the need to persuade North Korea to take concrete actions to completely abolish its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles while maintaining the pressure on the DPRK. The network added that they also exchanged views on the new strategy announced by the United States concerning Iran. According to the broadcaster, Kono also held a separate meeting with National Security Advisor Bolton.

Kono told reporters after his meeting with Secretary Pompeo: "As President Trump has stated, it will be meaningless to hold a meeting in Singapore unless certain conditions are met. Holding a meeting just for the sake of meeting is not the purpose. Our ultimate goal is to resolve the issues of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and abductions of Japanese nationals."

- [Column: Look at U.S.-China trade relationship from a strategic standpoint](#) (Sankei)
- [Japan, U.S. affirm resolve on N. Korea ahead of Trump-Kim summit](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Suga stresses importance of progress on nuclear and abductions issues](#) (Sankei)
- [Expert says 50 percent chance of U.S.-DPRK summit](#) (Nikkei)
- [Expert says 70 percent chance of U.S.-DPRK summit](#) (Nikkei)
- [Statue of forced laborers to be removed via administrative subrogation](#) (Asahi)
- [Abe departs to Russia for talks with Putin on economic cooperation](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Russian islanders make 1st visa-free trip to Japan this year](#) (Kyodo News)

### **ECONOMY**

#### **U.S. launches national security probe of auto imports**

NHK and all commercial broadcasters reported that the Trump administration announced on Wednesday that it has launched an investigation to determine the impact of auto imports on America's national security. In a related development, NHK said that a U.S. media outlet, which it did not name, reported that President Trump is mulling raising the tariff on imported passenger cars to 25% from the current 2.5% based on Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act. The network said that if the tariff is imposed, Japan and other trade partners of the United States and car dealers in America will likely react sharply.

NHK quoted Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga as saying at a press conference on Thursday that any steps on trade policy should be consistent with WTO rules and that Tokyo will continue to closely monitor future developments.

Trade Minister Seko also told reporters: "This is regrettable because if such a measure is actually taken, it could roil world markets and have a negative impact on the multilateral trade system based on WTO rules because the auto industry is such a large industry."

- [U.S. launches "national security" probe into auto imports](#) (Kyodo News)

- [Japan Lower House OKs bill to modify domestic arrangements for TPP](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Tokyo lures in overseas hedge funds and fintech](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Survey in Japan looks to assess outlook for foreign engineers](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Air duct corrosion, holes found at 7 nuclear plants in Japan](#) (Kyodo News)

## **POLITICS**

- [Prime minister's schedule on May 23, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Finance Ministry bins documents to hide land sale talks with school](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Finance Ministry in chaos after series of scandals, resignations](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Defense Ministry finds no systematic coverup of troop activity logs](#) (Kyodo News)
- ["Hold snap election to turn around the situation:" Cabinet advisor Iijima](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Kishida showing presence by emphasizing his fiscal integrity initiative](#) (Yomiuri)
- [DPFP's Oshima appointed new director for Upper House Commission on Constitution](#) (Mainichi)
- [Opinion: North Korea issues to determine Abe's chances to win third term as LDP president](#) (Shukan Toyo Keizai)

## **OPINION POLLS**

- [Ruling parties relieved that "decline in support rate has stopped," Yomiuri poll](#) (Yomiuri)
- [66% are "optimistic" that U.S.-DPRK summit will resolve nuclear issue, Yomiuri poll](#) (Yomiuri)
- [2% support rate for DPFP, Yomiuri poll](#) (Yomiuri)

## **SOCIETY**

### **Japanese companies implement work-style reform**

NHK's "Close-up Gendai+" reported on workstyle reform in Japan, looking at various efforts being made by private companies to reduce employee overtime while at the same time improving productivity. A food service chain shortened its business hours by terminating 24-hour operations but saw sales rise as a result of other improvements such as providing more attentive service to customers. The network also took up Itochu, a leading Japanese trading company, which launched bold reforms five years ago by encouraging employees to start working early in the morning instead of staying in the office until late at night. The reform has enabled Itochu employees to work more flexibly and productively and make better use of their personal time after work by engaging in hobbies or learning foreign languages and other skills.

- [Ex-Aum death-row inmate publishes VX research paper](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Editorial: Expedite debate to maintain social security system to 2040 and beyond](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Gov't ordered to pay damages over inmate's solitary confinement](#) (Kyodo News)

## **SECURITY**

- [Iraq daily log scandal may affect defense program revision](#) (Yomiuri)

- [Iwakuni: Local communities and the U.S. base – Airplane noise deteriorates](#) (Chugoku Shimbun)
- [Iwakuni: Local communities and the U.S. base – 1,881 low-altitude flights by U.S. military aircraft observed](#) (Chugoku Shimbun)
- [Iwakuni: Local communities and the U.S. base – Drills require prior approval in Germany, Italy](#) (Chugoku Shimbun)
- [Asia piracy information center chief says Japan should support other countries](#) (Yomiuri)

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### **Nago mayor seeks consideration for impact of noise on residents near Camp Schwab**

Okinawa Times wrote that in response to firing drills conducted at Camp Schwab on Tuesday that allegedly generated noise levels of more than 80 decibels and continued until 8:30 in the evening, Nago Mayor Toguchi visited Director General Nakajima of the Defense Ministry's Okinawa Bureau on Wednesday to make a request that consideration be given to the living conditions of local residents when noise is generated by U.S. military drills in the area.