Section 2. Fundamental Efforts to Ensure Thorough Civilian Control

In a democratic nation, politics must be given priority over the military. However, recently, public confidence in the processes of administrative works at the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces has been lost, and very serious issues concerning civilian control have emerged.

Given this situation, this section explains the specific content of the incidents that have occurred and sets out the points at issue and specific efforts based on them. (See Part II, Chapter 1, Section 3)

1. Recent Incidents

1. Incident of Mistakes in Reporting the Amount of Refueling

In 2003, the MSDF replenishment ship *Tokiwa* refueled U.S. vessels based on the former Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law. Although a division head of the Maritime Staff Office noticed inaccurate information on the amount of refueling, he failed to report this mistake to senior personnel nor to the Internal Bureau. Subsequently, based on the inaccurate information, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda and then Director-General of the Defense Agency Shigeru Ishiba made responses in press conferences and at the Diet.

This incident resulted in a loss of confidence in the work-process at the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces. This is a very significant problem in terms of thorough civilian control that should be seriously taken, as detailed below:
1) Work-processing mistakes within the Ministry of Defense, including a report with inaccurate figures and the failure to correct the report, demonstrated that the Ministry of Defense failed to appropriately assist the Minister of Defense, who is a core of civilian control.
2) Responses based on the inaccurate figures were made at the Diet, which demonstrates that the Ministry of Defense and Self-Defense Forces will not be appropriately controlled by the Diet, which is responsible for final civilian control.
3) At the same time, the fact that inaccurate information was given directly to the people through press conferences is a grave situation that may cause damage to the basis of the issue of civilian control.

2. Mistaken Destruction of Ship Deck Log

The ship deck log is a document that is prepared on MSDF vessels to record the activities and movements of that vessel. Regulations require that the log be kept on board for one year after the day the log is recorded, and, after that, should be stored for three years at the Regional Staff Office. However, on the replenishment ship *Towada*, which had been dispatched to the Indian Ocean under the former Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, a part of the ship deck log was mistakenly destroyed after the ship returned to Japan within the period of preservation of the document.

This work processing raises the following significant problems:
1) The supervision and instructions by a supervisor on document management on a daily basis were insufficient.
2) The appropriate procedures for document management were not taken.
3) The preservation of the ship deck log was not appropriately implemented according to regulations.

3. Collision between the Destroyer *Atago* and the Fishing Vessel *Seitoku Maru*

It was a serious problem in terms of the crisis management that considerable time was taken to report to the Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, who are responsible for civilian control, after the occurrence of the collision between the destroyer *Atago* and the fishing vessel *Seitoku Maru* at 04:07 on February 19, 2008. The fact also
shows that appropriate assistance has not been conducted to the Prime Minister and Minister of Defense.

2. Efforts at the Ministry of Defense
Given the occurrence of the incident of mistakes in reporting the amount of refueling, and the mistaken destruction of a ship deck log, from the perspective of ensuring thorough civilian control, in October 2007, the Ministry of Defense established the Committee on Drastic Measures to Ensure Civilian Control and has engaged in discussions on what drastic steps should be taken, including thorough prevention of recurrence.

In the incident of the collision between the destroyer Atago and the fishing vessel Seitoku Maru, an instruction concerning reports on incidents and accidents was revised on the day of the incident, and in March 2008, the existing system was completely revised and a new instruction concerning rapid reports related to emergency situations was issued. (See Part III, Chapter 4, Section 1)

Based on the above, in April 2008, in order to prevent recurrence of an incident like the series of incidents of misconduct and accidents, the Committee on Drastic Measures to Ensure Civilian Control was abolished and the Council on Drastic Measures to Prevent Recurrence of and Responses to Incidents and Accidents was established, considering that in addition to stop-gap measures, the background and fundamental causes of the incident should also be considered candidly to make any improvements, and that based on the harsh criticism of Ministry of Defense explanations following such incidents, it is necessary to fundamentally discuss how the accountability of the Ministry should be improved as required.

In addition, in the report by the Reform Council released in July 2008, a direction was laid out for the reform at the Prime Minister’s Office and at the Ministry of Defense that will serve as “organizational reforms to ensure modern civilian control.” Of them, measures for organizational reforms to strengthen command and control functions at the Ministry of Defense are as follows: (1) strengthening of policy-making structures that are centered on the Defense Minister; (2) strengthening of the functions of the Bureau of Defense Policy; (3) strengthening of the functions of the Joint Staff Office; (4) unification of sections responsible for defense capabilities build-up; and (5) measures in other important areas.

The Ministry of Defense will make every effort to advance these measures to realize the reform in the future.