

PACIFIC FORUM

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US-JAPAN RELATIONS

## AS GOOD AS IT GETS?

BRAD GLOSSERMAN, PACIFIC FORUM

The US-Japan relationship may well be at its all-time best. Animated by a concordance of vision and interests, the two governments are closely coordinating across a wide range of issues in a variety of venues—bilateral and multilateral, political, economic, and military. Concern about the potential destabilizing effects of regional developments provides considerable motivation for the two to work together. The final reporting period of 2023 provided ample evidence of their convergence. If that past is prologue, the year ahead should be a good one. Unfortunately, however, the tide could be turning. A political funds scandal has ensnared Japan’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and the approval ratings of the government of Prime Minister Kishida Fumio are plummeting as a result. Even if the prime minister survives the scandal—and most indications are that he will—he will be tarred and distracted as the region and the world face new and mounting challenges.

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## The Usual Stuff is Very Good

As befits a partnership critical to both nations' interests and national security, the last four months of 2023 were chock full of meetings at all levels of government. The chronology provides details, but topping the list was the encounter between the two leaders, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Kishida, at the APEC Leaders Meeting that the US hosted in San Francisco in November, which [yielded](#) an invitation for the Japanese prime minister to make a state visit to the US in early 2024. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko met or talked on the phone repeatedly throughout the reporting period, proof that the relationship can be maintained despite changes in personnel, as Kamikawa replaced Hayashi Yoshimasa at the foreign ministry after Kishida shuffled his Cabinet in early September to boost flagging approval ratings (an effort that largely failed).



Figure 1 The second session of the APEC Leaders' Meeting. Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan discussed issues with his counterpart on Japan's National Security Council, Secretary General Akiba Takeo, often in a trilateral format. In another indication of the expanding list of issues that generate cooperation, the two governments at the end of the year [signed](#) a Memorandum of Cooperation on countering foreign information manipulation.

The 2023 Defense of Japan White Paper, released last summer, [warned](#) that Japan faces “the most severe and complex security situation since the end of [World War II].” Consistent with that outlook, Japan strives to upgrade its defense capabilities and modernize the alliance with the US. That has resulted in, among other things, a stream of senior US military officials visiting Tokyo for meetings with senior Japanese

political, military, and diplomatic personnel; again, the chronology provides a detailed list. The September visit to Tokyo of Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command Adm. John Aquilino and his meetings with Kishida and Foreign Minister Kamikawa likely top the list, although November meetings between Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Charles Brown and Kishida and Kamikawa are a close second. There were many others. Of course, the central role that the alliance has played in Japanese national security has meant that such meetings aren't new. The publicity and attention given to those discussions is, however. This is a sign of both the need to engage in discussions and the need to be *seen* having those discussions. The Japanese government continues to shape public opinion in the country in preparation for what may be testing times.



Figure 2 Admiral John C. Aquilino and Foreign Minister Kamikawa. Photo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

Also of note was the Oct. 4 meeting of US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Japanese Minister of Defense Kiharu Minoru, at which they [discussed](#) regional affairs, highlighting that they “would not accept any unilateral changes to the status quo by force and such attempts in any parts of the world including the Indo-Pacific region and confirmed that they need to strengthen the Alliance capabilities to deter and respond to that end.” As always, they underscored “the importance of the US stating its commitment that Article V of the Japan-US Security Treaty applies to the Senkaku Islands.” They took up alliance modernization as well, and “confirmed to steadily progress efforts to strengthen Alliance capabilities to deter and respond under the new strategies.” They also agreed “to accelerated discussions on roles, missions and capabilities of the Alliance

including effective operation of counterstrike capabilities under Japan-US cooperation.”

In December, the two sides held a meeting of the [Extended Deterrence Dialogue](#) in Tokyo, at which they agreed “that it is necessary to continue strengthening deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-US alliance” given the worsening security environment. They exchanged views on how to enhance bilateral deterrence dialogues and ways to improve bilateral cooperation. They shared assessments of the regional security environment, and reviewed alliance conventional and US nuclear capabilities contributing to regional deterrence, with emphasis on ways the two countries, individually and together, can bolster deterrence. They also took up strategic arms control and risk reduction approaches. As always, the US reiterated its commitment to the defense of Japan under the mutual security treaty.

At the end of the reporting period, there were three other events of note, two positive, the other negative with implications for the alliance. The first was the Nov. 29 crash of a US Air Force CV-22 Osprey offshore Yakushima Island during a training mission. All eight crew members were killed in the accident and Tokyo grounded the 14 tilt-rotor aircraft it operates the day after the incident, and [asked](#) the US to do the same. The Ospreys have been controversial since their deployment, with critics arguing that they are accident prone, a charge that the US and Japanese governments, and the manufacturer, deny. The tragedy resurrected those concerns.

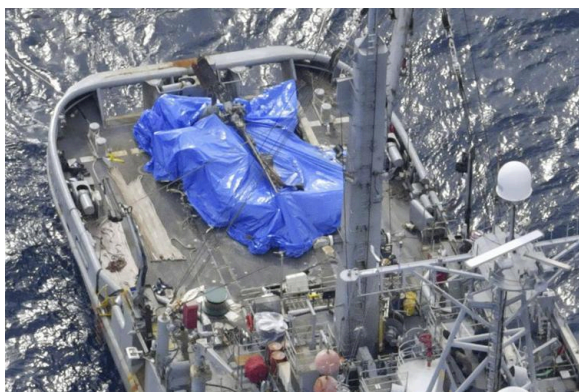


Figure 3 A blue sheet covers what is believed to be a part of a crashed U.S. military Osprey aircraft on a U.S. salvage boat off Yakushima, Kagoshima prefecture, southern Japan, on December 27, 2023. Photo: Associated Press

## Two Important Steps Forward

Concerns that the accident would cast a pall over the alliance were (somewhat) alleviated by two Japanese government decisions in the weeks to follow. In December, the Cabinet [agreed](#) “to add a new rule” to regulations on defense equipment exports, that will allow Japan “to export arms which were domestically produced under license of a foreign company to the licensing country.” In other words, Japan will send *Patriot* (PAC3) surface-to-air missile defense systems, which it produces by paying a license fee to Lockheed Martin, back to the United States. This is both a historic step—it marks Japan’s first export of lethal arms since the end of World War II—and a bit of headscratcher since Lockheed Martin is a US company. In fact, however, US stocks of *Patriots* have been depleted by the Ukraine conflict and this is a stopgap to replenish them.

The second Japanese government decision (and the third event for those trying to keep score) came at the very end of the year, when Minister of Land and Infrastructure Saito Tetsuo signed a document to allow construction on the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) to proceed. Agreement to move Marine Corps Air Station Futenma was reached in 1999; the residential buildup around the facility made it [“the most dangerous base in the world.”](#) necessitating its relocation. Popular opposition to the move, typically spearheaded by the Okinawa government, slowed progress.



Figure 4 Construction work is currently in progress on Wednesday in Oura Bay, Okinawa Prefecture, the designated site for the coastal airfield intended to replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. Photo: Kyodo

The land at the relocation site—offshore in Oura Bay, in Henoko—was discovered to be too soft and additional construction measures were

required. That necessitated a change in the plans, and the Okinawa prefectural government refused to sign off, despite court decisions requiring it to do so. At the end of December, Saito for the first time ever invoked central government authority under the Local Autonomy Act to override the opposition. The work then started in early January. The move was originally scheduled to have been completed in 2022; now it is expected to be finished around 2035, if there are no more substantive delays.

### Ever More Economics

Given the increasingly prominent role that economics plays in geopolitics, and the presence of both the US and Japan on the frontiers of high-technology, the ever-larger amounts of time and effort that the two governments devote to economic concerns as an alliance concern should come as no surprise. In this reporting period, the two governments held the second ministerial meeting of the US–Japan Economic Policy Consultative Committee (Economic “2+2”) on the sidelines of the APEC confab in San Francisco. It brought together the US and Japanese secretaries/ministers of State and Commerce/Industry (METI on the Japan side) for security-focused discussions that mirror those of the more traditional Security Consultative Committee (the original “2+2”). Their [joint statement](#) pledged to “strategically promote coordination to address rising threats to our economic and national security, and to enhance communication with other like-minded partners to achieve this objective.” It then identified 16 areas for cooperation to strengthen the rules-based economic order in the Indo-Pacific and enhance resilience and promote and protect critical and emerging technologies.

The ministerial-level meeting was preceded by a virtual vice-ministerial get-together, and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai had several phone calls and meetings with Japanese trade, economic, and diplomatic officials throughout the reporting period. Interaction between the Japanese government and the bilateral business community was also frequent, with Kishida and Kamikawa both addressing the 60<sup>th</sup> Japan-US Business Conference that was held in Tokyo. The prime minister also met Semiconductor Industry Association President and CEO John Neuffer in San Francisco, where they no doubt discussed the Tokyo government’s efforts to

nurture and expand semiconductor production in Japan.

Those talks also likely assessed October updates to US export controls that tightened restrictions introduced the year before. The new rules further cut access to advanced computing semiconductors and semiconductor producing equipment, as well as items that support supercomputing applications and end-uses, to arms-embargoed countries, including the PRC, and put additional related entities in the PRC on the Entity List. [According](#) to US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, the new controls “will increase effectiveness of our controls and further shut off pathways to evade our restrictions.” The new regulations were the latest attempt to ensure that US restrictions aligned with those of other key countries, Japan and the Netherlands in this case. Export controls by one country make no sense if targets can acquire the same components or knowhow from another source. Coordinating the three governments’ efforts has been a priority, and the result has been a tango: The US first introduced its rules in October 2022, proceeding unilaterally after months of negotiations with Tokyo and the Hague couldn’t yield joint action. Those two partners followed with their own restrictions some months later. The second US move in October 2023 reflected Washington’s [desire](#) to harmonize the three sets of rules and eliminate suspicion that American companies would exploit commercial opportunities created by Japanese regulations that went farther than those of the US.



Figure 5 Prime Minister Kishida receiving a courtesy call. Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office

### A Partnership for Larger Things

Bilateral cooperation between Washington and Tokyo helps lead broader engagement in the

region. The US and Japan are working together in a variety of multilateral formats. The most prominent trilateral includes the US, Japan, and South Korea, and it has been building on the outcomes of the trilateral Camp David leaders meeting in August. The three leaders met again, briefly, at the APEC meeting. While that was mostly a photo-op, it is nevertheless important as a signal that top leaders expect continuing progress in trilateralism. The three foreign ministers met every month to discuss issues of concern, and they paced lower-level work, such as the US-Japan-Korea Trilateral Development and Humanitarian Assistance Policy Dialogue that convened in October, the trilateral space security dialogue less than two weeks later, and the inaugural meeting of the Japan-US-Korea Trilateral Diplomacy Working Group for Foreign Ministry Cooperation on North Korea's Cyber Threats in December, as well as consultations among the three countries' representatives for North Korean affairs. That paved the way for the December joint statement [released](#) by Secretary Blinken, Foreign Minister Kamikawa, and Foreign Minister Park Jin condemning North Korea's ballistic missile launches.

Gaining prominence are trilateral conversations between the US, Japan, and the Philippines, a group that has been consolidating since it emerged earlier this year. Following separate conversations among national security advisors and foreign ministers of the three countries last summer, Prime Minister Kishida, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos [met](#) while attending ASEAN-related summit meetings in Indonesia in September. (Harris was stepping in for President Biden, who traveled to the region two months later.) They exchanged views on the current situation in the South China Sea and agreed to jointly tackle unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force. They confirmed that their three governments would promote the strengthening of coordination "in various ways." The foreign ministers of the three countries met a few weeks later in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly where they [pledged](#) to "uphold our shared values of freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights, and reaffirmed our shared vision, as equal and sovereign partners, for a free and open Indo-Pacific region that upholds international law." They said they would "continue to call out behavior that is inconsistent with international law, including the PRC's recent actions near Second Thomas

Shoal that interfered with the Philippines' lawful exercise of high seas freedom of navigation." They also "discussed ways to support economic resiliency and deepen trilateral cooperation on energy, infrastructure, and digital economy issues, and to enhance trilateral security cooperation, including on maritime domain awareness, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief efforts."

Washington and Tokyo are an axis for cooperation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue ("Quad"), and the reporting period had plenty of those meetings as well. Foreign ministers met in New York in September on the sidelines of the UNGA. The Quad Senior Cyber Group met in Tokyo in early December, where they [reaffirmed](#) "our steadfast commitment to an Indo-Pacific that is resilient and equipped to detect and deter cyber-attacks." Since Quad countries' status are among the world's leaders in advancing digital technology, connectivity, and resilience, they pledged to provide capacity building in the Indo-Pacific region to strengthen the ability to protect government networks and critical infrastructure from cyber disruptions. Less than two weeks later, the Quad Counterterrorism Working Group met in Honolulu, where they [discussed](#) terrorism threats, developing regional coordination mechanisms, and countering terrorist use of emerging technologies, along with ways the Quad might coordinate to build capacity in Indo-Pacific countries.

While Japan's year as chair of the Group of Seven (G7) came to an end, it was an exemplary performance. Tokyo provided real leadership and may have revived a forum once dismissed as well past its sell-by date. In conversations in Washington, the applause for Prime Minister Kishida's performance—and that of the entire Japanese diplomatic bureaucracy—was sustained, with one person even calling the bilateral partnership "a G2 for the G7."

This enthusiasm was reflected in public views of the alliance in the United States. A December [report](#) from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs showed that US perceptions of Japan's global influence are on the rise for the first time in nearly a decade. Respondents ranked Japan fourth in global influence, trailing the United States, China, and Russia but besting other US allies such as the UK, Germany, Israel, and South Korea. Prime Minister Kishida was second among world leaders, with 66% giving him a "favorable" rating, trailing only Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy who had 68% favorable views. Three-quarters of Americans (77%) say that the US-Japan security relationship strengthens US national security and a strong majority (62%) have a great deal or fair amount of confidence in Japan to deal responsibly with world problems. Just under two-thirds (63%) support US bases in Japan, the second-highest recorded level of support since 2002. If there is a worrying indicator in the results, it is the finding that most Americans (55%) oppose the use of US troops if China were to launch a military conflict with Japan over disputed islands.

#### **And Yet.....**

The new year began with the government of Japan moving quickly to begin work at Henoko. (Construction commenced a couple of days ahead of schedule to thwart anticipated protests.) The Supreme Court is to review the lower court decision to allow the central government to use the Local Authority Act, but absent a ruling to halt construction, work will continue. Since the law allows Tokyo to act when leaving the matter unaddressed would “seriously harm the public interest,” and given the reluctance of the courts to interfere in foreign policy matters, there is little chance of judicial action to stop progress.

A much bigger concern is the political funds scandal that surfaced in 2023 and threatens to ensnare the LDP. Allegedly, many members of the party, including some of its most senior figures, failed to declare millions of dollars in income. While the practice purportedly occurred among all party factions, prosecutors are focused on two of the largest and most powerful groups within the LDP which have been instrumental in Kishida’s rise to prime minister and are key to keeping him in office. As a result, the prime minister’s popularity, and that of the ruling LDP, is flashing red, with Cabinet’s approval ratings falling below 20% in some polls and that of the LDP dropping beneath 30%.

There is little indication that Kishida will be forced from office. There is no urgency to replace him as the opposition remains unpopular and the LDP doesn’t want to engage in the internal debates to select a successor. The prospect of a state visit to the US also helps him because a change in leadership would undercut the rationale for such a meeting. Summits are

for work, they are not “getting to know you” opportunities.

For our purposes, this scandal matters for two reasons. First, Kishida will be distracted by domestic concerns and unlikely to focus on foreign affairs. The prime minister at the end of December canceled one diplomatic tour to concentrate on matters at home. He has capable deputies and an excellent foreign minister, but a visit by the head of state is a different sort of beast. Second, the alleged involvement of the Abe faction weakens one of the most powerful forces driving internationalism in Japanese policy. Kishida himself was thought to be agnostic about the forward-leaning diplomatic agenda that he inherited, although he disabused many observers of that belief during his term in office. That could reflect a belief that international activism is a good way to look like a leader and win public support. Unfortunately, the limited bounce in approval ratings that followed the May G7 summit he hosted may have undermined this argument. With Taiwan’s national elections in early January—decided by the time you read this—Japan may well need focused and energetic leadership to deal with an outcome that angers Beijing. Japan’s national security bureaucracy can address the challenges that result, but top-level leadership will be needed as well. We will soon see whether Kishida can provide it.

# CHRONOLOGY OF US-JAPAN RELATIONS

## SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 2023

**Sept. 1, 2023:** Commander of US Strategic Command General Anthony Cotton and Minister for Foreign Affairs Hayashi [meet](#) in Tokyo.

**Sept. 6, 2023:** Prime Minister Kishida Fumio, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos [meet](#) while attending the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in Indonesia.

**Sept. 11, 2023:** Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa and Assistant Commandant of the US Marine Corps General Eric Smith [meet](#) in Tokyo.

**Sept. 11, 2023:** Hayashi [meets](#) with a delegation of four governors (Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb, Kansas Governor Laura Kelly, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, and Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen) and two lieutenant governors (Illinois Lieutenant Governor Julia Stratton and Minnesota Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan) in Tokyo.

**Sept. 14, 2023:** Hayashi and Secretary of State Antony Blinken [speak](#) by telephone.

**Sept. 14, 2023:** Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko and Secretary of State Blinken [speak](#) by telephone.

**Sept. 18, 2023:** Blinken and Kamikawa [meet](#) in New York.

**Sept. 18, 2023:** Blinken and Kamikawa [attend](#) a G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New York.

**Sept. 19, 2023:** Kishida [delivers](#) an address at the UN General Assembly Meeting in New York.

**Sept. 20, 2023:** Kishida [receives](#) the Atlantic Council's Global Citizen Award in New York.

**Sept. 20, 2023:** Kishida [receives](#) the 2023 Global Goalkeepers Award from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in New York.

**Sept. 21, 2023:** Kishida [delivers](#) remarks at the Economic Club of New York.

**Sept. 22, 2023:** Blinken, Kamikawa, and Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs Park Jin [meet](#) in New York.

**Sept. 22, 2023:** Blinken, Kamikawa, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong, and Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar [hold](#) a Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New York.

**Sept. 22, 2023:** Blinken, Kamikawa, and Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique Manalo [meet](#) in New York.

**Sept. 27, 2023:** Kishida [meets](#) with Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command Admiral John Aquilino in Tokyo.

**Sept. 27, 2023:** Kamikawa [meets](#) with Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command Admiral Aquilino in Tokyo.

**Oct. 3, 2023:** Kamikawa [meets](#) with a delegation of the US Chamber of Commerce and the US-Japan Business Council, led by President and CEO of the US Chamber of Commerce Suzanne Clark and Chairman of the US-Japan Business Council Douglas Peterson, in Tokyo.

**Oct. 3, 2023:** Kishida [delivers](#) remarks at the opening ceremony of the 60th Japan-US Business Conference in Tokyo.

**Oct. 3, 2023:** Kamikawa [delivers](#) remarks at the opening ceremony of the 60th Japan-US Business Conference in Tokyo.

**Oct. 4, 2023:** Kishida [meets](#) with the delegation from the US Chamber of Commerce and the US-Japan Business Council.

**Oct. 5, 2023:** US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Kamikawa [speak](#) by telephone.

**Oct. 12, 2023:** Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Masahiro Komura and Secretary of the State of Florida Cord Byrd [sign](#) a Memorandum of Cooperation on Economic and Trade Relations between Japan and Florida.

**Oct. 16-18, 2023:** US and Japan [hold](#) the second annual Japan-US Security Dialogue in Palo Alto, California.

**Oct. 17, 2023:** Kishida [meets](#) with New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy in Tokyo.

**Oct. 17, 2023:** Kamikawa [meets](#) with New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy in Tokyo.

**Oct. 17, 2023:** Kamikawa [meets](#) with Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Tokyo.

**Oct. 19, 2023:** Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Keiichi Ono, METI Vice-Minister for International Affairs Shin Hosaka, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Jose Fernandez, and Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade Marisa Lago [hold](#) a vice-ministerial meeting of the Japan-US Economic Policy Consultative Committee (Economic “2+2”) online.

**Oct. 25, 2023:** Blinken, Kamikawa, and Korean Minister for Foreign Affairs Park [release](#) a joint statement condemning North Korean arms transfers to Russia.

**Oct. 26, 2023:** Kamikawa [meets](#) with Commander of the United Nations Command/Combined Forces Command/United States Forces Korea General Paul LaCamera in Tokyo.

**Oct. 29, 2023:** Kamikawa [meets](#) with US Trade Representative Tai in Tokyo.

**Oct. 29-30, 2023:** US-Japan-Korea Trilateral Development and Humanitarian Assistance Policy Dialogue is [held](#) in Honolulu.

**Nov. 7, 2023:** Kishida [meets](#) with Blinken in Tokyo.

**Nov. 7, 2023:** Kamikawa [meets](#) with Blinken in Tokyo.

**Nov. 8, 2023:** Japan-US-Korea Trilateral Dialogue on Space Security is [held](#) in Seoul.

**Nov. 8, 2023:** Blinken [participates](#) in an interview conducted by NHK’s Yusaku Ishii.

**Nov. 10, 2023:** Kishida [meets](#) with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Charles Brown in Tokyo.

**Nov. 10, 2023:** Kamikawa [meets](#) with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Brown in Tokyo.

**Nov. 11-17, 2023:** 2023 APEC Leaders’ Week is [held](#) in San Francisco.

**Nov. 13, 2023:** Tai, Kamikawa, and Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry Nishimura Yasutoshi [meet](#) in San Francisco.

**Nov. 13, 2023:** Kamikawa [meets](#) with Japanese American leaders in San Francisco.

**Nov. 14, 2023:** Blinken, Kamikawa, and Park [meet](#) in San Francisco.

**Nov. 14, 2023:** Blinken, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, Kamikawa, and METI Minister Nishimura [hold](#) the second ministerial meeting of the US-Japan Economic Policy Consultative Committee (Economic “2+2”) meeting in San Francisco.

**Nov. 15, 2023:** Kishida [meets](#) with Semiconductor Industry Association President and CEO John Neuffer in San Francisco.

**Nov. 16, 2023:** Biden and Kishida [meet](#) in San Francisco.



**Nov. 16, 2023:** Biden and Kishida [attend](#) the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco.

**Nov. 16, 2023:** Kishida [meets](#) with Google President and CEO Sundar Pichai in San Francisco.

**Nov. 17, 2023:** Kishida and Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol attend a Japan-Korea event at Stanford University.

**Nov. 25, 2023:** Kamikawa, Blinken, and Park [speak](#) by telephone.

**Nov. 29, 2023:** A US Air Force CV-22 Osprey [crashes](#) off the shore of Yakushima Island during a training mission.

**Nov. 30, 2023:** Foreign Minister Kamikawa [meets](#) with Ambassador Rahm Emanuel in Tokyo.

**Dec. 5-6, 2023:** Third Meeting of Principles of the Quad Senior Cyber Group is [held](#) in Tokyo.

**Dec. 5-7, 2023:** Japan and the US [hold](#) an Extended Deterrence Dialogue in Tokyo.

**Dec. 6, 2023:** State Minister for Foreign Affairs Iwao Horii [meets](#) with Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Elizabeth Allen in Tokyo.

**Dec. 6, 2023:** Assistant Minister for Press and Public Diplomacy Kobayashi Maki and Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Allen [sign](#) a Memorandum of Cooperation on countering foreign information manipulation.

**Dec. 7, 2023:** First Japan-US-Korea Trilateral Diplomacy Working Group for Foreign Ministry Cooperation on North Korea's Cyber Threats is [held](#) in Tokyo.

**Dec. 12, 2023:** State Minister for Foreign Affairs Tsuji Kiyoto [meets](#) with Commanding General of the US Army Pacific Gen. Charles Flynn in Tokyo.

**Dec. 19, 2023:** Deputy Special Representative for North Korea Jung Pak, Foreign Affairs Director General for Asian and Oceanian Affairs Namazu Hiyouki, and Korean Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Kim Gun [speak](#) by telephone.

**Dec. 20, 2023:** Blinken, Kamikawa, and Park [release](#) a joint statement condemning North Korea's ballistic missile launches.

**Dec. 22, 2023:** Kishida [meets](#) with Japan Chair of the Japan-US Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON) Kenichiro Sasae in Tokyo.

**Dec. 22, 2023:** US, Japan, Australia, and India [hold](#) a Quad Counterterrorism Working Group meeting in Honolulu.

