

On the Publication of Defense of Japan 2008



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Last year's "Defense of Japan 2007" was our first white paper since the transition of the Defense Agency to the Ministry of Defense. The white paper demonstrated the resolve of the Ministry to become an organization more resilient to crisis and more capable of contributing to the international peace.

However, we cannot say that the roughly one year that has passed from that time to the publication of this white paper has been a bright one for the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces. During this period, there occurred a wide range of problems as follows: problems related to thorough implementation of civilian control such as the mistaken reporting of the amount of fuel replenished and the mistaken destruction of log books; problems related to establishment of a strict information security system, such as an information leakage via the Internet and leakage of a Special Defense Secret regarding the Aegis system; problems related to transparency of defense procurement such as excessive billing by suppliers; and misconducts such as the arrest of a former Vice-Minister of Defense on suspicion of bribery. These serious problems have deeply undermined the trust of the people, and I once again offer my sincere apologies for such incidents.

Regarding the collision of the MSDF destroyer *Atago* with the fishing boat *Seitoku Maru*, which occurred on February 19, 2008, it is unacceptable that the SDF, whose mission is to protect the lives and property of the people, caused such an incident. We deeply regret the occurrence of this accident. We intend to take all preventative measures to ensure that we will never cause any similar incident again.

Based on this series of problems, discussions involving experts were conducted at the Council for Reforming the Ministry of Defense which had been established within the Prime Minister's Office, and a report was compiled in July of this year.

This report thoroughly assessed and analyzed each of the problems and presented proposals based on the reform principles of: 1) Thorough adherence to rules and regulations, 2) Establishment of professionalism, and 3) Establishment of a management of works that prioritizes the execution of duty, with the aim of total optimization.

Moreover, the report states that organizational reform is also necessary in order to enable the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces to more steadily and effectively implement these three principles and present proposals for specific reforms to enhance the command functions of the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Defense.

The purpose of this reform is not restructuring of the Ministry of Defense itself, but to prevent the recurrence of problems and accidents in the future as well as to try to build a system that enables the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces to respond more quickly and appropriately to a wide range of challenges such as new threats and diverse situations including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism and the continued severe security environment surrounding Japan. We will proceed with further reviews within the Ministry of Defense and steadily implement drastic reform of the Ministry.

Concerning protection of the independence and peace of Japan, it is the Ministry of Defense and the SDF alone which provide the ultimate defense for the people of Japan. That is why I believe that it must be an organization with strict discipline that can earn confidence from the people and must live up to the trust of the people. The majority of SDF members solemnly devote themselves to engaging in international peace cooperation activities in the Indian Ocean and other places in the world, as well as day-to-day missions in various regions throughout Japan. This is why I believe that the Ministry of Defense and the SDF should be revitalized for the sake of the people of Japan, for each and every SDF member, and in order to contribute to international peace and security.

We have written the “Defense of Japan 2008” in an accessible manner so as to promote an understanding of the SDF’s activities among the people of Japan and other countries, while incorporating our resolve for the reform of the Ministry of Defense. Furthermore, we have made efforts to convey the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces as they are through columns highlighting the voices of SDF members engaging in their day-to-day duties.

It is my hope that this “Defense of Japan 2008” will be read by many people, and that we will obtain their understanding of the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces as well as their attention to and support for the steady implementation of reform of the Ministry.