

Section 5 Southeast Asia

1. General Situation

Southeast Asia holds key positions for traffic linking the Pacific and Indian Oceans, such as the Straits of Malacca, the South China Sea, and is an important region for Japan. The countries in this region are making efforts to achieve political stability and steady economic growth, and lately have realized overall economic development to varying degrees. Such economic development has deepened the relationships of interdependence within and outside the region. However, this region still has destabilizing factors, including the territorial dispute over the Spratly Islands, ethnic minority issues, separatist and independence movements, and Islamic extremist groups. Moreover, there are still incidents such as piracy by which the safe passage of ships is obstructed, though the number of incidents of piracy has been on the decline in recent year¹⁸³. In order to cope with these problems, the countries in the region are working to build sufficient military forces not only for traditional national defense but also to address new security issues such as anti-terrorism and piracy. In recent years, against the backdrop of economic development, they have been modernizing their military forces, particularly their navy and air forces.

In this region, the United States is developing relationships of confidence with Southeast Asian countries and working to strengthen their readiness through numerous joint military exercises such as the multinational military exercise Cobra Gold and Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT)¹⁸⁴ and the provision of military technology and military assistance.

(See Fig. I-2-5-1)

2. Defense Policy of Each Country

1. Singapore

Given the concentration of people and their property in limited national land space and deepening economic interdependence with other countries, Singapore identifies diplomacy and deterrence as the twin pillars of national defense for maintaining peace and stability, and gives high priority to national defense, with defense spending accounting for about one-quarter of its national budget¹⁸⁵. As its national defense policy, Singapore declares that it will strengthen dialogue, confidence-building and cooperation with armed forces of countries within and outside Southeast Asia and promoting Total Defense¹⁸⁶. Faced with the need to appropriately and flexibly respond to war, terrorism, peacekeeping activities, and humanitarian crises, Singapore is working on the transformation of the 3rd Generation Singapore Forces to implement effective responses with limited resources, and is striving to modernize equipment and enhance operational capabilities¹⁸⁷.

Singapore is making aggressive efforts to modernize military equipment, including the earliest introduction in Southeast Asia of early-warning aircraft, air refueling tankers and a submarine rescue mother ship¹⁸⁸. Regarding enhancement of operational capability, it conducts training by stationing its troops overseas on an ongoing basis to overcome constraints on training areas due to limited land space¹⁸⁹.

Singapore makes efforts for regional cooperation based on friendly cooperative relations with other Southeast Asian countries, including the conclusion of defense cooperation agreements with countries within and outside the region¹⁹⁰. Also, aiming to contribute to the stability and development in the region, Singapore supports the United States' presence in the Asia-Pacific. The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding in 1990 permitting the United States to use military facilities in Singapore. This allows U.S. forces to promptly respond to emergencies in the Middle East and Africa. The United States ranks Singapore as a Major Security Cooperation Partner. In July 2005, the two countries signed the Strategic Framework Agreement between the United States of

America and the Republic of Singapore for a Closer Cooperation Partnership in Defense and Security to further strengthen cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism, prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, joint military exercises and training, and policy dialogues.

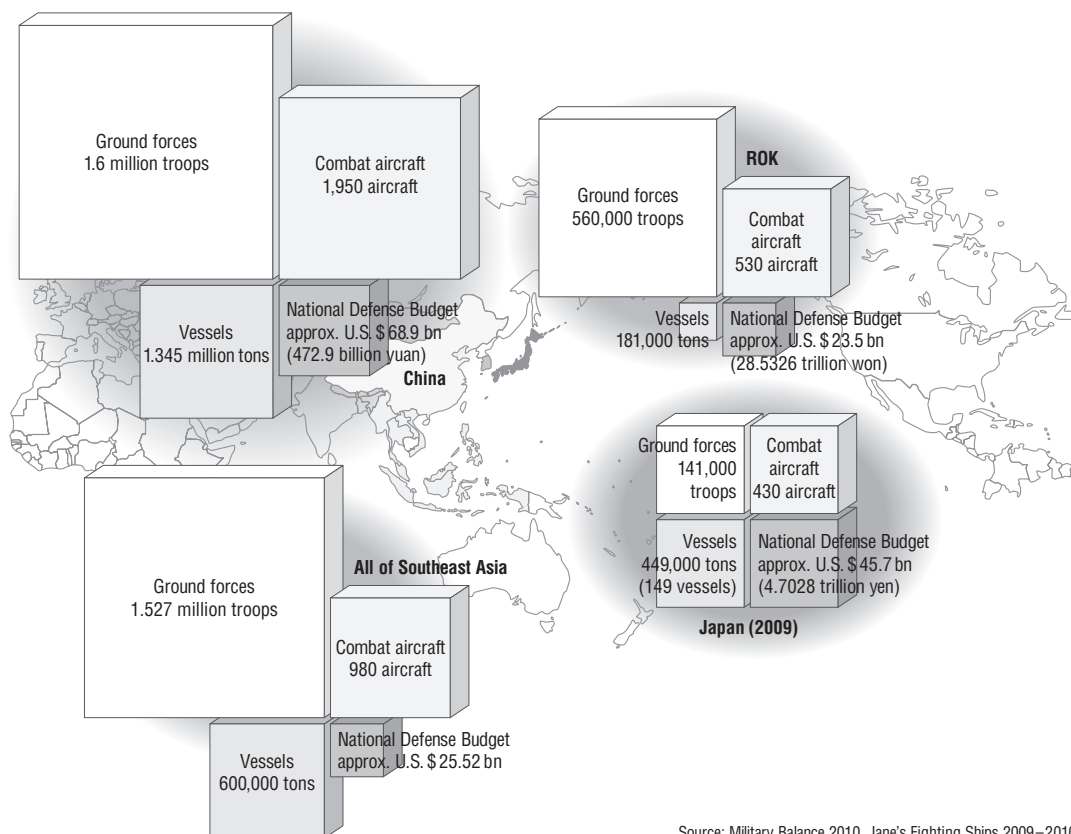
Singapore has been actively participating in international peace cooperation activities as well. Though on a limited scale, in addition to U.N. peacekeeping activities, it has dispatched personnel, aircraft, and naval vessels to Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf of Aden ¹⁹¹.

2. Malaysia

Malaysia, surrounded by other member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), considers that its strategic interests have close ties with those of countries in the region and that any threat to ASEAN or an ASEAN country is a threat to Malaysia ¹⁹².

For this reason, Malaysia regards the strengthening of bilateral relations with neighboring countries, strengthening of ASEAN, cooperation with Islamic countries, South-South cooperation, and the upholding of the

Fig. I-2-5-1 Comparison of Forces Strength and Defense Budget between Southeast Asia and Japan/China/ROK 2009



Source: Military Balance 2010, Jane's Fighting Ships 2009–2010.

- Notes: 1. The size of each block indicates relative size using Japan as the base size.
2. For Japan, the force strength shows the actual strength of each Self-Defense Force as of the end of FY2009; the number of combat aircraft is the sum of the number of combat aircraft of the ASDF (excluding transport aircraft) and that of the MSDF (fixed-wing aircraft only).
3. The national defense budget of China is from the Finance Minister's Budget Report to the National People's congress in 2009.
4. The national defense budget of the ROK is from the ROK National Defense White Paper 2009.
5. The national defense budget of China and the ROK is expressed in U.S. dollars and is calculated at the FY2009 Ministry of Finance announced-exchange rates of 103 yen to the dollar, 15 yen to the yuan, and 85 yen to 1,000 won.
6. The Japanese national defense budget is expressed in U.S. dollars converting 2009 figures at the FY2008 Ministry of Finance announced-exchange rate of 103 yen to the dollar.

principle of noninterference in internal affairs, as the cornerstone of its foreign policy. Malaysia's defense policy revolves around the fundamental principles of Self-Reliance, Regional Cooperation and Foreign Aid¹⁹³. Malaysia sets forth deterrence and Total Defense as their defense concepts and regards a strategy to repel aggression and the buildup of highly reliable military force as important and the involvement of not only the military but also all the people as necessary.

Malaysia conducts bilateral military exercises and promotes military cooperation with other countries, including the United States, Australia, and India, but does not take part in multilateral exercises other than those under the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA)¹⁹⁴, and maintains the national security system based on the FPDA.

Furthermore, like other Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia or the Philippines, Malaysia actively participates in U.N. peacekeeping activities¹⁹⁵, and has also sent its troops for antipiracy measures in the Gulf of Aden¹⁹⁶.

3. Indonesia

While there is a perception that within the next several years there is yet to be any indication of a conventional military threat from outside, the intensity of trans-national security threats has actually significantly increased in the past few years. Indonesia states that it treats non-military security issues as a part of national defense issues¹⁹⁷. To that end, Indonesia is promoting Total Defense through both military defense and non-military defense activities under the idea that all people utilizing all resources available, maintaining Indonesia's independence, national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unification. Furthermore, Indonesia is implementing military reform, which includes the prohibition of the involvement of military officers in politics and business activities, and the separation of military and police roles.

In foreign policy, Indonesia emphasizes cooperation with other ASEAN states and pursues independent and proactive diplomacy as its basic idea. In its national defense policy, Indonesia makes it clear that it does not rely on other nations for the safety of the nation and also is not part of any defense pacts with other countries. However, Indonesia regards defense and military cooperation with the United States as significant for the development of the country's defense force, not only for the interest of Indonesia but also for its regional security interests¹⁹⁸, and has strengthened cooperative relations with the United States in such fields as military education and training, and military equipment procurement in recent years.

Though International Military Education and Training (IMET) with the United States was temporarily suspended due to disputes over the activities of Indonesian forces in Timor-Leste¹⁹⁹, the United States in November 2005 decided to resume IMET and also decided to resume arms exports to Indonesia. In February 2008, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates visited Indonesia and held talks with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and then Minister of Defence Juwono Sudarsono, where they agreed to strengthen cooperation in counter-piracy activities and counterterrorism as well as military cooperation. In January 2009, the Indonesian Navy and the U.S. Navy conducted a joint exercise of their Special Forces on the island of Java. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Indonesia as part of the tour of Asian countries, her first foreign trip as top U.S. diplomat, and reached an agreement with then Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda to build a comprehensive partnership in various areas, including security cooperation, and to further strengthen the bilateral relationship.

Indonesia believes that the participation in U.N. peacekeeping activities leads to the elevation of its status in the international community, and has dispatched a total of some 18,000 military personnel on 43 contingents²⁰⁰. Between March and late November 2009, Indonesia sent its surface force for the first time to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), including the country's state-of-the-art Sigma-class corvette²⁰¹.

4. Thailand

Under its flexible omnidirectional diplomatic policy, Thailand pursues cooperation with other Southeast Asian countries and coordination with major countries, including Japan, the United States and China. Thailand's national defense policy consists of the two elements of 1) enhancement of the defense capabilities of the armed forces, and coordination and integration with other government institutions; and 2) strengthening of security cooperation relationships with neighboring countries, the regional community, and the international community. On this basis, it has adopted the national defense strategy that revolves around the three pillars of Security Cooperation, United Defense, and Active Defense²⁰². Thailand is promoting close security cooperation with neighboring countries, the buildup of defense capabilities, and reform of the armed forces and the Ministry of Defence.

Thailand believes that while risks of traditional threats such as a large-scale invasion have decreased, the risk of non-traditional threats such as international terrorism are on the rise, and in particular the insurgency in southern Thailand by separatists poses a national challenge going forward²⁰³. Thailand also has border disputes with neighboring Myanmar and Cambodia, and the disputes occasionally heighten tensions between Thailand and Cambodia. The insurgency in the south is raising realistic concerns for Thailand, but in the area of build-up of defense capabilities, it is modernizing the armed forces centering on the naval and air forces and is the sole owner of an aircraft carrier in Southeast Asia.²⁰⁴

With respect to relations with the United States, which serves as the core of security cooperation, Thailand believes the presence of U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific region provides security assurances for many countries as well as security concerns for some states²⁰⁵. Thailand has established a good relationship with the United States by maintaining cooperation with the United States since the Cold War era. Since the conclusion of the Military Assistance Agreement in 1950, Thailand and the United States maintained the cooperative relationship, and they have been conducting the joint military exercise Cobra Gold since 1982. Cobra Gold became a multinational exercise in 2000, and includes noncombat missions such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief²⁰⁶.

In addition to U.N. peacekeeping operations, Thailand has been actively engaged in international peace cooperation activities, dispatching its troops to Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2003, the United States designated Thailand as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA)²⁰⁷ in appreciation of its proactive participation in the U.S.-led war on terror. The United States also views Thailand, together with Japan, Korea, Australia, and the Philippines, as the cornerstone of peace and security in Asia²⁰⁸.

5. Vietnam

In the Cold War era, the Soviet Union was the largest donor of assistance for Vietnam, and Russia owned a naval base in the Bay of Cam Ranh. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Vietnam rapidly expanded its diplomatic relations, and established diplomatic ties with the United States. At present, Vietnam pursues an omnidirectional diplomatic policy and states that it will actively participate in international and regional cooperation in order to build friendly relations with all countries under its foreign policy principles of multilateral participation and respect for diversity. Based on its experiences with the independence war, Vietnam emphasizes that other countries must strictly respect its independence, national sovereignty, unification and territorial integrity, and declares that it will neither join any military alliance nor give any foreign country permission to have military bases in Vietnam. Vietnam advocates a posture of all-people national defense²⁰⁹, and states that maintaining a peaceful and stable environment for socio-economic development, achieving industrialization and modernization, and building a socialism-based market economy are its vital national interests and the objectives of its national defense policy.

Vietnam believes that a state of tension which may lead to armed conflict remains unsettled in Southeast Asia and that territorial disputes are becoming complicated; in particular, those relating to sovereignty and national interests in the South China Sea have been on the rise²¹⁰. Vietnam highly appreciates the United Nations and its

peacekeeping activities, and insists that international cooperation in such areas as counterterrorism and the war against terror should be carried out within the framework of the United Nations in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Vietnam has maintained close ties with Russia particularly in the area of national defense since the Cold War era, and aside from the use of the Bay of Cam Ranh by Russia, Vietnam depends almost totally on Russia for its military equipment. In 2001, Vietnam and Russia signed the Joint Statement for a Strategic Partnership, and agreed to strengthen cooperation in the area of national defense.

Regarding relations with the United States, the two countries concluded an agreement on International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program in June 2005 and major progress was witnessed in bilateral military cooperation. In June 2006, then U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld visited Vietnam, and agreement was reached to expand military exchanges between the two countries. Many U.S. defense-related personnel, including the Secretary of Defense and the Commander of U.S. Pacific Command, frequently visited Vietnam between 2006 and 2007, and in April 2007, the United States partially lifted its arms embargo on Vietnam²¹¹. In October 2008, the first strategic dialogue was held between Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh and then U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Mark Kimmitt to build up cooperative relations between the two countries in political, security, defense and other areas. Further, in December 2009, Vietnamese Minister of Defence Phung Quang Thanh visited the United States.

6. The Philippines

The Philippines perceives terrorism by domestic anti-government armed groups as the most serious threat to national security. Since 2004, the country has been implementing reform programs in the areas of defense planning, improvement of operational and training capabilities, reform of military structures and modernization of forces in accordance with a defense reform program called the Philippine Defense Reform (PDR).

The Philippines and the United States have a history of a close relationship and maintain a long-standing, tight military cooperation relationship²¹². The two countries maintain the cooperative relationship, with the continuation of the mutual defense treaty and military assistance agreement, even after the eviction of U.S. forces in 1992²¹³. The two countries have been conducting the large-scale annual joint military exercise Balikatan since 2000 as counterterrorism measures against terrorist groups including the Abu Sayyaf Group²¹⁴. The Philippines and the United States have also conducted other joint exercises, including Balance Piston and Talon Vision. The United States designated the Philippines as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA), as the United States views the Philippines as the cornerstone of peace and security in Asia²¹⁵.

3. Military Modernization in the Region

In recent years, Southeast Asian countries have been modernizing their militaries against a backdrop of economic development and other factors.

In May 2009, Singapore took the first delivery of four U.S.-made F-15 fighters for the detachments in Idaho, United States. Singapore plans to have a total of 24 F-15 fighter jets, all of which are scheduled to be delivered by 2012. Singapore has also participated in the joint development program of the F-35 fighter, the first Asian country to do so. As for the naval strength of Singapore, all six French-made Formidable-class frigates with stealth capability were commissioned in 2009. Singapore also purchased two secondhand Swedish-made submarines, which are scheduled to be delivered by the end of 2010 after upgrading and refurbishing operations.

Malaysia started introducing Russian-made Su-30 fighters from 2007, and the delivery of all 18 of them was completed in 2009. As for naval strength, Malaysia's first submarine (the Scorpene-class submarine jointly developed by France and Spain) was commissioned in January 2009, and a second one in November 2009.



The launching ceremony of an Archer-class submarine (Singapore)
[Ministry of Defence, Singapore]



The commissioning of a Scorpene-class submarine (second ship) in Malaysia
[Royal Malaysian Navy]

Malaysia also placed orders for six German-made Kedah-class corvettes, and all of them are scheduled to be commissioned by the end of 2010.

Indonesia introduced two each of Russian-made Su-27 and Su-30 fighters in 2003, and plans to ultimately own a total of five of each. Regarding naval strength, in 2009 Indonesia completed the commissioning of four Dutch-made Sigma-class corvettes. In addition, in September 2007, Indonesia agreed with Russia to strengthen military technological and defense cooperation, and signed an agreement to purchase \$1 billion worth of Russian-made weapons with government loans. The agreement reportedly covers such weapons as two Kilo-class submarines.

Thailand in 2007 decided to purchase Swedish-made JAS-39 fighters as well as aircraft with early-warning systems. Thailand does not own any submarines at present, but it is reported to have started considering the purchase of a submarine²¹⁶.

Vietnam purchased four Su-30 fighters in 2004, and there are reports that the country is making an additional purchase of the fighter jet²¹⁷. In December 2009, Vietnam was reported to have concluded a contract to purchase six Kilo-class submarines from Russia²¹⁸.

Many Southeast Asian countries have expanded the growth of their defense spending in recent years, and this is considered one of factors that make the modernization of military equipment possible. Aside from this factor, there are views that sensitive relations among Southeast Asian countries to the military buildup, the growing influence of China, and the limited effectiveness of the regional security institutions as a confidence-building measure, are behind the ongoing military modernization in Southeast Asia²¹⁹.

4. Relations with China

There are currently territorial disputes between Southeast Asian countries and China over the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands²²⁰. At the Summit Meeting between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China held in November 2002, ASEAN member countries and China signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea²²¹, which aims for a peaceful settlement of the territorial issue. However, no major development has been seen in the drafting of a Regional Code of Conduct in the South China Sea²²², which would provide more concrete behavior and possess legal binding force. Movements observed in recent years with regard to the relationship with the Spratly Islands and Paracel Islands include an increase in activities of neighboring countries claiming ownership and subsequent protests against these claims²²³.

In recent years, China has actively pushed the related countries to give priority to the development of resources in the waters surrounding the Spratly Islands, setting aside the territorial issue. For example, in September 2004, China and the Philippines agreed on a joint oil field exploration in the waters of the Spratly Islands, and in March 2005, China, the Philippines, and Vietnam reached an agreement on the launch of a joint exploration of oil

and natural gas in the South China Sea. However, the Philippines did not agree to the renewal/extension of the agreement and withdrew from the agreement in July 2008.

In recent years, China has been making efforts to develop cooperative relations with Southeast Asian countries. The first ASEAN–China Summit was held in 1997, and at the 11th ASEAN–China Summit in 2007, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao stated that China is “ready to enhance cooperation with ASEAN in non-traditional security fields, and will fund training such as the maritime investigation training in the Malacca Strait.”

In the area of national defense, mutual visits of senior military officials and exchanges and cooperation between troops of ASEAN countries and China are under way, centering on bilateral exchanges. China conducted the first joint search and rescue exercise with Thailand in 2004, the first of its kind with any Southeast Asian nation. A joint patrol was launched in the Gulf of Tonkin by Vietnamese and Chinese naval vessels in April 2006. In 2007 and 2008, the special forces of China and Thailand came together to conduct a combined counterterrorism military exercise²²⁴. In 2009, China and Singapore conducted a joint counterterrorism exercise²²⁵. Further, in 2007, China provided Cambodia with patrol boats as an assistance package, and in 2008, China reportedly concluded a contract to sell two patrol boats to Timor-Leste.

5. Regional Cooperation

Southeast Asian nations utilize ASEAN as a multilateral security framework for the region. In addition to the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), a dialogue forum on the political and security sectors in the Asia-Pacific region, the ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) has been held annually since 2006²²⁶. Furthermore, at the 13th ASEAN Summit in 2007, the ASEAN Charter was adopted, containing the basic principles for establishing the ASEAN Community by 2015²²⁷, and entered into force in December 2008 after the completion of the ratification procedures of all member states. At the 15th ASEAN Summit held in October 2009, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) was formally established, underscoring steady progress toward the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015. At the same Summit, ASEAN set forth its policy of holding summit meetings with the United States and Russia as part of the dialogue with extra-regional countries²²⁸, and it also expressed its appreciation of the United States’ accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) as a strong signal of its involvement in peace and security of the region²²⁹. At the ASEAN summit meeting in April 2010 an agreement was made to hold an expanded ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM+8), and in addition they mentioned holding summit meetings with the United States and Russia, continuing efforts to strengthen relations with countries outside the region.

In the Southeast Asian region, multilateral cooperation is being promoted in frameworks other than ASEAN as well, in order to deal with a wide variety of security issues such as transnational problems including terrorism and piracy.

In July 2004, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore started the Trilateral Coordinated Patrols for vigilance against pirates in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. In this effort, the naval forces of the three countries patrol their own territories in cooperation with each other. Subsequently, in September 2005, the countries launched their joint coastline airborne patrols code-named Eyes in the Sky. In September 2008, Thailand joined these schemes. As another counter-piracy measure, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships



The 4th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (Vietnam)
[Ministry of Defence, Singapore]

and Asia (ReCAAP)²³⁰, proposed and led by Japan, entered into effect in September 2006, promoting the sharing of information concerning piracy and establishment of cooperation systems.

Since 2004, Malaysia, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand have conducted joint exercises including maritime interdiction training within the framework of the Five Powers Defense Arrangements (FPDA).

6. Regional Issues

In Southeast Asia, while intra-regional cooperation is in progress, some unstable factors remain.

In July 2008, the tension between Cambodia and Thailand intensified over the disputed border area near the Preah Vihear Temple, and the opposing forces exchanged gun fire in October 2008, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries on both sides. Later, the field commanders of both sides held talks and agreed to conduct joint patrols around the temple, in an effort to alleviate the tense situation. Subsequently, however, sporadic exchanges of gun fire have occurred between the two sides.

In the Philippines, armed conflicts between government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have continued for some 40 years. Progress was made in the peace process following the ceasefire agreement of 2003 and activities of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) from 2004²³¹. Since August 2008, however, armed clashes intensified again over the settlement of the pending land problem, and after Malaysia, one of the principal members, withdrew from the IMT, the IMT suspended its operations at the end of November 2008. Subsequently, in December 2008, the Philippine Government and the MILF agreed to put together the IMT again, reopening negotiations for a peace agreement. Following this development, Japan and Malaysia dispatched personnel to the IMT again, and the IMT officially resumed its activities in Mindanao²³². Going forward, it is desired that a final agreement on peace in Mindanao will be reached at an early date²³³.

In Timor-Leste, Australia, New Zealand, Portugal, and Malaysia dispatched their troops to the International Stabilization Force (ISF) in April 2006 in response to a worsening security situation, and subsequently in August 2006, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) was established²³⁴.

In February 2008, President José Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao of Timor-Leste were attacked by armed groups. Since then, however, the security situation has been stabilized as a result of continued political and economic efforts. The mandate of UNMIT was extended to February 26, 2011, from the standpoint of promoting peace, stability, and development of newly born nation²³⁵. In the meantime, Timor-Leste aspires to gain accession to ASEAN by 2012.