Pacific Partnership 2014

The 13th IISS Asia Security Summit

Japan–Australia Defense Ministerial Meeting
5th Japan–Australia “2+2” Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations
General Iwasaki’s Visit to Myanmar
FY2014 SDF Joint Exercise for Rescue
Participation in Red Flag-Alaska
Personnel Replacements of the SDF Engineer Unit
Dispatched to South Sudan PKO
Scenery of Japan - Nagaoka Firework Festival

Cover Photograph:
Pacific Partnership 2014

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

5th Japan–Australia “2+2” Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations
Minister of Defense Itsunori Onodera visited Singapore from May 30th to June 1st and attended the 13th IISS Asia Security Summit (Shangri-La Dialogue). At the Dialogue, Minister Onodera delivered a speech and held meetings with defense ministers of participating host countries. Minister Onodera explained Japan’s national security policy, with a particular focus on the status of discussions involving the reconstruction of Japan’s legal basis for security, and discussed the regional situation and defense cooperation.

The Ministers discussed issues such as the regional situation, bilateral defense cooperation, and the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. They shared the common view to oppose any attempt to change the status quo by coercion in any region of the world including the East China Sea. Secretary Hagel welcomed and supported Japan’s efforts concerning the right of collective self-defense and other matters. They agreed that they would continue close bilateral cooperation on matters such as completing the revision of the Guidelines for Japan–U.S. Defense Cooperation by the end of the year and mitigating the impact on Okinawa, and thereby strengthening the Japan–U.S. Alliance.

The Ministers held discussions on the regional security situation including North Korea as well as trilateral defense cooperation and released the joint statement based on the outcome of the discussion. Their common understanding is that North Korea’s continued provocations pose a serious threat to regional and global security and agreed that all three countries would continue to coordinate closely on this issue. They also reaffirmed the importance of information sharing and shared an understanding that this issue needs to be reviewed further.

The Ministers exchanged views on regional matters, they discussed the regional situation focusing on the South China Sea. They agreed that issues in both the South China Sea and East China Sea should be peacefully resolved through dialogue. Minister Onodera welcomed Vietnam’s decision of first ever dispatch of personnel to UNMISS and conveyed his intent to continue actively supporting Vietnam in this area. In response, Minister Thanh expressed his gratitude for Japan’s support.

The Ministers discussed the regional situation as well as measures to further strengthen Japan–Australia defense cooperation in advance of the Japan–Australia "2+2" meeting planned to take place in Tokyo in June. They agreed that they would seek to deepen bilateral defense cooperation through bilateral joint exercises, trilateral defense cooperation involving the U.S., and defense equipment and technology cooperation.

The Ministers held a discussion on bilateral defense cooperation and the regional situation as part of a follow-up to the agreement made at the Japan–U.K. summit meeting held in London in May this year. They also agreed that they will continue to closely engage in consultations on the conclusion of an ACIA and to establish a working-level framework for dialogue to promote the cooperation in the area of defense equipment and technology.
Meeting with Foreign Leaders

Japan–Australia Defense Ministerial Meeting

5th Japan–Australia “2+2” Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultations

Defense Minister Onodera met with Australian Defence Minister, Senator David Johnston for the Japan–Australia Defense Ministerial Meeting in Tokyo on June 11th. At the opening, Minister Onodera welcomed Minister Johnston’s visit to Japan. Minister Johnston stated that Japan is a reliable friendly country to Australia as well as to the region and that Australia would like to maintain the good relationship with Japan. Minister Onodera explained about the incident where Chinese fighter aircraft flew dangerously close to SDF aircraft on the same day of the meeting (June 11th).

The Ministers exchanged their views on issues such as the areas of cooperation between the defense organizations for the Japan–Australia Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultations (“2+2”) based on the outcome of Japan–Australia summit meeting held in April this year. The Ministers agreed to enhance Japan–Australia and the trilateral cooperation with the U.S. such as expanding bilateral and trilateral joint exercises. The Ministers confirmed the progress of cooperation in the area of defense equipment and technology, and welcomed that contents of joint research are steadily being specified for the commencement of research in the next fiscal year.

General Iwasaki’s Visit to Myanmar

General Shigeru Iwasaki, Chief of Staff, Joint Staff, paid an official visit to Myanmar from May 26th to 29th, upon the invitation of Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar Defence Services. In the meeting between General Iwasaki and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, they discussed issues such as the security situation in the Asia-Pacific region and defense cooperation/ exchanges between Japan and Myanmar. In particular, they agreed on the importance of resolving regional issues through dialogue.

They also confirmed the importance of exchanges at each level of the SDF and Myanmar Defence Services in light of the long history between Myanmar and Japan as “new old friends.”

FY2014 SDF Joint Exercise for Rescue

From June 2nd to 6th, FY2014 Joint Exercise for Rescue was conducted at the Ministry of Defense (Ichigaya, Tokyo), GSDF Camp Asaka (Saitama prefecture), and other related organizations participating in the exercise.

The purpose of this year’s exercise was to maintain and enhance the SDF’s disaster response capabilities in the event of a Nankai Trough Earthquake in cooperation with related organizations including USFJ and other ministries and agencies.

Participation in Red Flag-Alaska

The ASDF took part in the United States Air Force combat exercise “Red Flag-Alaska” from June 2nd to July 3rd. Hosted by the United States Air Force, this exercise is intended to enhance the tactical combat skills of units and the joint responsiveness of Japan and U.S. Forces.

The ASDF deployed six F-15 fighters and two KC-767 air transport.

The duration of the training where the aircraft were involved in drilling of air-to-air combat, aerial refueling, and tactical air transport.

This year marks the eighteenth participation from the ASDF since 1996.
Q1. What is Pacific Partnership?
A1. Pacific Partnership (PP) is a mission hosted by the U.S. forces that started in 2007. During PP, vessels mainly composed of the U.S. Navy visit countries in the region and conduct activities such as medical care, construction work, and cultural exchanges. The aim of this mission is to strengthen mutual collaboration among participating nations and to promote smooth implementation of international peace cooperation operations and international disaster relief activities, collaborating with other governments, militaries, and NGOs.

Q2. What is the significance of participating in PP?
A2. Through exchanges among military and civilian personnel of partner and host nations by conducting medical care, maintenance of facilities, and cultural exchange, PP is expected to promote mutual understanding and cooperation among related nations and improve the international security environment. By providing medical services, repairing facilities, and transporting supplies/other goods, participation in PP will serve the purpose of improving our skills in the fields of medical care, facility maintenance, and transport in international peace cooperation operations. Partner nations can also acquire expertise to coordinate and further enhance their medical skills in the fields of disaster relief.

Q3. How has the MOD been involved in PP?
A3. The MOD/SDF has deployed its personnel from the GSDF and participated in medical activities annually since 2007. In 2010, the MOD deployed SDF troops for the first time to include an MSDF transport vessel KUNISAKI and a medical team from the GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF. The SDF also cooperated with civilian organizations such as NGOs in Vietnam and Cambodia. In 2011, although the size of the deployment had been planned to be the same, it was reduced due to the Great East Japan Earthquake. Several medical officers, dental officers, and others were deployed to East Timor and Micronesia. In 2012, an SDF transport aircraft was deployed for the first time. In addition, SDF medical team (approx. 40 personnel), a MSDF transport vessel (OYU/MI), NGOs (2 organizations and 19 individuals) were deployed to the Philippines and Vietnam. In 2013, SDF medical personnel were deployed to Tonga. In Papua New Guinea, SDF Medical personnel, a MSDF vessel (TAMAGURI) as well as ASDF transport vessel were deployed and carried out activities in cooperation with NGOs.

Q4. What are the specific activities of PP 2014?
A4. PP 2014 takes place in the Southeast Asian countries. The MOD/SDF conducts activities in Vietnam from June 6th to 15th, in Cambodia from June 19th to 28th, and in the Philippines from July 4th to 15th. We dispatch:
(1) Medical personnel from GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF: 40
(2) GSDF engineer personnel: 10
(3) MSDF vessel (Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Philippines): 1
(4) ASDF transport aircraft (the Philippines): 1
In Cambodia and the Philippines, the SDF will conduct activities in cooperation with NGOs.
The activities include:
(1) Comprehensive medical care mainly composed of internal medicine and dental service
(2) Public health education to local residents and medical staff
(3) Repairing facilities such as local medical clinics and schools
(4) Cultural exchanges with local residents (introduction of Japanese culture such as origami paper folding art and kendo fencing)

A ceremony for the departure of the 6th Engineer Unit to be dispatched to South Sudan PKO (UNMISS: United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan) was held at GSDF Camp Obihiro on May 20th. The ceremony was attended by Senior Vice-Minister of Defense Takeda, officials, and the families of personnel. Senior Vice-Minister of Defense Takeda and the commander of the 5th Brigade, Northern Army of GSDF gave words of encouragement to the 6th Engineer Unit. The advance team of the 6th Engineer Unit departed Japan of May 23rd to replace the 5th Engineer Unit in phases. All personnel from the 5th Engineer Unit returned to Japan by June 20th. At the request of UNMISS, since they started their activities on December 16th, 2013, 5th Engineer Unit have carried out IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) assistance such as establishing water supplies, providing medical assistance, and carrying out site preparation for POC (Protection of Civilian) area, as well as helping construct security fences and improving drainage ditches at the UN site. Sending off the first group of the 5th Engineer Unit, the commander told his personnel that they should return home with pride, always bearing in mind the modesty and gratitude for support from their families and the unit. He expressed his appreciation for their hard work in South Sudan and wished for safe journey back home.
Troop Inspection by Defense Minister Onodera:
Minamitorishima Island (4 June)
Minister Onodera has been proactively inspecting SDF camps and bases throughout Japan since he assumed his position. On June 4th, Minister Onodera made an inspection of Minamitorishima Island, the easternmost territory of Japan with an area of approx. 1.5 square kilometers, and encouraged personnel of MSDF Minamitorishima Air Dispatch Unit.

Troop Inspection etc. by Minister Onodera: Hokkaido (14~15 June)
Parliamentary Senior Vice-Minister of Defense Takeda’s Visit to France (Meetings with officials of France Ministry of Defence, visit to Eurosatory 2014) (15~17 June)

Courtesy Call on Defense Minister Onodera by Secretary of Ministry of Defence and Urban Development of Sri Lanka (17 June)
Courtesy Call on Defense Minister Onodera by Secretary General of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (17 June)

Firework Festival is a special attraction of summer in Japan. Along with Oomagari Festival (Aomori prefecture) and Tsuchiura Festival (Ibaraki prefecture), the Nagaoka Firework Festival (Niigata prefecture) is regarded as one of the three largest firework festivals in Japan. During the annual festival held on August 2nd and 3rd, the sky over Niigata prefecture is beautifully colored by approx. no less than 20,000 gorgeous aerial shells prepared by skilled craftsmen.

Gigantic flower firework, almost 650m in diameter, blooms in the sky when the largest scale shell in Japan called “Sei-san-shaku-dama” sparks (90cm in diameter, 300kg in weight). A wide-scale star mine “Phoenix” is launched to wish and pray for a recovery from the past disasters that hit Niigata region. This year is particularly commemorative for locals, since it marks the 50th anniversary of the Niigata Earthquake. Also a decade has passed since the Mid Niigata Prefecture Earthquake in 2004 and Niigata Fukushima Heavy rain fall.

On this landmark year, Niigata Joint Disaster Drill was held on June 16th, the same day of the earthquake 50 years ago. The 30th Infantry Regiment, GSDF 12th Brigade, stationed at Camp Shibata participated in the drill with the aim of verifying the coordination procedure with relevant agencies in case of disaster relief operations.

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