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**JOINT STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE RUMSFELD
JAPANESE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TARO ASO
JAPANESE MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENSE FUKUSHIRO NUKAGA**

**Following a meeting of the United States-Japan Security Consultative Meeting
May 1, 2006**

The U.S.-Japan Alliance, with the U.S.-Japan security relationship at its core, is the indispensable foundation of Japan's security and of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and the linchpin of American security policy in the region. This strong partnership is increasingly vital in meeting global challenges, and in promoting fundamental values shared by both nations, including basic human rights, freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. The alliance has successfully adapted itself to changes in the regional and global security environment, and it must continue to evolve in depth and scope in order to address future challenges. To remain strong, this partnership must be reinforced by continued firm public support in both countries.

At today's meeting, the Ministers, sharing the view that new and emerging threats pose a common challenge that affects the security of nations worldwide, noted the increasingly close cooperation between their two countries on a broad array of issues. The Ministers confirmed their desire to expand that cooperation to ensure the U.S.-Japan Alliance continues to play a vital role in enhancing regional and global peace and security. The Ministers noted the importance of U.S. and Japanese efforts to strengthen democracy in and reconstruct Iraq and Afghanistan, and to support reform efforts in the broader Middle East. They committed to work closely on efforts to convince Iran to suspend all enrichment-related activities and cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency's investigation, and agreed on the need for concerted United Nations Security Council action.

As elsewhere in the world, the Asia-Pacific region faces persistent challenges that give rise to unpredictability and uncertainty. The Ministers reconfirmed a shared commitment to the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, and urged North Korea to return expeditiously to the talks without preconditions, to dismantle its nuclear programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and to cease all illicit and proliferation activities. They reaffirmed the importance of resolving regional disputes through

diplomatic efforts, and called for greater transparency on the modernization of military capabilities in the region.

In this security environment, the Ministers affirmed their commitment to close cooperation in realizing the common strategic objectives the Security Consultative Committee (SCC) identified in February 2005. The Ministers stressed the imperative of strengthening and improving the effectiveness of bilateral security and defense cooperation in such areas as ballistic missile defense, bilateral contingency planning, information sharing and intelligence cooperation, and international peace cooperation activities, as well as the importance of improving interoperability of Japan's Self-Defense Forces and U.S. forces, as outlined in the recommendations on bilateral roles, missions, and capabilities described in the October 2005 SCC document. In this context, the Ministers emphasized the importance of examining the scope of security and defense cooperation to ensure a robust alliance relationship, and to enhance the alliance's capability to respond to diverse challenges in the evolving regional and global security environment.

At the SCC meeting held today, the Ministers approved implementation details for the October 2005 realignment initiatives, which are described in today's SCC document, "United States-Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation." The Ministers recognized that the implementation of these realignment initiatives will lead to a new phase in alliance cooperation and strengthened alliance capabilities in the region. The measures to be implemented demonstrate the resolve of both parties to strengthen their commitments under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and, at the same time, to reduce the burden on local communities, including those on Okinawa, thereby providing the basis for enhanced public support for the security alliance. Recognizing the Government of Japan's coordination with local communities, the Ministers confirmed the feasibility of the realignment initiatives. Recognizing also that completion of these realignment initiatives is essential to strengthen the foundation of alliance transformation, the Ministers committed themselves to the timely and thorough implementation of the plan, consistent with the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and its related arrangements.

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