Efforts to Strengthen Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation

Japan and the United States have been developing defense cooperation based on their understanding of the security environment surrounding Japan.

Today, Japan–U.S. defense cooperation has expanded to a wide range of areas. Examples include the expansion of the content and scope of existing joint training and exercises compared to the past, the cooperative development of SM-3 Block IIA, deployment of TPY-2 radars and other U.S. BMD assets in Japan, and bilateral strategic policy dialogue on new fields such as space and cyber. Furthermore, trilateral cooperation has been developed by inviting Australia and South Korea to the Japan-U.S. bilateral cooperation. In addition, activities to improve the global security environment, such as international peace keeping activities and anti-piracy activities, are conducted in close cooperation with the United States.

Among the wide areas of the Japan-U.S. defense cooperation, this section describes the strengthening of efforts in peacetime before the occurrence of contingencies, which has been carried out intensively by the two countries in light of the current security environment, and the study on “the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation,” which is the basic guidelines for Japan-U.S. defense cooperation. This section also provides an outline of the meeting of a Japanese Defense Minister and U.S. Defense Secretary in April 2013.

1 Efforts under Normal Circumstances to Enhance Japan–U.S. Defense Cooperation

In light of trends in the security environment, the 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) stipulated the building of a “Dynamic Defense Force” focusing on the operational use of the defense force unlike the old “Basic Defense Forces Concept” emphasizing the existence of the defense force. Based on this concept of a dynamic defense force, the MOD and the SDF are to put their defense force into operation with an emphasis on conducting regular activities such as intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) activities in peacetime constantly, continuously, and strategically, responding to emergencies promptly and seamlessly, and promoting bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the Asia Pacific and other regions in a multilayered manner.

It is necessary to apply this concept of a dynamic defense force to defense cooperation between Japan and the U.S., which will ensure effective deterrence and response as well as stabilize the security environment in the region. This cooperation includes (1) reacting to various situations not responsively but proactively, and conducting prompt and seamless cooperation from peacetime through to contingencies, (2) strengthening deterrence and the presence of the two countries by raising activities of units of the SDF and U.S. forces in peacetime and demonstrating intentions and capabilities, and (3) advancing Japan-U.S. defense cooperation in a multilayered manner through trilateral defense cooperation with such countries as South Korea and Australia and Japan-U.S. cooperation within multilateral frameworks.

Based on this approach, Japan and the U.S. are considering, as concrete measures for cooperation in peacetime, the expansion of bilateral training and surveillance activities as well as the joint/shared use of the facilities of the two countries that will serve as the base of the activities. The two countries have confirmed the expansions at such opportunities as the “2+2” meeting held in June 2011 and meeting of Defense Ministers and the Secretaries of Defense held in August and September 2012 and in April 2013.

Expanding joint training increases cooperative activities in peacetime, thereby improving the readiness and operational capability of units as well as interoperability between the SDF and U.S. forces. Moreover, conducting joint training at an effective time, venue, and scale demonstrates common intentions and unified capabilities between Japan and the U.S., and thereby serves as a deterrent. Similarly, expanding joint ISR activities not only ensures that the two countries gain information superiority over other countries but also functions as a deterrent. Expanding joint/shared use of facilities increases bases for the SDF’s activities such as maneuver areas, harbors, and airfields, which in turn enhances the diversity and efficiency of Japan-U.S. bilateral training and expands the scope and raises the frequency of such activities as surveillance. Furthermore, it is also expected that advancing joint/shared use of USFJ facilities and areas by the SDF will lead to a reduced burden on local communities.

In this way, the synergy effect created by joint use of facilities, joint training, and joint ISR activities can further strengthen and improve the operational capabilities of the SDF and U.S. forces, including efficiency, interoperability, readiness, mobility, and sustainability. (See Fig. II-3-4-I)
The modalities and contents of Japan–U.S. defense cooperation described above have been intensively discussed, and substantial cooperation is advancing. As to the expansion of the Japan–U.S. joint training, the GSDF, which has been conducting field training with U.S. Marine Corps with an aim of enhancing its response capabilities in island areas, conducted its first field training with the U.S. Marine Corps III MEF in Guam and Tinian Islands, etc. from August to September 2012 as a concrete measure of the Japan-U.S. “dynamic defense cooperation” announced in the "2+2" Joint Statement in April 2012. Furthermore, from May to June 2013, the SDF for the first time participated in the joint exercise “Dawn Blitz” of the U.S. forces, which has been held on the West Coast of the U.S. This was the first Japan-U.S. bilateral joint exercise held abroad, in which training is carried out for a series of operations relating to coordination with the U.S. forces and response to attacks to offshore islands area.

With regard to joint surveillance activities, recognizing that it is important to bilaterally cooperate and implement intelligence, surveillance, and other activities in the Asia-Pacific Region in order to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their activities, the two countries set up the Defense ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) Working Group in February 2013 consisting of director-level defense officials from Japan and the U.S., which is further deepening the cooperation between the two countries.

Japan-U.S. joint/shared use of facilities, areas, etc. is steadily progressing, as exemplified by the relocation of the ASDF Air Defense Command to Yokota in April 2012 and the relocation of the GSDF Central Readiness Force Headquarters to Zama in March 2013 as part of the realignment of the USFJ. In addition, the development of training ranges as facilities for joint/shared use by the SDF and the U.S. forces in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands (Tinian Island, Pagan Island, etc.) is under consideration.

2 Efforts toward Review of the “Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation”

The current Guidelines mentioned in Section 1 were developed in 1997 in light of changes in the security environment, including the end of the cold war, the North Korea crisis, and the China-Taiwan crisis, by reviewing the old guidelines formulated in 1978. The current guidelines define the roles of Japan and the United States, and the cooperation of the two countries under three categories: (1) under normal circumstances, (2) in response to an armed attack against Japan, and (3) in situations in areas surrounding Japan. They also stipulate that they will review the Guidelines in a timely and appropriate manner.

More than 15 years have passed since the establishment of the current Guidelines. During these years various issues and destabilizing factors have emerged, become more visible and aggravated in the security environment surrounding Japan; such as more active military activities of neighboring
countries, new threats including international terrorist organizations and risks against stable use of global commons such as oceans, space and cyber space. In addition, the activities of the SDF have expanded to a global scale, as exemplified by anti-piracy activities, PKO, and international disaster relief activities. As a result, it is now necessary for the Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation to adapt to these changes in the security environment and the expansion of the SDF’s activities and missions.

Against the backdrop of the changes in the security environment, at the Japan-U.S. Defense leaders’ meeting held in August 2012, they concurred in the importance of studying and discussing the Guidelines for the Japan–U.S. Defense Cooperation established in 1997, in light of the changes over the 10 years since its formulation and ways of Japan-U.S. defense cooperation in the future. At the Japan-U.S. Defense ministerial meeting in September 2012, both sides reconfirmed the recognition and agreed to work on the necessary study and discussions. In the same month, “Project Team for the Study of the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation” was set up in the MOD and is now studying the matter. Furthermore, at the end of 2012, Prime Minister Abe ordered Defense Minister Onodera to study the review of the Guidelines for the Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation and others in order to expand the role of the SDF and enhance the deterrent capabilities. In addition, at the Japan-U.S. Summit held in February 2013, as Prime Minister Abe and U.S. President Obama exchanged views on security and the situations in the Asia-Pacific region, the Prime Minister stated to the President that, “in response to the evolving security environment, Japan would like to start reviewing the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation through discussions on the

Column

On Participating in a Field Training Exercise (Iron Fist 2013) with the U.S. Marine Corps in the U.S.

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Every year since FY2010, the Western Army Infantry Regiment has conducted bilateral field training exercises with the U.S. Marine Corps, in order to practice the effective exercise of the combined firepower of the JGSDF, JMSDF, and JASDF, both before and after landing, in an island-based military operation.

In the exercise in which I participated, we practiced key points relating to the guidance of the airborne weapons, naval artillery, and artillery and mortar firepower belonging to the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps, at the latter’s weapons guidance simulator and at a huge firing and bombing range.

The focus of this exercise was to work as a single team in guiding the ground, sea, and airborne firepower. This was the second time that I had participated in this exercise, but I was still able to learn many things from the U.S. Marine Corps and I was impressed by their wealth of combat experience.

In addition to a high level of English ability, a wide range of knowledge is required, from orders for firing targets to airspace coordination, which we do not usually have the opportunity to handle, so it is quite tough in some ways, but that adds to the sense of fulfillment. We also used our regiment’s 81mm mortar in the exercise, and the U.S. Marine Corps instructor praised the Self-Defense Forces personnel, saying that our mortar firing was very precise compared to that of the Marines.

These trainings are only just beginning and we have limited opportunities for live-fire training, so I feel that bilateral training with U.S. Marine Corps, which have abundant experience and a superb training environment, are of tremendous significance. I will strive diligently in our day-to-day exercises, with the objective of further honing the knowledge and skills that I have gained from the U.S. Marine Corps.
two countries’ ideas of the roles, missions and capabilities (RMC)."

Currently, discussions on the ideas of bilateral RMC and perceptions of strategic environment, which are presupposed for concrete defense cooperation, are advancing at various levels including the Councilor level of the two defense authorities. Because discussions on the review of the National Defense Program Guidelines and the QDR of the United States, to be established next year, will be closely interlinked with this, Japan and the United States will consider these matters while continuing intensive discussions.

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**Commentary**

### Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting: Further Strengthening of Japan-U.S. Alliance

On February 22, 2013, Prime Minister Abe visited the U.S. and met with President Obama for 105 minutes. The summary of security-related part of the meeting is as follows:

- **Prime Minister Abe** stated that in light of the increasingly severe security environment, Japan would fulfill its responsibility along with the U.S. He explained that Japan was working to strengthen its own defense capabilities through such measures as increasing its defense budget and reviewing the National Defense Program Guidelines, and that Japan had started to study the right of collective self-defense. The Prime Minister emphasized that Japan would ensure these efforts should contribute to the strengthening of the Alliance. In addition, Prime Minister Abe expressed his intention to promote cooperation in wide-ranging areas in order to enhance the deterrence of the Japan-U.S. Security Alliance. Furthermore, he added that in response to the changing security environment, Japan would like to start reviewing the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation through discussions concerning the two countries’ views of the roles, missions and capabilities.

- **President Obama** stated that the Japan-U.S. Alliance was of great importance also for the U.S., a Pacific nation, and welcomed Japan’s efforts to strengthen the Alliance. The two leaders agreed that they would order their respective defense and foreign ministers to follow up on important security issues by utilizing the 2+2 Meeting.

- **On the realignment of the U.S. Forces in Japan**, Prime Minister Abe stated that Japan would implement the realignment in accordance with the existing agreements with the U.S. and seek to mitigate the impact on Okinawa while maintaining deterrence. Both leaders also agreed that they would advance the relocation of MCAS Futenma and the Consolidation Plan for Facilities and Areas in Okinawa without delay.

- **Prime Minister Abe** welcomed the launch of comprehensive dialogues on space and cyber between Japan and the United States.

- **Both leaders** agreed to promote ballistic missile defense cooperation in the face of the nuclear and missile development by North Korea. They confirmed the additional deployment of a TPY-2 radar (so-called X-band radar) to Japan.
On April 29, 2013, Minister of Defense Onodera visited the United States and had a meeting with Secretary of Defense Hagel at the United States Department of Defense, exchanging views on a broad range of topics, including Japan-U.S. defense cooperation and the realignment of the USFJ.

In this meeting, Minister of Defense Onodera and U.S. Secretary of Defense Hagel confirmed the continued significance of the Japan-U.S. Alliance in ensuring the safety of Japan and stability of the region, and agreed on the significance of stepping up the bilateral cooperative relationship to a new stage based on the outcome of the Japan-U.S. Summit meeting held in February. They also exchanged views on the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region and confirmed close bilateral coordination between Japan and the U.S., as well as close trilateral coordination among Japan, the U.S., and South Korea in dealing with North Korea. On the Senkaku Islands, Minister of Defense Onodera explained Japan’s basic position that the islands were clearly an inherent part of the territory of Japan, in light of historical facts and based upon international law, and that Japan was determined to protect its land, waters, and airspace. U.S. Secretary of Defense Hagel stated that Article 5 of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty applied to the Senkaku Islands and that he was opposed to any unilateral action that aimed to change the status quo by force.

Regarding bilateral defense cooperation, Minister of Defense Onodera and U.S. Secretary of Defense Hagel welcomed the progress of bilateral discussions to share views on the strategic environment, which serve as a basis for the reviewing process of the Guidelines, and agreed to continue intensive discussions. They also confirmed the establishment of the Defense ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) Working Group and the progress of a study on cooperation in peacetime operations such as bilateral patrol and surveillance activities. In addition, they exchanged views on the additional deployment of a mobile radar for BMD in Japan.

On the realignment of the USFJ, they confirmed that landfill permit request for the relocation of MCAS Futenma and the development of the Consolidation Plan for Facilities and Areas in Okinawa were important steps for significantly mitigating the impact on Okinawa. They agreed to steadily make progress on the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, including relocation of USMC from Okinawa to Guam.

Minister of Defense Onodera and U.S. Secretary of Defense Hagel also agreed to hold a “2+2” Meeting at an appropriate timing this year to discuss the efforts for forging the bilateral Alliance.