

Defense Chronology

- China has continued to reinforce its military capabilities both in quality and quantity. It has also continued its attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas, including the Senkaku Islands, which are inherent parts of the territory of Japan, and has intensified its activities in the Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan.
- The second U.S.-North Korea summit was held, but there has been no change in the situation that North Korea possesses and deploys several hundred ballistic missiles capable of reaching every part of Japan. North Korea also continues illegal transfers of goods at sea (so-called "ship-to-ship transfer") through increasingly sophisticated methods in such areas as the East China Sea.
- Russia carried out "Vostok 2018" in the Eastern Military District. The United States and Russia remained far apart regarding the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty; following the United States' announcement of withdrawal, the treaty lost effect in August 2019.



The exercise was conducted on the largest scale since 1981, with participation of nearly 300,000 soldiers, including those from the Chinese and Mongolian militaries.



Vice President Pence indicated a recognition that China wants "to push the United States of America from the Western Pacific," citing such incidents as a Chinese military vessel's coming in near collision with a U.S. military vessel in the South China Sea in September.

◆ Russia's deployment of Su-35 fighters to Etorofu Island

◆ Near collision of U.S. and Chinese military vessels in the South China Sea

◆ First ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)-China joint maritime exercise

◆ (from October) NATO's exercise Trident Juncture conducted on the largest scale in recent years

◆ U.S. President Trump ordering establishment of a U.S. Space Command

JULY 2018

- ◆ Heavy rain in July 2018 (call-up of Ready Reserve Personnel)
- ◆ Japan-Russia "2+2" meeting
- ◆ Signing of the Japan-France Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (Japan-France ACSA)

AUGUST 2018

- ◆ Telephone Call between Defense Minister Onodera and U.S. Defense Secretary Mattis

SEPTEMBER 2018

- ◆ Hokkaido Eastern Iburi Earthquake (call-up of Ready Reserve Personnel)

OCTOBER 2018

- ◆ Japan-Australia "2+2" meeting
- ◆ Japan-U.S. Defense Ministerial Meeting
- ◆ ASEAN Defense Minister's Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus)

NOVEMBER 2018

DECEMBER 2018

- ◆ Formulation of the NDPG and the Medium Term Defense Program (FY 2019 – FY 2023; MTDP)
- ◆ Disaster relief in response to hog cholera (until June)

Indo Southeast Asia Deployment (ISEAD) (August to October)



Toward realizing a "free and open Indo-Pacific," the SDF conducted joint training with the navies of the countries in the region and reinforced cooperation with them.

International disaster relief activities in Indonesia (October)



An air transport unit was dispatched in response to the earthquake and tsunami that occurred near Sulawesi Island, and transported relief materials and affected people.

Disaster relief in response to the Hokkaido Eastern Iburi Earthquake (September to October)



The GSDF conducted lifesaving operations, water and food supply assistance, and bathing assistance, engaging approximately 25,000 personnel, nine vessels, and 46 aircraft at the maximum.

Japan-China Defense Ministerial Meeting (October)



The Japan-China defense ministerial meeting was held for the first time in three years, and the ministers agreed on early establishment of a hotline concerning the Maritime and Air Communication Mechanism between Japanese and Chinese defense authorities.



Continued acts suspected as “ship-to-ship transfers” (January)



Acts suspected as “ship-to-ship transfers” were confirmed 20 times in total from 2018 to the end of June 2019.



The second U.S.-North Korea summit (February)

[AFP/Jiji]

The second U.S.-North Korea summit was held in Hanoi, but ended without reaching any agreement.



China's international fleet review (April)

[Jane's by IHS Markit]

China, which aims to beef up its military capacity, unveiled its new 10,000-ton class Renhai-class destroyer at an international fleet review.



China Coast Guard vessels repeatedly intruding into Japan's territorial waters near the Senkaku Islands

[Photo: Japan Coast Guard]

Chinese government vessels have continuously intruded into Japan's territorial waters near the Senkaku Islands in spite of Japan's strong protests.

◆ U.S. release of the Missile Defense Review (MDR)

◆ U.S. announces withdrawal from the INF Treaty

◆ U.S. declaration of liberation of ISIS-controlled territory in Syria and Iraq

◆ China's international fleet review

◆ North Korea fires short-range ballistic missiles

◆ U.S. Department of Defense releases Indo-Pacific Strategy Report

JANUARY 2019

- ◆ Japan-France “2+2” meeting
- ◆ Meeting between Defense Minister Iwaya and then Acting U.S. Secretary of Defense Shanahan

FEBRUARY 2019

March 2019

- ◆ Grant of UH-1H parts and maintenance equipment to the Philippine Air Force
- ◆ Deployment of GSDF units to Amami Oshima Island and Miyakojima Island

APRIL 2019

- ◆ Japan-U.S. “2+2” Meeting
- ◆ Meeting between Defense Minister Iwaya and then Acting U.S. Secretary of Defense Shanahan

MAY 2019

- ◆ Memorandum on the orientation of promotion of defense industry cooperation signed between the Japanese and Vietnamese defense authorities
- ◆ Visiting Destroyer JS “Kaga” by Prime Minister Abe and President Trump
- ◆ Japan-Russia “2+2” Meeting

JUNE 2019

- ◆ Shangri-La Dialogue
- ◆ Meeting between Defense Minister Iwaya and then Acting U.S. Secretary of Defense Shanahan
- ◆ Entering into force of the Japan-France ACSA



The United Nations (UN) Project for Rapid Deployment of Enabling Capabilities/Asia and the surrounding regions (November to December)



GSD personnel giving a lecture on how to operate heavy equipment

While the SDF had already been conducting the UN Project for Rapid Deployment of Enabling Capabilities in Africa, it carried out the project in Asia and the surrounding regions for the first time.



Dispatch of personnel to the Multinational Force & Observers (MFO) (April)

Japanese officers serving on the MFO Headquarters

In the first deployment under the system of “Internationally Coordinated Operations for Peace and Security,” personnel began to be dispatched as staff officers to the MFO.

- In Japan, the SDF conducted activities in response to the 2018 Hokkaido Eastern Iburi Earthquake and other natural disasters. In addition, it promptly responded to disasters outside Japan, such as transporting relief materials as the Japan Disaster Relief Team when an earthquake and tsunami occurred in Indonesia.
- As the first “Internationally Coordinated Operations for Peace and Security,” the deployment of two personnel dispatched as staff officers to the MFO, which monitors the ceasefire between Egypt and Israel in the Sinai Peninsula, began in April 2019.
- In line with the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific, the SDF actively engages in defense cooperation and exchanges, leveraging its defense capability, such as conducting joint training and exercises with and providing capacity building assistance to the countries within the region.