

Foreword



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The transition of the Defense Agency to a ministry, which had been a long-term concern, was approved by a majority of Diet members, and the Ministry of Defense was set up on January 9, 2007.

Since the foundation of the Defense Agency and the Self Defense Forces (SDF) more than 52 years ago, the security environment surrounding Japan has undergone many significant changes. Accordingly, urgent improvements in regard to the structure of the Defense Agency and the SDF became necessary so that the two organizational entities could more promptly respond to a variety of problems and accurately but flexibly meet the requests and expectations of the public. To meet these challenges, the Agency has made transition to the Ministry of Defense.

The Ministry of Defense, to meet the expectations and trust of people, will plan and formulate a variety of policies to fulfill its responsibility as the ministry in charge of national defense, which is one of the central government's fundamental missions. We at the Ministry will further make vigilant efforts with a strong sense of responsibility to respond to any possible emergencies in a prompt and appropriate manner.

The security environment surrounding Japan remains severe. North Korea's test-launch last year of ballistic missiles and its announcement that it conducted a nuclear test, for example, are of major concern. The establishment of the Ministry of Defense marks a fresh start for Japan toward the achievement of new policy goals. The Ministry of Defense will more actively implement diverse measures, including those regarding the realignment of the United States Forces in Japan (USFJ) and international peace cooperation activities.

First, we must implement the Japan-U.S. agreement on the realignment of the USFJ. It is extremely important to implement the realignment in a smooth and prompt manner to enhance the effectiveness of the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements and decrease the burden that the U.S. military bases in Japan impose on local communities. At the last session of the Diet, a bill to promote smooth realignment has passed. Through implementation of the measures provided for in the law, we will steadily press ahead with the realignment.

International peace cooperation activities conducted by the SDF are highly appreciated by countries throughout the world. These activities include those in the Indian Ocean conducted under the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law as well as those being conducted in Iraq under the Humanitarian Relief and Iraqi

Reconstruction Special Measures Law. The SDF will continue to proactively engage in international peace cooperation activities, which were upgraded to one of its primary missions. In addition, the SDF will continue to improve aspects of its education and training as well as transportation and other systems.

The Ministry of Defense must successfully begin its rebirth as a policymaking organization. In order to develop a strategic plan for the nation's future, ensure Japan's security, and fully meet the expectations of the international community, the Ministry must strengthen its policymaking function. Within the present fiscal year, we will reorganize its structure, enhance the policymaking function, and boost contact with local communities.

As demonstrated by North Korea's test launch of ballistic missiles in 2006 and Pyongyang's announcement of the same year that it had implemented a nuclear test, there is a range of problems affecting Japan's security and the peace and safety of the international community. In order to deal with these problems in an appropriate manner, we will steadily improve the nation's defense capabilities as required. In particular, in order to intercept any possible ballistic missile attacks, we aim to deploy SM-3 equipped ships and Patriot PAC-3 units at an early date.

Through these measures, the Ministry of Defense and the SDF will devote themselves to contributing to the future of Japan and its people and to the peace and stability of the world.

Defense of Japan 2007 is the Ministry of Defense's first white paper. It clearly describes important matters related to Japan's defense and SDF activities conducted both at home and abroad, including the transition of the Defense Agency to a ministry, in order to deepen understanding both at home and overseas. In addition, the white paper introduces the activities of SDF personnel who are fulfilling their missions with vigilance and a strong sense of responsibility under severe conditions.

I hope that as many people as possible will read this white paper and go on to offer us their frank opinion.