JAPAN DEFENSE FOCUS

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SPECIAL FEATURE

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The Latest News on the Ministry of Defense and Self-Defense Forces

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Japan-Philippines Defense Ministerial Meeting

On January 29th, Defense Minister Nakatani held a ministerial meeting in Tokyo with Secretary of National Defense of the Republic of the Philippines, Voltaire T. Gazmin.

At the beginning of the meeting, Minister Nakatani strongly condemned the terrorist act of taking Japanese hostage in Syria, and explained Japanese government’s intention not to give in to terrorism and its efforts to actively contribute to the peace and stability of the world together with international community. Secretary Gazmin expressed his support for it.

The two Ministers extensively exchanged ideas regarding security circumstances surrounding the two countries as well as future bilateral defense cooperation and exchanges. The Ministers particularly briefed each other on and acknowledged the current situation of South China Sea and East China Sea.

Minister Nakatani also explained Japan’s effort on the ongoing development of security legislation, and Secretary Gazmin welcomed Japan’s such efforts.

The Ministers shared views to elevate the bilateral defense cooperation and exchanges to a new phase, strengthening the cooperation and exchanges through capacity building, assistance and trainings/exercises in the area of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) and Maritime Security, exploring a new possibility of cooperation in such areas as defense equipment and technology. To express their will, they signed the “Memorandum on Defense Cooperation and Exchanges between the Ministry of Defense of Japan and the Department of National Defense of the Republic of the Philippines.”

Through various means of obtaining information, the MOD collects and analyzes a wide range of information essential for securing peace and stability of Japan. With respect to the information collected via people, the MOD places Defense Attachés at Japanese embassies and government missions to collect military information from defense authorities in their country of residence as well as from other country’s military attachés.

Defense Attachés are also responsible for coordinating defense cooperation with other countries since such framework has been increasingly expanding both in quality and quantity lately.

In light of the terrorist attack against Japanese nationals in Algeria that took place in January 2013, the MOD decided to newly send Defense Attachés to seven African countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, and South Africa) where beneficial military information is available, and additionally dispatch Attachés to three European countries (France, Germany, and the UK) that have close ties with the region in FY2014.

At the end of March, 2015, the MOD will have a total of 58 Defense Attachés at 40 embassies and two government missions.

For full text of the Joint Press Release and Memorandum, visit the MOD website.

http://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/youjin/2015/01/29a_memo_e.pdf
In an effort to deal with the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in West Africa, the MOD/SDF has dispatched two liaison officials to be engaged in information gathering at the headquarters of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) in Stuttgart, Germany. Following is an interview carried out on MAJ Fujii and Maj Yamauchi, who have been working at AFRICOM since January 7th, 2015.

| Q1. Tell us about your current duties at AFRICOM. |

MAJ Fujii / Maj Yamauchi:
Our duties are to gather and process various information at the headquarters of the AFRICOM and to send them to the MOD/SDF in Japan for the use of the Japanese government to consider ways to tackle the EVD.

| Q2. What do you think is the significance of your work? |

MAJ Fujii:
The latest and accurate on-site information concentrate at AFRICOM since it is the very headquarters in charge of the U.S.'s fight against the EVD. Besides, AFRICOM has liaison officials from eight other countries. Therefore, we have access to a wide range of information about activities of other countries as well. Such quick, accurate, and broad information are only available here.

Maj Yamauchi:
We can collect accurate information in a timely manner by actually working here at AFRICOM. We also share information with liaison officials from other countries. I feel a great deal of responsibility since the course of action to be taken by the MOD/SDF will be decided based on the information we send back to Japan. Also, I find it very fulfilling to work here, representing Japan, at the forefront where the MOD/SDF is considering ways to make contributions to Africa.

| Q3. Tell us about your goals and aspirations. |

MAJ Fujii:
I would like to continuously make every possible effort to live up to our grave responsibilities.

Maj Yamauchi:
We are currently serving as liaison officials for the purpose of dealing with the EVD, but I would like to go beyond that and take this opportunity to establish contacts with and learn the operations of the U.S. forces, thereby making most of my experience at AFRICOM for my future duties at the SDF and contributing more to the MOD/SDF.

The ASDF took part in the trilateral combat training as well as Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) exercise together with the U.S. Air Force (USAF) and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) from January 27th to March 12th at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

The exercise Cope North Guam seeks to enhance tactical combat skills of the ASDF units and the joint response capabilities of U.S. and Japan forces. It also provides opportunities for the ASDF to improve interoperability with the USAF and RAAF in the HA/DR activities.

This trilateral exercise involved 460 personnel from the ASDF Air Defense Command and ASDF Air Support Command as well as aircraft such as the F-2A, F-15J/DJ, U-125A, F-2C, C-130H and KC-767. For the HA/DR component, 64 ASDF personnel and two C-130H aircraft participated in the training involving airlift, airdrop of supplies, takeoff and landings on uneven surfaces, searching operations, and the aeromedical evacuations.

The ASDF units have taken part in Cope North Guam since 1999, with this year marking the 15th time. The RAAF started participating in the exercise since 2011, making it the fourth time the Japan-U.S.-Australia trilateral training of its kind was held.
The SDF participated in Cobra Gold 15, a multilateral joint training exercise that took place in Thailand from February 9th to 20th. Approx. 100 personnel from the MOD/SDF, including GSDF, MSDF, ASDF, and Joint Staff Office took part.

A total of nine countries took part in this year’s Cobra Gold to include Japan, the U.S., Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, China, and India. The Cobra Gold seeks to improve necessary capabilities as well as promote mutual understanding and reinforce relationships of trust between the countries involved. Of the various training exercises that took place, the SDF participated in the Staff Exercise (STAFFEX), humanitarian/civilian assistance activities, and the transport training of overseas Japanese nationals.

In the STAFFEX part, personnel practiced planning for counter-piracy operations and coordination procedures with the multinational force headquarters. During the transport training of Japanese nationals abroad, they confirmed a series of procedures such as taking over nationals from the embassy and loading them on aircraft for evacuation.

Humanitarian/civilian assistance activities component included the tabletop exercises based on the scenario of HA/DR in response to the outbreak of infectious disease.

Since taking part in Cobra Gold’s STAFFEX for the first time in 2005, the SDF has expanded its scope of participating exercise. This year marked the 11th participation from the SDF.

The SDF held a field training exercise with the U.S. Army at its Yasubetsu Training Area in Hokkaido from February 9th to 22nd. The exercise North Wind 2 involved approx. 150 personnel from the GSDF 5th Brigade 27th Infantry Regiment and the GSDF Central Readiness Force as well as approx. 50 personnel from the U.S. Army’s 25th Infantry Division 4th Brigade Combat Team 1-501 Infantry Unit stationed in Alaska.

The GSDF and U.S. Army carried out the field exercises according to coordination procedures on joint operations in the snowy cold area, in an effort to improve interoperability, following each of their respective chains of command. Additionally, Japan and U.S. paratroopers carried out a joint training, seeking to improve the tactical combat skills of both countries since the U.S. Army personnel stationed in Alaska that took part in the North Wind 2 were the only large-scale U.S. paratrooper unit in the Asia-Pacific region.

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This field training has been organized in Japan since 1981, with this year marking the 27th time.

United Nations Staff Officers Course

The Japan Peacekeeping Training and Research Center (JPC) held the United Nations Staff Officers Course (UNSOC) from January 26th to February 10th. The UNSOC, which was held for the third time, is a UN recognized training program that provides staff officers who will engage in UN PKOs with essential knowledge and skills. In addition to 12 SDF personnel and MOD officials, one official of the Cabinet Office and a total of eight military personnel from Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and the UK attended the course.

Each of the 21 participants from different organizations, had their own operational procedures, different sense of values based on their cultural background and traditions, and individual job experiences. Through UNSOC curriculum, participants have not only learned the activity rules for UN missions together, but also promoted mutual understanding. It allowed participants to acquire the knowledge and skills that are necessary to immediately contribute to the UN PKOs as headquarters-level staff officers.

Both courses offered by the JPC (PKOCCC* and UNSOC) basically aim at military personnel. However, as latest PKO mission trend towards more integrated and complex ones, it is requested that all actors collaborate with each other in the field including military personnel, police officers, and civilians to strengthen cooperation and interaction through joint pre-deployment training. For this purpose, the JPC will continuously strive to contribute to developing the human resources at home and abroad who are expected to work in various international activities for maintaining peace and security, including the UN PKOs.

*PKO Contingent Commanders’ Course
Sakura, a globally recognized Japanese word for cherry blossoms, refers to trees and their flowers belonging to genus Prunus. Although it is believed to have originated in the Himalayas, Sakura is widely distributed today in the temperate zone of the Northern Hemisphere including the U.S., Europe, and West Siberia.

Sakura is commonly considered as one of the representatives of typical and iconic Japanese sceneries along with Mt. Fuji. In fact, Sakura is deeply incorporated into the Japanese culture and society. It has often been found in traditional and modern Japanese art such as poetry, Ukiyo-e painting, manga, film, popular songs, and so forth, symbolizing the arrival of spring, happiness, and sometimes ephemeral nature of life. When spring comes and Sakura blooms, the Japanese people get together, sometimes in great numbers, to hold feasts around flowering trees in parks or at riversides. This long-standing Japanese tradition is known as “Hanami,” literally meaning “flower-viewing.” Sakura is even depicted on the 100-yen coin, so check it out if you have one at hand.

Sakura is closely tied with the MOD/SDF too as uniforms of the SDF officers bear the symbol of Sakura flower. Sakura is also planted in a large number of SDF bases and camps, some of which hold Sakura festivals in spring so that people can come in and admire the beautiful flowers. Here, Sakura is no longer a metaphor for ephemerality. Rather, it serves as a tribute to the enduring tie between local residents and the SDF.