

On the Publication of Defense of Japan 2020



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Thank you very much for taking a look at the 2020 version of the Defense White Paper.

The Defense White Paper was first published exactly 50 years ago, in 1970, based on then Defense Agency Director-General NAKASONE Yasuhiro's strong conviction that "more than anything else, it is the understanding, active support, and cooperation of the people that is essential to the defense of the nation," at a time when the general public still had a strong negative perception of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF).

Since then, as the international situation has changed dramatically and the uncertainty over the security environment surrounding Japan has grown rapidly, the role and the field of activities of the Ministry of Defense (MOD)/SDF have broadened to cover the space, cyberspace and electromagnetic domains.

Although dramatic changes unimaginable half a century ago have occurred, widespread understanding and support from the Japanese people continue to be essential in any era in order to defend their peaceful lives and Japan's territorial land, seas and airspace.

We believe that Mr. Nakasone's conviction lives on in the current Defense White Paper, which marks the 50th anniversary of publication. We are looking forward to your reading it.

In compiling the 2020 version of the Defense White Paper, we pursued ease of understanding and user-friendliness. Below, let me explain the notable features of the white paper.

First, in order to provide an overall picture, we summarized important international developments and the MOD/SDF's activities that we would like you to understand in the Special Feature "Defense Chronology" and "Digest." These include North Korea's repeated ballistic missile launches; China's persistent continuation of the unilateral attempt to alter the status quo; the MOD/SDF's dedicated contributions to bringing the outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease under control; disaster relief operations conducted in response to large-scale natural disasters; the start of information gathering activity in order to ensure the safety of Japan-related vessels in the Middle East; and defense cooperation and exchange with the United States and other countries.

In addition, in the current white paper, we introduce to readers around 50 SDF personnel, a higher number than previously, in order to convey the voices of SDF personnel engaging in various activities inside and outside of the country with a strong sense of mission so that you can feel more familiar with the MOD/SDF.

In addition, in a new departure, we have prepared more than 50 videos related to the contents of the main text and placed QR codes linked to them in the main text.

As you can easily play various videos via a smartphone, we hope that you will enjoy watching them.

We also changed the coverage period of the white paper. Previously, the white paper covered a period of approximately one year to around June, but the period was changed to approximately one year to the end of March, namely the end of a fiscal year. As a result, the 2020 version of the Defense White Paper mainly covers activities and incidents in FY2019. However, it also covers some important incidents, such as those related to the novel coronavirus, that occurred by June this year.

Furthermore, while the Defense White Paper can be accessed through the MOD's website, the 2020 version for the first time contains editable data in the Reference section at the end. I hope that this will be very useful for readers.

As indicated above, I expect that more people, including security experts and ordinary people, will find the 2020 version of the Defense White Paper enjoyable and satisfying to read.

I sincerely hope that by using the white paper as a convenient reference, you will deepen your understanding of matters related to the security of Japan and activities of the MOD/SDF.