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 **JAPAN MEDIA  
HIGHLIGHTS**

Afternoon Alert - Friday, July 27, 2018

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#### HEADLINES

##### Noon news

All broadcasters except Fuji TV gave top play to reports on Typhoon Jongdari, saying the tropical storm will probably hit the Kanto Plain tomorrow.

#### INTERNATIONAL

##### DPRK returns remains of U.S. soldiers killed in Korean War

All broadcasters reported on the White House announcement on Thursday that North Korea has transferred 55 sets of remains of U.S. service members killed in the Korean War, quoting a White House spokesperson as saying in a press release: "Today, [Kim Jong Un] is fulfilling part of the commitment he made to the President to return our fallen American service members. We are encouraged by North Korea's actions and the momentum for positive change." As the repatriation marked Pyongyang's first step toward implementing an agreement made in the landmark June summit with President Trump in June, several networks projected that the Kim regime may put further pressure on the Trump administration to swiftly issue a joint declaration on ending the Korean War.

##### Foreign Minister Kono to visit Russia and three other nations

Asahi reported online that Foreign Minister Kono plans to visit Russia, Singapore, Myanmar, and Bangladesh starting on July 30, saying that while in Moscow he will attend a bilateral foreign and defense ministerial meeting. The top Japanese diplomat is expected to take part in ASEAN-related conferences in Singapore and might hold a meeting with his DPRK counterpart.

- [Japan, Russia to hold 2-plus-2 talks next week in Moscow](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan to host African development confab in Yokohama in Aug. 2019](#) (Kyodo News)

- [Former envoy to UN on significance of U.S. “nuclear umbrella” for Japan](#) (Asahi)
- [2 years to go: Japan nervous about N. Korean role in Tokyo Games](#) (Jiji Press)
- [Maltese prime minister to visit Japan from July 29](#) (Nikkei)

## ECONOMY

### **Aso says FFR dialogue will be held in August, Japan has no intention to do FTA**

At a press conference held after the cabinet meeting on July 27, Finance Minister Taro Aso indicated that Japan and the U.S. are expected to hold a bilateral dialogue on “free, fair and reciprocal (FFR)” trade in August. “Mr. Lighthizer is trying to use the FFR as a way to get Japan to say yes to an FTA, but we have been saying from the very beginning that we have no intention to do an FTA,” he said.

On the agreement reached between the U.S. and EU, Aso said: “The details are unclear. Therefore, I have nothing to comment.” He expressed the view that Washington will hold trade negotiations in sequence in proportion to the size of the trade deficits with the U.S. Given that China has the largest trade surplus with the U.S., followed by the EU, the member nations of NAFTA (Canada and Mexico), and Japan, Aso noted that “it would take some time before the U.S. will get to Japan [to start negotiations].” He also underscored the need to closely monitor U.S. trade policies, saying that “we need to look at developments and examine various situations.”

### **Motegi comments on upcoming trade talks with U.S.**

NHK reported online on press remarks this morning by Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Motegi, who commented on USTR Lighthizer’s announcement at Congress on Thursday that the first round of the new trade talks with Japan will be held in the next 30 days. “Final arrangements for the first round of the so-called FFR talks are underway for an announcement in the near future,” said the Japanese minister. “As the two sides have different views on the idea of a bilateral free trade agreement, it is important for cabinet members to hold discussions to fill the gap. Although it will not be an easy negotiation, I would like to hold constructive discussions on how Japan and the U.S. can cooperate for the development of the Asia-Pacific region.”

- [Japan to tell Midwest states its carmakers help U.S. economy](#) (Kyodo News)
- [USTR Lighthizer eyes 1st trade talks with Japan by late Aug.](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan to use EU’s case for reference in FFR talks with the U.S.](#) (Sankei)
- [Japan welcomes U.S.-EU accord before Tokyo-Washington trade talks](#) (Jiji Press)
- [China’s private-sector debt poses crisis risk, Japan report says](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Tepeco gets low rating for nuclear accident drills, draws criticism](#) (The Japan Times)

## POLITICS

- [Prime minister’s schedule on July 26, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Finance Ministry forms new leadership, ending months-long vacuum](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Aso keen on enlarging his LDP faction by merging with Kishida faction](#) (Sankei)
- [Editorial: LDP presidential candidates should engage in robust policy debates](#) (The Japan News)
- [Cartoon: Election fantasy](#) (Sankei)

## EDUCATION

- [Education ministry to designate 10 high schools to nurture cosmopolitans](#) (Yomiuri, Evening edition)

## SOCIETY

### **“Last letters” of death row inmates**

NHK’s “Close-up Gendai+” reported on letters that the broadcaster received from several former Aum Shinrikyo cult members on death row, the last of whom were executed on Thursday. The program said that almost all of the inmates expressed deep repentance for their crimes. The letters included one written by Yasuo Hayashi after learning that Shoko Asahara, the founder of the doomsday cult, and six of his former colleagues had been executed by hanging on July 6. Hayashi and other members reportedly stated that they were brainwashed by the cult leader, with one of them saying that in the presence of the charismatic founder, he was a “doll who had no capacity to judge things on his own.

## SECURITY

### **Governor Onaga announces plan to rescind landfill permit**

All TV networks reported that during a press conference this morning, Okinawa Governor Onaga said he will commence administrative procedures to rescind the landfill permit for FRF construction off Camp Schwab that was issued by his predecessor on the grounds that the central government has been undertaking the construction work without presenting sufficient measures to safeguard the marine environment in the vicinity. While insisting that the construction initiative does “not serve the public interest,” the governor disclosed that he will arrange a hearing to allow the Okinawa Defense Bureau to make its own case as a first step toward the cancellation. The Okinawa leader reportedly vowed to utilize all the tools available to him to fulfill his campaign promise of “never allowing the construction of a new base off Henoko.”

Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga reportedly commented on Onaga’s decision by saying: “Our understanding is that based on the contents of a ruling issued by the Supreme Court two years ago, both the central government and Okinawa should cooperate in good faith to proceed with the landfill work.”

The two major Okinawa papers also reported today on Onaga’s announcement, noting that the administrative measure is the Okinawa leader’s “final trump card” for derailing the base relocation initiative. As the central government is determined to move forward with the construction by pouring sand and earth into waters off Camp Schwab in mid-August, the articles projected that it will probably take the case to court to seek an injunction against the rescindment.

- [Editorial: In-depth talks must go into revising Japan’s defense policy](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)

- [Aegis Ashore system costs double to over ¥400 billion](#) (The Japan News)

**OKINAWA  
LOCAL PRESS**

- [National Governors' Association adopts proposal to seek "creation of disaster prevention ministry"](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
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