

Foreword



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The Defense Agency/Self-Defense Forces (SDF) are undergoing substantial changes: specific progress is made towards the Defense Agency's transition to a ministry; Japan and the United States have reached agreements on the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan; and the humanitarian and reconstruction assistance operations conducted by the SDF in Iraq have come to a turning point. At the same time, following a series of scandals involving the Defense Agency, all possible efforts are now being made at the Agency to regain people's trust in it. Furthermore, at the beginning of July, North Korea carried out the launching of ballistic missiles despite the warnings given by countries concerned including Japan.

Defense of Japan 2006 is designed to gain understanding of people of Japan and foreign countries on these recent developments and important issues concerning Japan's defense.

With respect to the transition of the Defense Agency to a ministry and upgrading of international peace cooperation activities to a primary mission of the SDF, a draft bill to this end was recently submitted to the Diet. The Defense Agency is about to make a fresh start as a policy-making organization in the real sense of the term. In addition to the introduction of joint operational postures by the SDF and the build-up of missile defense capability, we need to exert wide-ranging efforts to make our organization and human resources suitable for a governmental organization responsible for policies in the area of defense and security.

The implementation of the agreements between Japan and the U.S. on the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan is also a great challenge. I myself have proactively taken the initiative in this matter as Japan's own strategic issue, under the basic principles of the maintenance of deterrence and the reduction of burdens on local communities. As stated in "The Japan-U.S. Alliance of the New Century" announced at the Japan-U.S. summit meeting held recently, the full and prompt implementation of agreements made between Japan and the United States is necessary, not only for Japan and the United States, but also for the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region. Japan will fulfill its commitment by all means.

Important development has been made in situations surrounding Iraq of late, and the Japanese government decided to redeploy its Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) troops engaged in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance operations in Al-Muthanna Province. I myself visited Iraq in December 2005 and was greatly impressed with the activities of GSDF personnel, by actually looking at them working in cooperation with troops from various countries and fulfilling their missions under severe circumstances, for

which local citizens were expressing gratitude. I am very proud that the GSDF troops could complete their missions achieving pleasant results for Iraqi people.

We, however, had a series of problems which damaged people's trust in us. We must behave strictly especially when the Defense Agency/SDF are gaining increasing expectations and trust of our people. As regards the bid-rigging scandal involving the Defense Facilities Administration Agency, we will make serious efforts to regain people's trust, including the establishment of an organization to conduct audits from an agency-wide view and the revision of the system to check the appropriateness of procurements at local branches.

North Korea launched ballistic missiles despite warnings given by countries concerned including Japan. This behavior is a serious challenge from the viewpoint of Japan's security and the peace and stability of the international community. The Defense Agency and the SDF will continue to take all possible measures to deal with this issue.

Under these major changes, SDF personnel are fulfilling their daily missions with a sense of alarm and responsibility. This white paper describes some examples of their activities.

I hope that a great number of people will read this white paper and give their frank opinions to us.