



## On the Publication of Defense of Japan 2017

Minister of Defense

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A decade ago in January 2007, the Defense Agency transitioned to the Ministry of Defense. Over the last 10 years since the transition, the Ministry of Defense (MOD) / the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) has responded swiftly and precisely to frequent outbreaks of incidents ranging from natural disasters including the Great East Japan Earthquake, to ballistic missile launches by North Korea. Especially following its inauguration, the Abe administration established the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Program Guidelines, and resumed increases in defense budgets that had been cut for 10 years, while the MOD/SDF revised the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation and sought to further strengthen the ties of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. Furthermore, the Legislation for Peace and Security was developed to ensure that we are able to secure the lives and peaceful livelihood of the Japanese people in any situation, and contribute even more proactively to the peace and stability of the international community.

However, the security environment surrounding Japan has become more severe in the past decade. North Korea's ongoing development of nuclear weapons and missiles as well as repeated launches of ballistic missiles have become a serious and imminent threat of the region and the international community. This threat has elevated to a new level particularly since last year, when North Korea willfully conducted two nuclear tests and launched over 20 ballistic missiles. China remains poised to fulfill its unilateral demands without compromise, based on its own assertions incompatible with the existing international order. This has raised significant concerns over the impact on the security environment in Japan and the rest of the region, and in the world. Against this backdrop, we will focus on the following for maintaining the sovereignty and independence of Japan and for protecting its peace: (1) Japan's own efforts; (2) strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance; and (3) active promotion of security cooperation.

Firstly, our security policy rests on the efforts made by Japan. The MOD/SDF has reinforced the defense posture in the southwestern region, along with ballistic missile defense capability, and has advanced initiatives in new fields such as space and cyberspace. We have thereby sought to enhance the defense capabilities of Japan, both in quality and quantity, and expand the role that Japan can fulfill.

Secondly, the Japan-U.S. Alliance forms the centerpiece of Japan's security policy. Within a short time span since the inauguration of the new U.S. administration in January 2017, Gen (ret.) Mattis, the newly sworn-in Secretary of Defense, visited Japan and held a Japan-U.S. Defense Ministerial Meeting. This is a testament to the importance that the new U.S. administration continues to place on Japan. Japan remains committed to making the bonds of the unwavering Japan-U.S. Alliance even stronger and enhancing the deterrence and response capabilities of the Alliance, underpinned by a relationship of trust with the United States.

Thirdly, Japan proactively promotes security cooperation with the countries concerned. In November 2016, we announced the “Vientiane Vision” at the ASEAN-Japan Defence Ministers' Informal Meeting. The MOD set forth the vision for the first time as the future direction of defense cooperation with the ASEAN as a whole, and this was welcomed by all ASEAN member states. As for the SDF engineering units dispatched to South Sudan that were engaged in peacekeeping operations for five years, the personnel worked hand-in-hand with the people in the country and carried out activities in a “Japanese” manner which gave consideration to the local situation. These activities came to an end upon accomplishing the largest achievements among Japan’s previous deployments to peacekeeping operations.

In pressing forward with these three focal measures, the development of the Legislation for Peace and Security has provided a foundation for further advancing these efforts. The MOD attaches particular importance to the activities of the SDF following the Legislation’s entry into force, and has therefore conducted a variety of exercises pursuant to the Legislation. It has also assigned new duties such as “kaketsuke-keigo” for the peacekeeping operations in South Sudan, as well as decided on a set of Implementation Guidelines for Article 95-2 of the Self-Defense Forces Law.

In this manner the MOD/SDF makes every effort to complete its duties, with the recognition that it is a critical body tasked with the most fundamental role for the survival of the nation, namely, to protect the peace and independence of Japan. Those who execute the duties diligently with a strong sense of mission are the SDF personnel on the frontlines.

To promote readers’ understanding of SDF personnel, a cornerstone of national defense, tirelessly executing their duties for the sake of the expectations and trust conferred by our country and the international community, Defense of Japan 2017 highlights the human aspect of the MOD/SDF, adding a new chapter that details the human foundation and organization that support the defense force. In addition, recent active roles played by female personnel in the MOD/SDF are featured in the opening pages. Also, we have come up with creative ways to make the Defense of Japan a more accessible and easy-to-understand publication. For example, we have considerably expanded the opening feature and included more photographs and figures to provide clear explanations of important themes.

In order to ensure that the MOD/SDF is executing its duties correctly, it is above all essential to gain the understanding and trust of the people of Japan. Having reassumed the position of Minister of Defense, I have once again reminded myself of the grave importance of the SDF’s duty of securing peace in Japan in an extremely severe security environment. I will do my utmost to build a more disciplined and robust organization and secure the public’s firm trust in the MOD/SDF. I sincerely hope that the Japanese people will read this whitepaper to have a greater understanding of the defense policies of Japan and become more familiar with the MOD/SDF.