

# New National Defense Program Guidelines

The National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) is a “grand design” to ensure the peace and security of Japan, which establishes the posture of Japan’s defense capability and the level to achieve based on the security environment and the changes in military situation surrounding Japan. The NDPG has squarely faced the reality of the security

environment at all times and set forth the defense capability which is truly needed to protect the Japanese nationals.

Since it was first formulated in 1976, the NDPG has been established six times. The current NDPG for FY2019 and beyond (2018 NDPG) was decided in 2018.<sup>1</sup>

## Section 1

### Features of the Past NDPGs

#### 1 1976 NDPG

Formulated against the backdrop of the détente<sup>2</sup> of the 1970s, the 1976 NDPG<sup>3</sup> was based on an awareness that (1) in general, a full-scale military clash between East and West would be unlikely to occur, and (2) in the vicinity of Japan, the balanced relationship between the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union, and the existence of the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements, would continue to play a substantial role in preventing a serious invasion of Japan.

Taking that into consideration, with regard to Japan’s defense capability, the 1976 NDPG stipulated that it should (1) be furnished with the various functions required

for defense and (2) be in a balanced posture in terms of organization and deployment, including logistic support, (3) take an adequate surveillance posture in peacetime, (4) effectively cope with a limited and small-scale invasion, and (5) be capable of shifting smoothly to a new posture regarding defense capability when required due to an important change occurring in the situation. The concept of Basic Defense Capability introduced by the 1976 NDPG attached importance to deterrence, emphasizing measures to prevent an invasion of Japan.

#### 2 1995 NDPG

The 1995 NDPG<sup>4</sup> was formulated with consideration to the change of the international security environment, such as the end of the Cold War, and increasing public expectations for the Self Defense Forces (SDF) in the wake of the United Nations peacekeeping operations and response to the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake.

The 1995 NDPG pointed out that previous defense buildup policies were based on the concept of the Basic Defense Force, which aimed to maintain a minimum-necessary defense force as an independent nation preventing a power vacuum that would destabilize the region, rather than coping with a direct military threat to Japan, and basically followed

the same approach.

At the same time, in terms of the content of Japan’s defense capability, the 1995 NDPG was characterized by its emphasis on the further utilization of SDF capabilities not only in the defense of Japan but also in response to large-scale disasters and various other situations, and in contributions to a more stable security environment, as well as reviewing the scale and function of the defense force.

<sup>1</sup> National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2019 and beyond (approved by the National Security Council and the Cabinet on December 18, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> The situation where the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, which were in a conflict referred to as “the Cold War” at the time, began to be eased, prompted by the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. It ended with the Soviet Union’s intervention in Afghanistan in 1979.

<sup>3</sup> National Defense Program Guidelines for FY1977 and beyond (approved by the National Security Council and the Cabinet on October 29, 1976)

<sup>4</sup> National Defense Program Guidelines for FY1996 and beyond (approved by the National Security Council and the Cabinet on November 28, 1995)

### 3 2004 NDPG

Amid the emergence of new threats and the challenges of such diverse situations as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, and the activities of international terrorist organizations, the 2004 NDPG<sup>5</sup> was formulated on the decision that new guidelines for the approach to the national security and defense capability were necessary.

The 2004 NDPG established two security goals: (1) preventing direct threats from reaching Japan and, in the event that one does, repel it and minimize any damage, and (2) improving the international security environment, so as

to reduce the chances that any threat will reach Japan in the first place. To this end, the 2004 NDPG set an integrated combination of three approaches, (1) Japan's own effort, (2) Japan-U.S. Arrangements, and (3) Cooperation with the international community. Accordingly, in terms of the concept of defense capability, the 2004 NDPG stipulated that a "multifunctional, flexible, effective defense force" was necessary to address new threats and diverse situations, with emphasis on response capabilities, while maintaining effective aspects of the concept of Basic Defense Capability.

### 4 2010 NDPG

The 2010 NDPG<sup>6</sup> was formulated in light of the recognition that (1) large-scale military capacity, including nuclear capability, still exists in the surrounding region, with many countries modernizing their military forces and intensifying various activities; (2) dramatic progress in such fields as military science and technology has shortened the time between the first signs of a contingency and its development, making a seamless response necessary; and (3) many security issues extend across national borders, making partnerships and cooperation between countries important from times of peace, so the role of military forces is diversifying and it is becoming common to continuously operate military forces,

in peacetime.

Accordingly, the 2010 NDPG focused on SDF operations, rather than the Basic Defense Force Concept, which emphasized the existence of the defense force; as such, the 2010 NDPG stipulated that it was necessary to ensure that future defense capability be dynamic and can proactively conduct the various activities required to be fulfilled. Therefore, the 2010 NDPG prescribed the development of a Dynamic Defense Force that demonstrates readiness, mobility, flexibility, sustainability, and versatility, underpinned by advanced technical capabilities and intelligence skills, in light of trends in the level of military technology.

### 5 2013 NDPG

The 2013 NDPG<sup>7</sup> was formulated in light of the fact that the qualitative and quantitative capabilities of the defense force underpinning the SDF activities were not necessarily sufficient, even though the number and the duration of situations, including so-called gray-zone situations, which require the SDF's commitment, were both increasing amid the increasingly severe security environment surrounding Japan.

The 2013 NDPG, being fully mindful of these needs, called for the enhancement of deterrence and response capability by pursuing further joint operations, improving the mission-capable rate of equipment and its employment to conduct activities, as well as developing defense capabilities adequate in terms of both quality and quantity that underpin various activities. To this end, Japan was to conduct capability assessments based on joint operations in relation to the SDF's total functions and capabilities, in order to identify the

functions and capabilities that should be comprehensively prioritized. The 2013 NDPG made it possible to adapt to an ever-changing security environment surrounding Japan, and realize a more prioritized and efficient defense capability build-up, based on the results of these capability assessments. Additionally, the 2013 NDPG required the build-up of the most effective operational posture, by further strengthening a wide-ranging logistics support foundation.

In this manner, the 2013 NDPG set forth that Japan would develop a "Dynamic Joint Defense Force," which would provide an effective defense that enables the SDF to conduct a diverse range of activities dynamically, adapting to situations as they demand.



Fig.II-3-1-1 (Changes of the Views regarding Defense Capability)

<sup>5</sup> National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2005 and beyond (approved by the National Security Council and the Cabinet on December 10, 2004)

<sup>6</sup> National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2011 and beyond (approved by the National Security Council and the Cabinet on December 17, 2010)

<sup>7</sup> National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2014 and beyond (approved by the National Security Council and the Cabinet on December 17, 2013)

Fig.II-3-1-1 Changes of the Views regarding Defense Capability

