

Section  
5Looking Back Over 20 Years of International  
Cooperation by the Ministry of Defense and the SDF

Over the two decades that have passed since the dispatch of minesweepers to the Persian Gulf in 1991, the Ministry of Defense and Self-Defense Forces have conducted a variety of activities in various areas of the globe, including United Nations peacekeeping operations and international disaster relief activities. In conducting such activities more proactively in the future, it will be necessary to make even greater efforts

to secure the understanding of the Japanese people concerning the importance of international cooperation on the part of the Ministry of Defense and the SDF. Accordingly, this section looks back over the 20 years since the Ministry of Defense and the SDF commenced international cooperation and explains the advances made within the international community.

## 1 The Path of International Cooperation by the Ministry of Defense and the SDF

In April 1991, after the Gulf War, a Maritime Self-Defense Force minesweeping unit was dispatched to the Persian Gulf. It was the first time since the establishment of the Self-Defense Forces that they got involved in activities within the international community. In addition to the goal of ensuring the safety of Japanese marine vessels navigating in that area, this dispatch was significant as a kind of international contribution and international cooperation in the form of personnel, with the peaceful, humanitarian objective of reconstructing a disaster-stricken country.

About 20 years have passed since then, but during this time, the Ministry of Defense and the SDF have engaged in a variety of activities in the international community, carrying out their assigned duties by trial and error amid harsh environments, and have built up an excellent reputation, both within Japan and overseas.

Amid the international environment since the end of the Cold War, the provision for more assistance in United Nations peacekeeping operations and greater international cooperation in rescue activities following large-scale disasters overseas became a national issue in Japan. In order to make a more active international contribution, particularly in the form of personnel, the Government undertook various deliberations and in the autumn of 1991, it submitted to the Diet the International Peace Cooperation Bill and the reform bill concerning the Act on Dispatchment of the Japan Disaster Relief Team, which would pave the way for the SDF to undertake international peace cooperation activities.

Various discussions took place regarding these bills and, after the International Peace Cooperation Bill was partially revised, both laws were enacted in 1992; in June the same year, based on the International Peace Cooperation Act<sup>1</sup>, the



The MSDF minesweeper *Sakushima* disposing of a mine in the Persian Gulf (August 1991). The MSDF minesweeping unit disposed of a total of 34 mines



GSDF engineering unit repairing a low-cost paved road in Cambodia (1993)  
GSDF engineering unit repaired a total of approximately 100km of roads and around 40 bridges.

<sup>1</sup> Act on Cooperation for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Other Operations  
See <[http://www.pko.go.jp/PKO\\_J/data/law/law\\_data02.html](http://www.pko.go.jp/PKO_J/data/law/law_data02.html)>

Japan Defense Agency (as it was at the time) dispatched a Ground Self-Defense Force engineer unit to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), which was the first time that the Self-Defense Forces had participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations. One can say that this marked the beginning of a new era in Japan's endeavors focused on international peace. The deployment in Cambodia was the first experience of international peace and cooperation activities for the SDF and although there were aspects in the preparations and actual implementation of duties where they were effectively feeling their way in the dark, they were able to achieve great things in their duties, including the repair of roads and bridges. Thus, it can be said that the skills, experience and organizational functions of the SDF, which had been cultivated through rigorous training around the clock in order to enable them to fulfill their fundamental duty of defending the nation, were also adequately utilized in the arena of international cooperation.

Since then, up to the end of May 2012, the Ministry of Defense and the SDF have undertaken a total of 14 international peace and cooperation operations, including those currently underway, in a range of places in the Middle East, Central America, Asia and Africa. Since the 1992 revision of the Act on Dispatchment of the Japan Disaster Relief Team, the SDF have also steadily built up a good record of international disaster relief activities, while making arrangements to enable them to fulfill their normal duties. In order to provide relief in the aftermath of the hurricane that hit the Central American country of Honduras in October 1998, it was decided to dispatch a SDF

unit to provide medical care and prevent an epidemic. Although this was the first international disaster relief activity undertaken by the SDF, they responded to local requests amid harsh post-disaster conditions in that remote Central American location, and achieved splendid results for which both the Government of Honduras and the local people were grateful, so this can be said to have been an extremely significant first step.

Since then, the Ministry of Defense and the SDF have been involved in a total of 13 operations to date in various parts of the world; moreover, in light of their actual achievements, the SDF have made successive improvements in their preparations, with the objective of achieving swifter dispatch and more effective relief activities.

At the same time as building up this solid record of achievement in United Nations peacekeeping operations and disaster relief activities, the SDF have also provided support and cooperation in the fields of logistics support and humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for initiatives occasionally required to be undertaken by the international community due to world affairs at certain times, where it has been determined that it is necessary for Japan to make a voluntary, proactive contribution while putting in place the institutional infrastructure; these activities have included cooperation with initiatives focused on dealing with international terrorism and initiatives aimed at the reconstruction of Iraq.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, Japan has conducted counterterrorism initiatives in a variety of fields, one of which involved the MSDF engaging in mid-ocean refueling operations in the Indian Ocean to assist ships from countries engaging in counterterrorism activities, including the U.S., the U.K., France, Germany and Pakistan; these activities were based on the former Anti-terrorism Special Measures Law<sup>2</sup> (known as the former Replenishment Support Special Measures Law<sup>3</sup> after the act was revoked). Such activities carried out by various countries in order to prevent the movement of terrorists or narcotics have been somewhat effective in restricting the freedom of movement of terrorists within Afghanistan, as well as constraining their activities, such as the procurement of supplies and funding. In addition, these activities have confirmed that the mid-ocean refueling technology of the MSDF is extremely reliable; moreover, they have made it possible to build up and share with a range of other countries know-how and knowledge concerning various operations, as well as improving the ability to carry out continuous mid-ocean refueling over long periods of time.



A C-130 transport aircraft and ASDF personnel preparing relief supplies for Honduras (November 1998). The ASDF carried out long-distance airlifts over a distance of approximately 18,000km, involving a flight time of 36 hours

- 2 Act on Special Measures concerning Measures Taken by Japan in Support of the Activities of Foreign Countries Aiming to Achieve the Purposes of the Charter of the United Nations in Response to the Terrorist Attacks Which Took Place on 11 September 2001 in the United States of America as well as concerning Humanitarian Measures Based on Relevant Resolutions of the United Nations  
See <[http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/hourei/houritu/tero\\_h.html](http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/hourei/houritu/tero_h.html)>
- 3 Act on Special Measures concerning Implementation of Replenishment Support Activities towards the Anti-Terrorism Maritime Interdiction Operation  
See <[http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/hourei/houritu/kyuuyu\\_sinpou.pdf](http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/hourei/houritu/kyuuyu_sinpou.pdf)>



The MSDF supply ship Oumi (right) conducting mid-ocean refueling of a Canadian ship (left) in the Indian Ocean

See References 56, 57

Since May 2003, in light of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483 and the subsequent Security Council resolutions, the international community has been actively supporting the reconstruction of Iraq.

Based on the former Action Special Measures concerning Humanitarian Relief and Reconstruction work Security Assistance in Iraq<sup>4</sup> enacted in July the same year, Japan dispatched SDF units to Iraq between December 2003 and December 2008. The SDF have provided support through medical care, the supply of water, the restoration and reconstruction of public facilities such as schools and roads, and the transportation of humanitarian and reconstruction supplies, and have contributed to initiatives aimed at the autonomous reconstruction of Iraq. Moreover, to provide cooperation in the reconstruction and



Iraqi children gathering around a member of the GSDF during activities to provide humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Iraq (Samawah, Iraq)



An ASDF C-130 transport aircraft conducting airlifts as part of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Iraq (Kuwait)

stability of Iraq, ASDF units have provided airlift support for GSDF units, United Nations personnel and Multi-National Force troops dispatched to Muthanna Province. Such cooperation by Japan in the reconstruction of Iraq has been highly praised by both the international community and the people of Iraq, and has been significant not only because it has increased trust in Japan, but also because conducting activities in partnership with the USA has made US-Japan cooperation in the field of security even closer and more effective.

See Reference 58

As well as initiatives that are required of Japan as a member of the international community, there are activities that Japan must deal with from the perspective of maintaining public order by protecting the lives or property of the populace. Since 2008, the number of cases of piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden has increased sharply and it has become a major international problem. Amid this situation, there have been instances of pirate attacks on Japanese-affiliated vessels, so the Ministry of Defense and the SDF dispatched two destroyers in March 2009, followed by two P-3C maritime patrol aircraft in May the same year, in order to escort civilian vessels in those waters, and began warning and surveillance activities in the area; since July 2009, these activities have continued on the basis of the Anti-Piracy Measures Act. In light of the severe threat that acts of piracy pose to the maintenance of public safety and order on the sea, these activities are being carried out because Japan believes that it is necessary to actively fulfill our international responsibilities, as well as maintaining public safety and order on the sea for ourselves; accordingly, in terms of engaging in international cooperation and making an international contribution in the form of personnel, these activities have a similar significance to the dispatch of the MSDF minesweeping unit to the Persian Gulf.

(See Fig. III-3-5-1)

<sup>4</sup> Act on Special Measures concerning Humanitarian Relief and Reconstruction Work and Security Assistance in Iraq  
See <[http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/hourei/houritu/iraq\\_h.html](http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/hourei/houritu/iraq_h.html)>



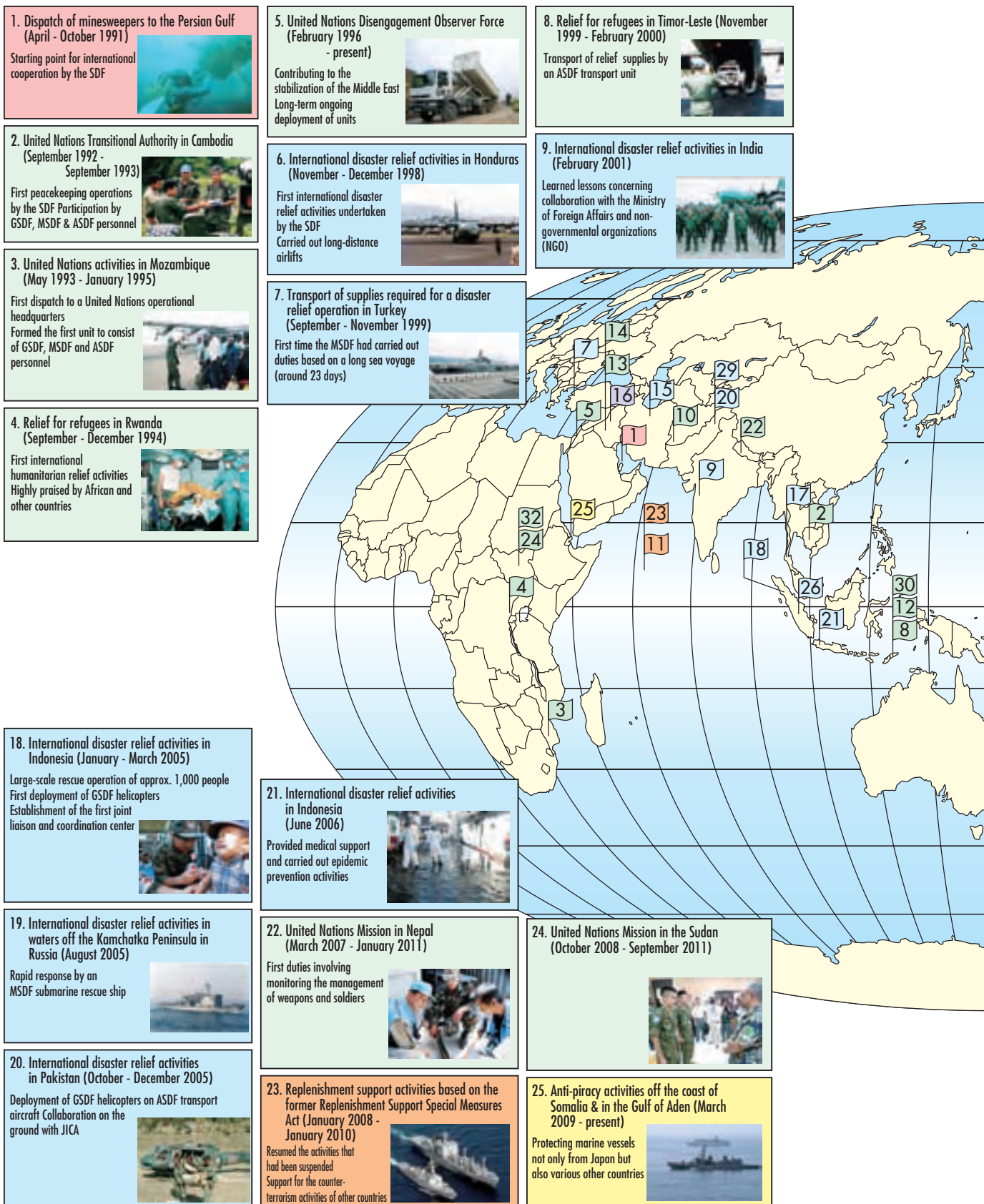
As outlined above, during the two decades or so since the MSDF minesweeping unit was dispatched to the Persian Gulf, the SDF have undertaken various activities, including peacekeeping operations and other international peace cooperation activities, as well as anti-piracy activities. Over these 20 years, both the content and the location of the activities of the Self-Defense Forces as part of the international community have expanded. Moreover, through these activities, Japan has built up a high reputation - both within Japan and overseas - for contributing to the maintenance of peace and safety of the international community, while also accumulating experience in joint operations, such as conducting transport operations and working as part of a team composed of ground, maritime and air units, and striving to improve the abilities of our own units by making successive improvements to unit dispatch arrangements and systems. In peacekeeping operations, while conducting activities in collaboration with units from other countries, such as the U.S., not only have Japanese forces been highly praised for their abilities, but these activities have also contributed to increasing trust in Japan. We in the

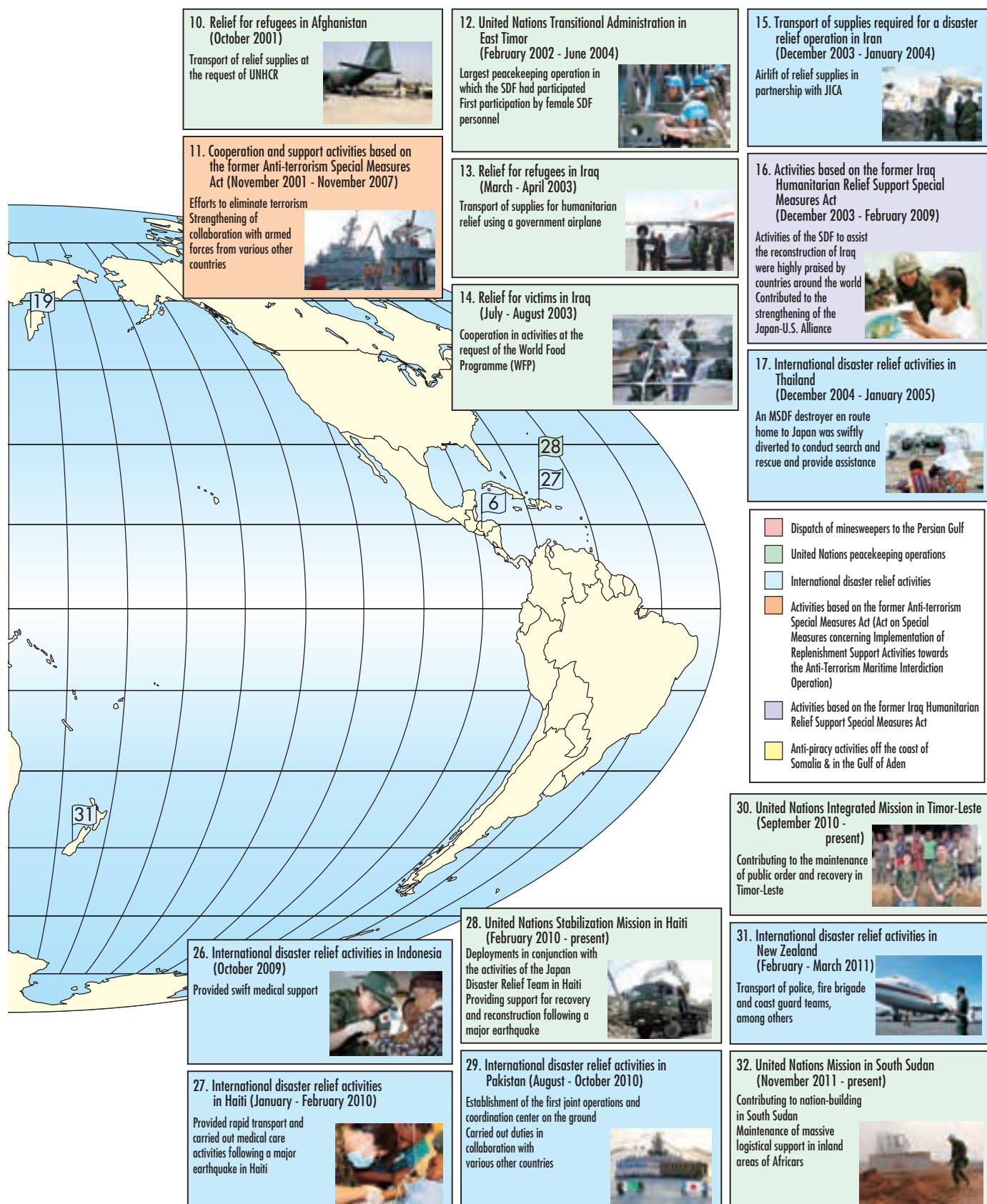


Parliamentary Secretary of Defense Jimpu delivering the keynote speech at the Symposium Commemorating 20 Years of International Cooperation by the SDF (December 2011)

Ministry of Defense and the SDF will endeavor to be even more proactive in our activities in the international community, while continuing to seek understanding and support, both within Japan and overseas<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> In order to seek the understanding of the populace regarding the importance of international cooperation, the Ministry of Defense and Self-Defense Forces held the Symposium Commemorating 20 Years of International Cooperation by the Self-Defense Forces in December 2011.

**Fig. III-3-5-1** Record of Activities in the International Community by the Ministry of Defense and Self-Defense Forces





## Column

### VOICE

### Commentary

### Q&A

## Looking Back the First Dispatch Based on the PKO Law - Cambodia PKO -

Tetsuya Nishimoto, former Chairman of the Joint Staff Council (Chief of Staff, GSDF at the time of Cambodia PKO)

20 years have passed since June 1992 when the PKO Law was enacted and Japan participated in PKO in Cambodia for the first time.

At that time, having only a little more than three months after the enactment of the PKO Law, we experienced significant difficulties in preparation. First, we struggled in selection of personnel, formation of unit and training. Second, preparation and packing of enormous amount of equipment and arrangement of transportation means to send them to the site required huge amount of work. Third, we needed to make sure for removing anxiety of the personnel's families about the overseas dispatch as the first PKO by the SDF and to establish a support system for them.

In the field, they completed construction/repair of roads and bridges and improvement of ports to facilitate withdrawal of other troops, which was highly appreciated.

Meanwhile, the first general election for Cambodia was held under the tense situation in which U.N. volunteer Atsuhito Nakata and Civilian Police Superintendent Haruyuki Takada were killed in April and May 1993, respectively. At that time the biggest challenge was to ensure safety of 41 election observers sent from Japan. I believe that, because guarding them was not allowed by the law, the SDF personnel investigating roads/bridges near polling stations and sending food and water were conducive to ensuring their safety.



Visiting a field of Cambodia PKO as GSDF Chief of Staff (then)  
(second from the left)



The accomplishments are the result of humble and dedicated activities of the dispatched personnel and the organizing power nurtured by our predecessors. Supports by our brothers in the MSDF and ASDF are also unforgettable. I truly cannot thank them enough.

Since then Japan's international peace keeping activities have made major advances. I think this development is only natural for Japan, which has only limited natural resources and therefore is dependent on trade. It is strongly desirable to develop a legal system necessary to make the activities more effective and ensure safety of personnel.