Collaboration with Local Communities

Activities in Civic Life and Contributions to Society

The Ministry of Defense (MOD)/the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) conducts activities to support the lives of citizens in a range of fields, in response to requests from municipal governments and relevant organizations. Such activities contribute to further deepening the trust in the SDF, and provide SDF personnel with pride and confidence.

The Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) handles the disposal of unexploded ordnance found throughout Japan. In FY2015, there were approx. 1,392 such cases (approx. 43 tons). In particular, cases handled in Okinawa Prefecture accounted for approx. 47% of the total cases. The Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) clears and disposes of underwater mines and other dangerous explosives, and approx. 1,832 explosives (approx. 3.5 tons) were handled in FY2015.

The SDF camps and bases allow the local residents access to their facilities to the extent that it does not interfere with unit activities, thus striving to foster friendly interaction with local communities. The SDF also provides transportation and other assistance at a variety of athletic events. In addition, it supports regional medical treatment efforts by providing general medical care at some SDF hospitals as well as conducting urgent transport for emergency patients from isolated islands. Furthermore, based on national policy, the MOD/SDF ensures opportunities for local small and medium sized enterprises to receive orders, while taking efficiency into account, by such measures as the promotion of separated/divided ordering and the securing of competition.

1  "The Contract Basic Policy of the Government regarding Small and Medium Enterprises in FY2015" (Cabinet decision on August 28, 2015)
2  For example, this is a method through which grouping of products etc. takes place when putting up the order for general competitive bidding, and then a successful bidder for the groups is decided.
The role of the SDF in local communities is not limited to disaster relief dispatch.

The GSDF holds five armies nationwide, namely Northern, North Eastern, Eastern, Middle, and Western Armies, and each of these armies conducts cooperation activities that suit the characteristics of each region.

Among these cooperation activities, unexploded ordinance disposal is common across the armies, and they deal with approximately 1,400 cases on average every year. Due to the history of the Battle of Okinawa, the number of disposal cases in the Kyushu and Okinawa regions (GSDF Western Army) still account for 50% of the total disposal cases even after 70 years since the end of the battle. Transporting emergency patients also counts for over 200 cases annually (GSDF alone), and the overwhelming majority (70-80%) of these cases occur in the remote islands of Nagasaki, Kagoshima and Okinawa. Also, recently removing snow from houses where an elderly person is living alone is becoming an issue in snowy cold places. In the ongoing depopulation areas in particular, there are not many young people who can carry out such a work. For this reason, there have been increasing cases in Hokkaido (GSDF Northern Army) that the SDF that stations in the vicinity provides support for removing snow as volunteers.

In addition to providing the assistance for various traditional events held in each region, in the Tohoku region (GSDF North Eastern Army), people have larger expectations on the SDF’s contribution to memorial events and town development connected to the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Meanwhile, support for national events taking place in each region is also an important role of the SDF. Following the support for the National Sports Festival in Wakayama in 2015, the GSDF Army (GSDF Middle Army) provided support to transport state guests along with other support during the G7 2016 Ise-Shima Summit held in May 2016. The SDF intends to contribute to a successful Olympic Games by providing security assistance under the Ground Central Command to be newly formed and the GSDF Eastern Army during the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020.

Volunteering to remove snow in Akabira City, Hokkaido (GSDF 10th Infantry Regiment (Takikawa City, Hokkaido))
Support for the rowing competition at the National Sports Festival in Wakayama (The Third Tank Battalion (Takashima City, Shiga Prefecture))

2. Cooperation from Local Governments and Other Relevant Organizations for the SDF

Amid the harsh recruitment and employment situation, the cooperation from local governments and relevant organizations is vital to secure highly qualified personnel and to support the reemployment of uniformed SDF personnel who retire at a relatively young age under the SDF’s early retirement system.

Furthermore, SDF camps and bases maintain close relations with local communities, and therefore, various forms of support and cooperation from the local community are indispensable for the SDF to conduct its diverse activities, including training exercises and disaster dispatch. Moreover, units dispatched overseas for international peace cooperation missions and other duties receive support and assistance from the relevant organizations for the procedures involved.

Reference 69 (Activities in Civic Life); Reference 70 (Activities Contributing to Society)

3 Out of the bidding participation eligibility categorized into grade A-D, this refers to competition between grade C or D only, which comprise mostly of small and medium enterprises.

4 In addition to this kind of support, many letters of encouragement are sent from the public to the SDF personnel, which raise the morale of SDF personnel and reinforce their awareness of serving the people of Japan.
Regional Defense Bureaus make efforts to build cooperative relationships with local communities, through collaboration with SDF units and Provincial Cooperation Offices. Specifically, Regional Defense Bureaus hold seminars on defense issues for local residents and provide explanations about the Annual White Paper, “Defense of Japan,” to local governments in order to gain wide understanding. They also host Japan-U.S. friendship programs for citizens who live near U.S. Forces facilities and areas in Japan, U.S. Forces personnel, and their families to interact with each other through sports and music regarding defense policies and the realignment of the U.S. Forces in Japan. Furthermore, Regional Defense Bureaus provide necessary explanations and conduct coordination for relevant local governments when implementing the realignments of the U.S. Forces and the reorganization of SDF units, deployment of equipment, and training, as well as conducting the necessary liaison and coordination in the event of disasters, accidents, or any other emergency situations, such as major earthquakes.

It should be noted that in recent years, cases of interference against SDF and U.S. Forces aircraft via kite flying and laser irradiation have frequently occurred in the areas surrounding air stations in Atsugi and Futenma. These are extremely dangerous and malicious acts that may disrupt a pilot’s ability to control aircraft and result in a catastrophe such as a crash. From the viewpoint of preventing unforeseen accidents in advance, as well as ensuring the safety of the area and the safe operation of aircraft, the MOD disseminates information regarding the risks involved in those acts to local residents by putting up posters and requests their cooperation in reporting to the police while closely cooperating with relevant ministries and agencies as well as relevant local governments.

4 Measures to Promote Harmony between Defense Facilities and Surrounding Areas

Scale and Features of Defense Facilities

The uses of defense facilities are diverse, and they often require large volumes of land. In addition, as of January 1, 2016, approx. 25% of the land area of the facilities and areas (for exclusive use) of the U.S. Forces in Japan is jointly used by the SDF in accordance with the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement, with the purpose to enhance the diversity and efficiency of Japan-U.S. bilateral training and exercises. Meanwhile, problems related to restricted establishment and operations of defense facilities have emerged due to the urbanization of areas around many of the defense facilities. Also, another problem is that frequent aircraft operations such as takeoffs and landings cause noise and other issues, impacting the living environment of local residential communities.

Initiatives to Promote Harmony between Defense Facilities and Surrounding Areas

Defense facilities, as the foundation that supports the defense capabilities of Japan and the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements, are indispensable for our country’s security. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain conditions for constant and stable utilization by ensuring harmony.
between the defense facilities and the surrounding areas as well as obtaining the understanding and cooperation of the local residents. For that purpose, the MOD has taken measures to promote harmony between defense facilities and surrounding areas since 1974, based on the Act on Improvement of Living Environment of Areas Around Defense Facilities (Living Environment Improvement Act).

*(See>> Fig. III-4-1-3 (Measures for Harmony Between Defense Facilities and Surrounding Areas); Reference 71 (Outline of Measures to Improve the Living Environment in the Areas Surrounding Defense Facilities))

(1) Measures of the Act on Improvement of Living Environment of Areas Around Defense Facilities

Based on the Act on Improvement of Living Environment of Areas Around Defense Facilities, the MOD has implemented various measures to prevent, alleviate, and mitigate impediments such as aircraft noise in the surrounding areas caused by the SDF or U.S. Forces activities, or by establishing and operating defense facilities including airfields. Furthermore, taking into consideration the requests of the relevant municipal governments, the MOD partially revised the Living Environment Improvement Act in 2011, and conducted a review to make it possible for the specified defense facilities environs improvement adjustment grants to be applied to so-called soft projects, such as aid for medical expenses. In addition, the MOD added defense facilities to be eligible for these grants. Focused work is also underway to provide residential sound insulation and...
efforts are being made to ensure its further progress.

Regarding the specified defense facilities environs improvement adjustment grants, the MOD has implemented initiatives such as the ‘PDCA Cycle’ process since April 2014, aiming to increase the effectiveness of these grants.

See>> Reference 72 (Partial Amendment of the Law Concerning Adjustment, etc. of the Living Environment in the Environs of Defense Facilities)

(2) Considerations for Future Harmonization of Defense Facilities and Surrounding Areas

In response to the requests by related municipal governments, the MOD continues to consider practical ways to achieve more effective and efficient measures to harmonize defense facilities and surrounding areas, in light of the severe fiscal situation.

See>> Fig. III-4-1-4 (FY2016 Costs for Countermeasures in Areas near Bases (Based on Expenditures))

### Table: FY2016 Costs for Countermeasures in Areas near Bases (Based on Expenditures)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Mainland</th>
<th>Okinawa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projects for preventing disturbances</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound insulation projects</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures related to relocations</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies for stabilizing people’s livelihoods</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road improvement projects</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environs Improvement Adjustment Grants</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other projects</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initiatives Taken by Local Authorities in the Vicinity of Defense Facilities

To ensure the stability of the lives and the enhancement of the welfare of local residents, local authorities in the vicinity of defense facilities conduct various developments and improvements of the living environment utilizing the national subsidy provided by the MOD to deal with obstacles generated due to the presence of defense facilities.

For example, to prevent and reduce the noise generated by the takeoff and landing of aircraft at the airfield of the SDF and the U.S. Forces in Japan, noise insulation work is conducted in schools and hospitals that require a quiet environment (a project using the subsidy scheme by the MOD).

Particularly, local authorities in municipalities situated in the vicinity of defense facilities that are significantly affected in terms of their living environment and community development, various projects are carried out to ease the impact on the surrounding areas using the Provision of Specified Defense Facility Environs Improvement Adjustment Grant.

Example of noise insulation work

Noise insulation work involves the installation of soundproof sashes (sound insulation), installation of air-conditioning equipment to keep the sealed indoor environment comfortable (ventilation and temperature holding), and the installation of sound absorption materials on the room walls and ceilings (sound absorption).

Example of project (Operation of a community bus)

In Shintomi-cho, Miyazaki Prefecture, where the Nyutabaru Airfield is located, the above grant is used for the purchase and operation of a vehicle for the stable operation of community buses, which are necessary for the daily lives of the town residents in the area with no presence of public transport.

As these examples demonstrate, cooperation with relevant local authorities is essential for facilitating harmony between defense facilities and their surrounding communities.