

On the Publication of Defense of Japan 2010



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The last year of 2009 was a major historical turning point, when the people of Japan saw a change of government. Following the change, we have been carrying out some reviews of issues related to defense. Meanwhile, under the Constitution of Japan, in accordance with the basic principles of maintaining an exclusively defense oriented policy and not becoming a military power that threatens other countries, we will continue to adhere to the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements and to maintain the basic parameters of our defense policy of independently building a moderate defense capability while ensuring civilian control and abiding by the Three Non-Nuclear Principles.

The Ministry of Defense has published a defense white paper every year which details Japan's defense policies and major developments over the previous year involving the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF). The white paper, "Defense of Japan," has ensured the transparency of Japan's defense policies and played an important role in enhancing other countries' understanding of, and trust in, our country, while having allowed more people to gain a deeper understanding of Japan's defense policies. "Defense of Japan 2010" is the first one published after the change of government, which I believe will give it an even greater significance than ordinary years.

The international security environment has been undergoing enormous changes in recent years, and the international society faces a variety of challenges ranging from traditional issues between nation states to new threats and diverse circumstances. The security environment surrounding Japan is growing increasingly severe, as evidenced by the North Korea's nuclear and missile issues, the modernization of China's armed forces, and the intensification of military activities by China and Russia.

Japan relies on foreign countries for most of its resources and food, and so the peace and stability of the international society are closely aligned with Japan's own peace and security. In that sense, it is important to strive for international cooperation and collaboration on security issues facing the international society. The SDF successfully concluded replenishment activities in the Indian Ocean which had lasted for about eight years, while on the other hand it has started a new peacekeeping operation (PKO) in response to the large-scale earthquake that struck Haiti in the Caribbean Sea in January 2010. It has also been engaged with ongoing PKOs in the Golan Heights, Nepal, and Sudan. Moreover, its destroyers and P-3C patrol aircraft have been undertaking active operations off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden in Africa to ensure the safety of maritime transport.

Thus, under the environment surrounding Japan which has become increasingly severe, the Ministry of Defense and the SDF continue to evolve on a day-to-day basis while expanding the range of activities further.

In addition, this year marks the 50-year milestone since the conclusion of the current Japan–U.S. Security Treaty. The Japan–U.S. Security Arrangements are the indispensable cornerstone for the peace and stability of not only Japan, but of the Asia-Pacific region. These are currently expanding out to cooperation for activities at a global scale, such as PKOs and response to large-scale disasters. Since the close and cooperative relationship between Japan and the United States plays an important role in tackling various security issues, it is extremely vital to maintain and strengthen the ties in the future. In this sense, the realignment of U.S. Forces such as the relocation of Marine Corps Futenma Air Station is a matter of great significance in striving to maintain deterrence and capabilities as well as reducing burdens on local communities. Therefore, the Japanese government is determined to make earnest efforts to meet its goal.

Furthermore, within this year, the Japanese government will revise the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), which serves as its basic policy for improving its defense capabilities. For deliberations toward this review of the NDGP, a new advisory panel of experts, “the Council on the Future of National Security and Defense Capabilities in the New Era” was established by the Cabinet in February 2010 and the panel submitted a report to the Prime Minister in August. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defense has already started the study and discussion on the matter under the instruction of the Defense Council. After this, we will also study such issues as security environment awareness, the role of defense capabilities, the organization of the SDF, and the way that the foundation for defense production and technology should be, while giving consideration to how Japan should improve defense capabilities effectively and efficiently in order to ensure the safety and security of the Japanese people.

It is very regrettable that some events, which have severely damaged the people’s trust in the Ministry of Defense and the SDF, have occurred in recent years. Following this, we have been taking the Ministry’s reform forward where any measures of preventing a reoccurrence of such incidents should be considered, but besides that, we have been looking at the reform from the perspective of promoting defense administration effectively and efficiently, taking into account the environment surrounding the Ministry of Defense, and ensuring the effectiveness of civilian control.

From the above, we have made considerable efforts to give a real picture of the Ministry of Defense and the SDF in this year’s defense white paper, including ordinary activities such as warning and surveillance activities and disaster relief unit dispatches. We have also striven to provide a greater number of materials for the people to think about Japan’s defense. Specifically, we have incorporated a greater number of columns and figures than in previous years and explained items plainly which are important for thinking about Japan’s security, while covering direct opinions of SDF members engaged in their day-to-day duties and those who have a close relationship with the Ministry of Defense.

National defense will not be viable and ensured without the trust and support of the people. I sincerely hope that this white paper, “Defense of Japan 2010,” will be read broadly by as many people as possible and that it will help you enhance your understanding of national defense.