Ensuring Maritime Security

For Japan, a major maritime state, strengthening order on the seas based on such fundamental principles as the rule of law and the freedom of navigation, as well as ensuring safe maritime transport, is a foundation of its peace and prosperity, which is extremely important. In cooperation with the relevant countries, the MOD/SDF engages in anti-piracy operations, as well as promotes various initiatives including assistance for capacity building in this field for coastal states, and making the most of various opportunities to enhance joint training and exercises in waters other than those in the immediate vicinity of Japan.

Part III, Chapter 1, Section 2-5 (Initiatives towards Ensuring Maritime Security)

Counter-Piracy Operations

Piracy is a grave threat to public safety and order on the seas. In particular, for Japan, which depends on maritime transportation to import most of the resources and food necessary for its survival and prosperity as a maritime nation, it is an important issue that cannot be ignored.

Basic Approach

The Japan Coast Guard (JCG), one of the law enforcement agencies in Japan, is primarily responsible for coping with piracy. However, in cases where it is deemed extremely difficult or impossible for the JCG to cope with piracy by itself, the SDF is to take action as well.

Circumstances Surrounding Incidents of Piracy and Initiatives by the International Community

For Japan and the international community, the waters off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden are extremely important, connecting Europe and the Middle East with East Asia. Regarding the waters in this area, successive United Nations Security Council resolutions\(^1\) were adopted, such as United Nations Security Council Resolution 1816, which was adopted in June 2008 in response to the frequent occurrence of and rapid increase in the piracy incidents with the purpose of acquiring ransoms by detaining hostages caused by pirates, who are armed with machine guns and rocket launchers. These resolutions have requested that various countries take actions, particularly the dispatch of warships and military aircraft, to deter piracy in the waters off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden.

To date, approximately 30 countries, including the United States, have dispatched their warships to the waters off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden. As part of its counter-piracy initiatives, the European Union (EU) has been conducting Operation Atalanta since December 2008, in addition to the counter-piracy operations conducted by the Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151)\(^2\) that was established in January 2009. Meanwhile, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commenced Operation Ocean Shield in August 2009 but ended this activity in December 2016. CTF 151 and the EU have been conducting their operation, and other countries have been dispatching their assets to the

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\(^2\) The Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), the headquarters of which is located in Bahrain, announced the establishment of the CTF in January 2009 as a multilateral combined task force for counter-piracy operations.
area. The international community continues to have a critical interest in and take actions to tackle the acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden.

As these initiatives by the international community have proved to be effective, the number of acts of piracy occurring in the waters off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden has hovered at a low level in recent years. However, the assumed root causes of piracy such as poverty in Somalia have still remained unsolved. In addition, considering the fact that Somalia’s capability to crack down on piracy is also still insufficient, if the international community reduces its counter-piracy efforts, the situation could be easily reversed. Therefore, there is no great change in the situation in which Japan must carry out its counter-piracy operations. Moreover, the Japanese Shipowners’ Association and other entities are continuously requesting that the SDF continue making every effort in relation to their counter-piracy operations.

(2) Activities by the Self-Defense Forces

The Deployment Surface Force for Counter Piracy Enforcement (DSPE) is a unit that conducts counter-piracy measures using destroyers. The DSPE strives to ensure the safety of ships navigating in the area in two different manners – direct escort of private vessels across the Gulf of Aden, and zone defense in allocated areas in the Gulf of Aden. In addition, there are JCG officers aboard the destroyer.

In the direct escort, the destroyer and private vessels to be escorted first gather at one of the two assembly points designated at the eastern and western ends of the Gulf of Aden on the agreed date and time, and then the destroyer escort the private vessel to the other assembly point. When the destroyer escorts the convoy, the helicopters carried on the destroyer also monitor the surrounding area from the sky as necessary. In this way, it takes around two days to sail approximately 900 km, while it ensures that the convoy is safe and secure all day and night. Moreover, as for the zone defense, the destroyer is deployed to waters allocated in coordination with the CTF 151 headquarters, and conducts warning and surveillance operations.

In recent years, while there are still ongoing requests...
for escort from vessels that are vulnerable to piracy such as tankers with relatively low speed and low broadside, the demand for direct escort has been decreasing. This is partly due to the existence of other initiatives for self-defense of private vessels involving the boarding of private armed security guards.

As this trend was expected to continue, the Government of Japan determined that the SDF would decrease the planned number of direct escorts and carry out zone defense during the period when direct escort is not conducted. Accordingly the Government of Japan changed the number of the deployed destroyers from two to one for operations off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden from December 2016: (1) based on the number of destroyers in recent years, the planned number of direct escorts in a month would be decreased, and at the same time, (2) during the period when direct escort is not conducted, zone defense would be carried out instead.

b. Deployment Air Force for Counter Piracy Enforcement
The Deployment Air Force for Counter Piracy Enforcement (DAPE) is a unit conducting counter-piracy activities using the P-3C patrol aircraft (two aircraft dispatched). The unit conducts warning and surveillance operations in the flight zone that is determined in coordination with the CTF 151 headquarters and confirms any suspicious boats. At the same time, the unit also provides information to the destroyers, the naval vessels of other countries and civilian vessels, responding by such means as confirming...
the safety of the surrounding area immediately, if requested. The information gathered by SDF P-3Cs is constantly shared with other related organizations, and contributes significantly to deterring acts of piracy and disarming vessels suspected of being pirate ships.

c. Deployment Support Group for Counter Piracy Enforcement

In order to improve the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the DAPE, the Deployment Support Group for Counter Piracy Enforcement (DGPE) carries out activities such as maintenance of the facility set up in the northwest district of Djibouti International Airport.

d. Transport Unit

The Airlift Squadron regularly operates ASDF transport aircraft to carry out air transport of materials required by the DAPE and the DGPE.

e. Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151) Deployed unit at the Headquarters

In order to strengthen coordination with the units of other countries engaged in counter-piracy operations and enhance the effectiveness of the SDF’s counter-piracy operations, the MOD decided to dispatch SDF personnel serving as the CTF 151 commander and the headquarter staff in July 2014, and has dispatched SDF personnel to the CTF 151 Headquarters where an officer from other countries serves as the commander since August 2014. During the period from May to August 2015, the SDF also dispatched a CTF 151 commander for the first time, while between March and June 2017 a CTF 151 commander as well as staff were also dispatched to the Headquarters.

f. Achievements

As of May 31, 2017, the DSPE has escorted 3,791 vessels. Under the protection of the SDF destroyers, not a single vessel has come to any harm from pirates and these vessels have all passed safely across the Gulf of Aden.

As for the DAPE, it commenced the counter-piracy operations in June 2009. As of May 31, 2017, the DAPE has conducted the following activities: aircraft have flown 1,810 missions with their flying hours totaling 13,890 hours; approximately 150,200 ships conducted identification tasks; and information was provided to vessels navigating the area and other countries engaging in counter-piracy operations on around 12,720 occasions. The activities conducted by the DAPE account for approximately 70-80% of the warning and surveillance operations carried out in the Gulf of Aden by the international community.

4 Praise for Japan’s Endeavors

The counter-piracy operations by the SDF have been highly praised by the international community. For example, national leaders and others have expressed their gratitude and the SDF has also been repeatedly well-received by the United Nations Security Council Resolution. Moreover, the destroyers, which are engaging in counter-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, has received many

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8 No member of the SDF had ever served as a commander of a multinational force since the foundation of the SDF.
messages from the captains and ship owners of the vessels that its units have escorted, expressing their gratitude that the ships were able to cross the Gulf of Aden with peace of mind and asking them to continue escorting ships there.

2 Contribution to the Maintenance of Public Safety and Order on the Seas through Maritime Training

1 Training Conducted by the SDF and Counter-Piracy Teams from Various Countries in the Gulf of Aden

In accordance with the agreement reached at the meeting between Prime Minister Abe and then NATO Secretary General Rasmussen in May 2014, the SDF’s deployed unit and NATO’s counter-piracy unit, with the objective of enhancing their cooperation and tactical skills required for counter-piracy activities, implemented joint exercises in the Gulf of Aden in September and November of the same year. In addition, since October 2014, the SDF has conducted joint exercises also with the EU surface forces and counter-piracy units of Turkey, Pakistan and other countries.

These training exercises conducted in the Gulf of Aden have an essential significance in that they strengthen the cooperation between the SDF and counter-piracy teams from various countries and regional organizations, and contribute to the maintenance of public safety and order on the seas.
Participation in the U.S. Hosted International Mine Countermeasures Exercise and Other Exercises

The MSDF has participated in every multilateral mine countermeasures exercise in the waters around the Arabian Peninsula hosted by the U.S. Navy since its first exercise in 2012, and this includes its participation in the Fourth International Mine Countermeasures Exercise in 2016. In addition, the MSDF also dispatched personnel to the first International Maritime Exercise (command post exercise) hosted by the United States and conducted in Bahrain in May 2017. Participating in this exercise assists in the enhancement of the tactical skills of the MSDF and the strengthening of trust among the participating countries. At the same time, the exercise also contributes to the maintenance of maritime security, while also contributing to the improvement of the global security environment.

Strengthening of Cooperation in Maritime Security through Joint Training, etc.

During June to August 2016, the MSDF participated in the Rim of the Pacific Joint Exercise (RIMPAC2016) that was hosted by the U.S. Navy and carried out in the waters and airspace surrounding Hawaii and the west coast of the United States. In September 2016, the MSDF also participated in the Multinational Maritime Exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Navy in the surrounding water of Darwin (Australia). Furthermore, in November 2016, the MSDF participated in the Royal New Zealand navy-hosted International Fleet Review, ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) Plus maritime security field training exercise, and the Multinational Maritime Exercise hosted by the Royal New Zealand Navy. Through the participation in these exercises, the MSDF improves its tactical skills as well as advancing mutual understanding and strengthening of trust relationships with other participating countries.

Strengthening cooperation with other participating countries through these joint exercises contributes to the maintenance of maritime security, which has extremely high significance.

Initiatives in the Asia-Pacific Region

The National Security Strategy and the National Defense Program Guidelines state that Japan will play a leading role in maintaining and developing “Open and Stable Seas,” including maritime security cooperation with other countries.

Accordingly, the MOD/SDF implements capacity building assistance in maritime security for Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar, thereby assisting countries such as coastal states enhance their capabilities, and strengthening cooperation with partners that share the same strategic interests as Japan.

In addition, the Basic Plan on Ocean Policy approved by the Cabinet in April 2013 states that to contribute to the creation and development of maritime order, Japan would ensure international collaboration and promote international cooperation by making use of fora such as multilateral and bilateral ocean conferences to contribute to international rule-making and consensus building. In response to this, the MOD has been working on cooperation for maritime security within regional security dialogue frameworks such as the ADMM Plus and the Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security (ISMMS).

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9 The exercise took place in May 2017, and command post exercises were carried out.
10 RIMPAC has been held almost every other year since 1971, and the 25th exercise took place this year. The MSDF began participating in RIMPAC in 1980, making this year its 19th participation. From the MSDF, the Destroyer Units (Destroyers Chokai and Hyuga), the Minesweeping Units, and the Air Units (two P-3C patrol aircraft) participated in the exercise.