



## **Instructions by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Commemorative Ceremony for the Transition of the Defense Agency to the Ministry of Defense (January 9, 2007)**

Nearly 55 years have passed since the San Francisco Treaty of Peace with Japan came into effect and Japan recovered its sovereignty. Today, in the capacity of prime minister, I am proud to witness the establishment of the Ministry of Defense as an organization to take charge of national defense—a mission indispensable for the protection of national sovereignty. Commemorating this historical day, I would like to express some of my ideas to all staff of the Ministry of Defense and personnel of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF).

In 1954, as Japan was making its first strong steps toward recovery after the devastation of World War II, the National Safety Agency was reorganized into the Defense Agency, and the SDF was founded as a national defense organization of a democratic country based on a concept entirely different from that which formed the basis of the former Japanese military. Japan thus started literally from nothing in terms of its national defense. National defense is one of the most basic functions a country needs to fulfill to protect the lives, welfare and property of its citizens. Domestic and overseas situations, however, have long positioned the governmental organization in charge of national defense not as a ministry but as an extra-ministerial bureau of the Prime Minister's office.

In the Cold War era, the severe confrontation between East and West substantially affected the domestic politics of Japan. In that era, some even objected to the existence of the Defense Agency and SDF. Those at the SDF, however, encouraged by the silent support and trust of many people, patiently and doggedly engaged themselves in daily training, sometimes clenching their teeth and sometimes in tears, and fulfilled their duties in disaster relief missions, while assisting the welfare of the Japanese people.

The end of the Cold War, however, dramatically changed the security environment surrounding Japan. It was a time for Japan to squarely face the crises and fundamentally review the roles of its defense capabilities.

Since the outbreak of the Gulf Crisis in 1990, the SDF has been engaged in a range of overseas operations, including peacekeeping operations (PKO). SDF personnel worked and sweated to protect the lives, welfare and property of people, devoting themselves to overseas operations, disaster relief missions in large-scale disasters that befell Japan, such as the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and maritime security operations, including operations to deal with an incident involving a suspicious boat off the coast of the Noto Peninsula. Many Japanese citizens felt sympathy for and trust in SDF personnel who conducted these activities.

The law for the transition of the Defense Agency to the Ministry of Defense passed with the support of more than 90% of the Diet members in both the Upper House and Lower House. This was made possible because those concerned, including active and retired SDF personnel, made efforts to fulfill their high and noble mission of national defense over many years.

Ministry of Defense officials and SDF personnel are required to devote themselves to meeting the expectations of people, heedless of danger. We, however, must not forget that since the launch of the SDF, more than 1,700 SDF personnel lost their precious lives in the course of fulfilling their missions. I would like to express my sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family of those who sacrificed their lives to fulfill the high and noble mission for the nation and its people.

It is no exaggeration to say that our country is now at the dawn of a new age. I have repeatedly mentioned that we must make a clean break with the post-war regime. In order to make Japan a “beautiful country,” we must part with the dogma that the post-war regime will never change. We must pursue new goals and new ideals for Japan in the 21st century and give specific form to them.

A young Charles de Gaulle wrote in his book, *The Edge of the Sword*, “When faced with the challenge of events, the man of character has recourse to himself. His instinctive response is to leave his mark on action, to take responsibility for it, to make it his own business. . . . It is not that he wishes to turn a blind eye to orders, or to sweep aside advice, but only that he is passionately anxious to exert his own will, to make up his mind.” With a similar attitude, I am determined to devote myself to the creation of a beautiful country. As for the right of collective self-defense, I will give first priority to national safety at all times, exploring what kind of activities in specific situations could constitute the exercise of the right to collective self-defense which is prohibited under the Constitution of Japan.

Following the revision of the Defense Agency Establishment Law, the Defense Agency was elevated to Ministry status, to a governmental organization in charge of planning and formulating policies on national defense and security. Also, the transition to a Ministry clearly shows Japan’s commitment to national defense and to the peace of the international community. This marks a big stride in parting with the post-war regime and creating a new country.

The enactment of the law for the transition of the Defense Agency to a Ministry demonstrated to those both within and outside the country the maturity of Japan as a democratic state, its confidence in civilian control, and the will of the nation and its people to play a responsible role for the peace and stability of the international community.

At the Japan-Philippines summit meeting held the other day, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Philippines, kindly welcomed the transition of the Defense Agency to the Ministry of Defense. I believe this implies that the President expects Japan to play a more active role in the security of the East Asian region and she has great confidence in the maturity of Japan’s civilian control of the SDF.

Even at this very moment, SDF personnel are carrying out their missions under difficult conditions in Iraq, the Golan Heights, the Indian Ocean, on isolated islands, and at the bases and camps of the SDF.

I can see in my mind how each of them is fulfilling their duties. As supreme commander, my heart is always with the SDF personnel. I am always proud of their activities and I expect them to go beyond the call of duty.

Finally, I hope that SDF personnel will maintain their high discipline and morale to ensure the peace and prosperity of Japan and make dedicated contributions for the future of this beautiful country and people and for the fulfillment of their high and noble mission for the world peace and stability. These are my instructions to you.

January 9, 2007

**Shinzo Abe**  
**Prime Minister**