

Chapter 4 New National Defense Program Guidelines

For appropriate execution of various SDF missions, it is necessary to acquire equipment such as destroyers and aircraft, and to establish a unit operation posture. However, building up defense capability cannot be achieved overtime and takes time, and therefore it needs to be planned and carried out on the basis of the medium- to long-term outlook.

For this reason, since FY1977, the Government has developed the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), which set forth the basic policies for Japan's security, the security environment surrounding Japan, the significance and role of Japan's defense capabilities, and basic guidelines for the building up of Japan's defense capabilities, including the specific organization of the SDF, and the deployment targets for major equipment.

Section 1 Features of the past NDPGs

To date, in light of security environment of the time, the National Defense Program Guidelines were formulated in 1976, 1995, 2004 and 2010.

See ▶ Fig. II-4-1-1 (Developments in the Upgrading of Defense Capability to Date)

1 1976 NDPG

Formulated against the backdrop of the détente¹ of the 1970s, the 1976 NDPG were based on awareness that (1) in general, a full-scale military clash between East and West would be unlikely to occur, and (2) in the vicinity of Japan, the balanced relationship between the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union, and the existence of the Japan-U.S. security alliance would continue to play a substantial role in preventing a serious invasion of Japan.

In addition, with regard to Japan's defense capabilities, the NDPG stipulated that it should give considerations so that it can (1) be furnished with the various functions required for defense and (2) be in a balanced posture in organization and deployment, including logistic support, (3) take adequate surveillance posture in peacetime, (4) effectively cope with situations up to limited and small-scale aggression, and (5) be capable of shifting smoothly to a new setup when an important change occurs in the situation and a new posture is necessary with regard to defense

¹ This refers to the process of the easing of tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union that were in a confrontational relationship called the Cold War, triggered by the Cuban Crisis of 1962. This situation ended by Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in 1979.

capability. The Basic Defense Force Concept introduced by the 1976 NDPG attached importance to deterrence, emphasizing measures to prevent an invasion of Japan.

2 1995 NDPG

The 1995 NDPG were formulated with consideration to the change of the international situation such as the end of the Cold War, and increasing public expectations for the SDF in the wake of the U.N. Peacekeeping Operations and response to the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.

The 1995 NDPG pointed out that previous Defense Programs of Japan were based on the Basic Defense Force Concept that aimed to possess a minimum-necessary defense force as an independent nation in order to prevent the country itself from becoming a power vacuum that becomes a factor of instability for the neighboring region, rather than directly coping with a military threat to Japan, and basically followed the same approach.

At the same time, in terms of the content of Japan's defense capabilities, the Guidelines were characterized by their emphasis on the further utilization of SDF capabilities not only in the defense of Japan, but also in response to large-scale disasters and various other situations, and in contributions to a more stable security environment, as well as reviewing the scale and function of the defense force.

3 2004 NDPG

Amid the emergence of new threats and the challenges of diverse situations such as the progress in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, and the activities of international terrorist activities, the 2004 NDPG were formulated on the decision that new guidelines for the approach to Japan's national security and defense capabilities were necessary.

The 2004 NDPG established two security goals: (1) preventing direct threats from reaching Japan and, in the event that one does, repel it and minimize any damage, and (2) improving the international security environment, so as to reduce the chances that any threat will reach Japan in the first place. To this end, the Guidelines set an integrated combination of three approaches, (1) Japan's own effort, (2) Japan-U.S. Arrangements, and (3) Cooperation with the international community. Accordingly, in terms of the concept of defense capabilities, the Guidelines stipulated that a "multifunctional, flexible, effective defense force" was necessary to address new threats and diverse situations, with emphasis on response capabilities, while maintaining effective aspects of the Basic Defense Force Concept.

4 2010 NDPG

The 2010 NDPG were formulated in light of the recognition that (1) large-scale military capacity, including nuclear capabilities, still exists in the surrounding region, with many countries modernizing their military forces and intensifying various activities; (2) dramatic progress in such fields as military science and technology has shortened the time between the first signs of a contingency and its development making a seamless response necessary; and (3) many security issues extend across national borders, making partnership and cooperation between countries important from times of peace, so the role of military forces is diversifying and it is becoming common to continuously operate military forces from peacetime.

Accordingly, the 2010 NDPG focus on SDF operations, rather than the Basic Defense Force Concept, which emphasized the existence of the defense force; as such, the Guidelines stipulate that it is necessary to ensure that future defense capabilities be dynamic and proactively conduct the various activities required to be fulfilled. Therefore, the 2010 NDPG prescribe the development of a Dynamic Defense Force that demonstrates readiness, mobility, flexibility, sustainability, and versatility, underpinned by advanced technical capabilities and intelligence skills, in light of trends in the level of military technology.

See ▶ Fig. II-4-1-2 (Changes in the Views regarding Defense Capability)