The security environment surrounding Japan has become increasingly severe, and both the number and the duration of situations requiring the MOD/SDF’s commitment are increasing. On the other hand, it is anticipated that a rising number of MOD staff, both male and female, who deal with such situations will face time constraints due to childcare, nursing care and other reasons.

Amid such challenging circumstances, ensuring preparedness to consistently respond to various situations requires creating an environment that enables staff to be sound both mentally and physically, maintain high morale, and fully demonstrate their abilities. On the basis of this view, the MOD/SDF promotes initiatives to achieve work-life balance of its staff members.

Also, the MOD/SDF has been proactively encouraging the active participation of female personnel, and the number of female personnel is on the rise.

The MOD/SDF has been conducting a variety of initiatives in order to promote work-life balance and the further expansion of the recruitment and promotion of female personnel in a unified manner, such as formulating various plans\(^1\) that include three reforms: (1) working style reform; (2) reform to combine a successful career with childrearing and nursing care; and (3) reform for promoting active engagement of female personnel.

\(^1\) “Action Plan for Promoting the Active Participation of Female Employees and Work-Life Balance at the MOD” (January 2015), (2) “Action Plan of the MOD Based on the Law to Promote the Role of Women in the Workforce (FY2016-FY2020)” (April 2016), and (3) “Action Plan to Support a Good Work-Life Balance of the Personnel of the MOD based on the Act on Advancement of Measures to Support Raising Next-Generation Children (FY2015-FY2020)” (March 2015).
periods. In addition, telework, a work style that allows working at home has become available in the Internal Bureau of the MOD in FY2017 after two years of test introduction from FY2015. Organizations other than the Internal Bureau of the MOD aim to begin adopting this work system from FY2019 and are steadily making preparation by beginning to pilot the system.

2 Reform to Combine a Successful Career with Childrearing and Nursing Care

In order for MOD/SDF staff, both male and female, to be successful in their careers while realizing work-life balance, it is necessary to establish a system that enables balancing work with childrearing/nursing care, and to ensure childcare services tailored to the irregular working patterns unique to the SDF.

(1) Development of an Environment that Enables Staff to Realize a Successful Career While Engaging in Childrearing and Nursing Care

The MOD/SDF has developed various schemes, which enable staff to balance work with childrearing/nursing care, such as ensuring substitute personnel for staff who take childcare leave and other leaves. In particular, the ministry is encouraging its male staff to take childcare leave to promote their participation in family life.

The MOD/SDF is also developing an environment that enables staff to balance work life with their family life by distributing e-mail newsletters to help its staff to return to work smoothly after childcare leave and encouraging staff to use a “childcare form” to facilitate managers’ and the human resources department’s thorough and detailed understanding of the situation regarding childcare.

The MOD/SDF has a system to rehire SDF personnel who have previously resigned mid-career. It reassessed the system so that former SDF personnels who had resigned in their mid-career due to childrearing and nursing care could be reemployed from January 2017. Based on this

VOICE

Feelings about working again as a Ground Self Defense Force member

Western Army Medical Unit, First Lieutenant, Tomomi Ikezaki

I joined the Ground Self Defense Force (GSDF) in 1993 as an officer candidate and worked as a treatment platoon leader in the medical division, but in 1999, in my mid-career, I quitted in order to take care of my first daughter. After it, I raised my three children and worked as a care welfare specialist at the same time. My husband, an active member of the Self Defense Forces (SDF), told me about the renewed hiring program for former SDF members. I had not been thinking about coming back to the GSDF at all. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm from my youthful years rekindled my motivation and I immediately decided to volunteer again. Receipt of my appointment certificate after the interviews filled me with the same inspiration as when I first joined the GSDF.

I began working as a GSDF officer again on the 1st January, 2018. There have been many things to learn and remember given significant changes in the environment surrounding the GSDF and its role since I left. While everyday was challenging, I felt that I could be useful even after a blank of 18 years and was happy to be rehired. I greatly appreciate the support from my superiors, peers and family, and will strive to become even more effective for my unit.

First Lieutenant Ikezaki and her superior
system, some previous Ground Self Defense Force personnels were recruited in January 2018.

(2) Ensuring Childcare Services
To allow SDF personnel who are rearing children to concentrate on their duties, it is important to ensure childcare services tailored to the irregular working patterns unique to the SDF. Since April 2007, the MOD/SDF has set up workplace nurseries at GSDF Camp Mishuku, GSDF Camp Kumamoto, GSDF Camp Makomanai, GSDF Asaka Camp dormitory district, MSDF Yokosuka Naval Base district, and ASDF Iruma Air Base, respectively. Additionally, in April 2017, a workplace nursery was newly opened at Ichigaya district where the MOD is located in April within National Defense Medical College in October 2017.

In addition, in the event of emergency operations such as disaster relief, the MOD promotes measures to provide temporary care within SDF camps and bases for children of SDF personnel who have no alternative but to attend to duties with their children.

For the further expansion of the recruitment and promotion of female personnel in a unified manner, the MOD/SDF has been making various efforts to advance the careers of motivated and qualified female personnel by setting up specific goals with regard to the recruitment and promotion of female personnel based on the “Action Plan for Promoting the Active Participation of Female Employees and Work-Life Balance.” Moreover, the MOD formulated the “Initiative to Promote Active Engagement of Female SDF Personnel – Aiming for Attractive SDF that Adapts to the Times and Environment” (the “Initiative”) in April 2017 to specify its conceptual policy for promoting the active participation of female SDF personnel.

(1) Significance of Promoting Active Engagement of Female SDF Personnel and Personnel Management Policy
The “Initiative” outlines the significance of promoting the active engagement of female personnel and the MOD/SDF personnel management policy. Specifically, with SDF duties becoming increasingly diverse and complex, SDF personnel are required to have multifaceted capabilities including higher levels of knowledge, decision-making ability, and skills than before. In addition, under a severe recruitment environment due to the declining birthrate and greater advancement into higher education, it is anticipated that the number of SDF personnel with time restraint including those involved in childcare, nursing care, and other responsibilities will significantly increase.

In light of these changes, the SDF is required to evolve from a conventional organization with an emphasis on homogeneity among the members, into an organization that is capable of incorporating diverse human resources in a flexible manner.

At the present moment, the largest human resource that the SDF has not been able to fully utilize is women, who account for half of the population targeted for recruitment. Promoting the active engagement of female SDF personnel has the following significance: (1) securing useful human resources; (2) utilizing diverse perspectives; and (3) reflecting values of the nation. For this reason, the MOD/SDF has decided to open up a path for female personnel with motivation, ability, and aptitude to have opportunities to demonstrate their abilities in various fields, and aim for doubling the ratio of female SDF personnel.

In terms of employing and promoting female SDF personnel, the MOD/SDF sets out a personnel management policy to ensure equal opportunity between men and women and assign the right person to the right place based on the person’s motivation and ability/aptitude.

(2) Removal of the Assignment Restriction of Female SDF Personnel
While the SDF has been accepting female SDF personnel since its establishment in 1954, assignment of female personnel had been restricted in some units, such as the GSDF infantry companies and tank companies. However, the Initiative, formulated in April 2017, virtually removed the restriction on the assignment of female personnel across the SDF.\(^2\)

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\(^2\) With regard to part of the GSDF NBC Weapon Defense Unit, the GSDF Tunnel Company, and MSDF submarines, the assignment restriction has not been removed due to reasons in relation to protecting motherhood and the characteristics of the equipment.

Also, certain units such as GSDF rifle platoons and tank platoons from which the assignment restriction has been removed, personnel will be assigned successively to the units whose preparation has completed by proceeding with necessary preparation such as making of assignment standards.
(3) Expansion of the Recruitment of Female Personnel

a. Female SDF Personnel

As of the end of March 2018, the number of female SDF personnel is about 15,000 (about 6.5% of total SDF personnel). Compared with ten years ago (end of March 2008, about 4.9% of total SDF personnel), this is a rise of 1.6 percentage point, indicating that the ratio of female SDF personnel has been on the rise in recent years.

In order to increase the proportion of female SDF personnel among total SDF personnel to over 9% by 2030, the MOD/SDF plans to ensure that women account for more than 10% of total newly employed SDF personnel in and after FY2017. Specifically, the increase in the number of female recruits will be realized by measures such as the elimination of the gender quota and the increase in the scheduled number of female recruits.

In addition, with regard to promotion, the proportion of women among SDF personnel with a rank of field officer or higher will be increased from 3.1%. As for the careers of the personnel anticipated to reach a rank of field officer or higher in the future, an emphasis is given on assigning them to a commander or assistant commander post at the rank of company officer, with the hope of allowing them to gain experience.

Furthermore, in addition to these specific numerical targets, the “Initiative” formulated in April 2017 indicates that the MOD aims to double the percentage of female personnel in the overall SDF personnel and halve the mid-career retirement rate.

b. Female Administrative Officials, Technical and Engineering Officials, Instructors, and Others

As of the end of March 2018, the number of female civilian personnel - administrative officials, technical and engineering officials, and instructors, and others - is approximately 3,200 (about 24.0% of total civilian personnel). Compared with ten years ago (end of March 2008 when females made up 22.8% of the total civilian personnel), this is a rise of 1.2 percentage point, indicating that the ratio of female civilian personnel is on a rising trend in recent years.

With regard to recruitment, in line with the overall government target, the MOD has set up its goal of ensuring that women account for over 30% of recruits in and after FY2016. Regarding promotion, as a goal to be achieved by the end of FY2020, the proportion of women of the Division-Director level at local organizations and Assistant-Division-Director level at the ministry proper or equivalent should be approximately 5%, and the proportion of women of the Division-Director level at the ministry proper or equivalent should be approximately 2%, and the proportion of women of the Unit-Chief level at the ministry proper or equivalent should be approximately 27%.