

Section
4

Efforts of the MOD/SDF in response to the Spread of Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

A pandemic of COVID-19 is a grave threat to the security of the international community, including Japan. In order to prevent the spread of infection, the MOD/SDF gathered

all their strength to carry out various activities.¹ None of the SDF personnel engaged in the activities got infected (as of May 31, 2020.)

1 Dispatching Nursing Officers to the Chartered Airplane Leaving Wuhan

In response to the spread of COVID-19 in China in January 2020, a chartered airplane was sent to Wuhan. By request of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the MOD/SDF supported the quarantine for Japanese returnees and others

on the airplane. Two nurses of the SDF Central Hospital boarded each of the chartered airplanes from the second to the fifth airplane and provided support.

2 Disaster Relief in Response to COVID-19

1 Disaster Relief pertaining to Rescue for Prevention of the Spread of COVID-19

In January 2020 the SDF implemented disaster relief for Japanese returnees due to the spread of COVID-19 in China (for 46 days from January 31 to March 16, 2020). Given that supporting for the returnees in order to prevent the spread of infection had an overriding emergency, it was hardly possible to expect the governors and other authorities to request the dispatch of the SDF concerning the overall situation. Therefore, the SDF conducted the operation by its judgement without request.

Accordingly, the SDF provided life and medical support at the temporary accommodation facilities where Japanese returnees and others stayed and the cruise ship Diamond Princess (approximately 3,700 passengers and crews) where a number of infected persons were identified as well as transportation of people leaving the ship. Specifically, SDF medical officers and others collected approximately 2,200 PCR samples in total on the ship. In addition, SDF ambulances and motor coaches transported approximately 2,000 passengers/crews including positive patients leaving

the ship. Approximately 1,300 passengers/crew in total returning to their countries by the chartered aircraft prepared by the respective governments (e.g. the United States, Australia, and Canada) were transported to Haneda Airport.

The activities on the “Diamond Princess” were huge, complex and unprecedented operations and also involved a high risk of infection. However, none of the approx. 2,700 personnel who were engaged in the field activities caught the infection in total.

In addition, SDF hospitals accepted patients and approximately 10 SDF Reserve Personnel with qualification as doctor, nurse, etc. were called up to provide medical support.



Medical assistance to passengers of the cruise ship (February 2020).



Video: Activities in response to the COVID-19

URL: <https://www.facebook.com/jointstaffpa/videos/285657902464800/>

¹ As for specific activities, see the MOD website (<https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/defense/saigai/2020/covid/index.html>).

This mission involved approximately 8,700 personnel who engaged in the field activities in total (overall approximately 20,000 personnel engaged in the activities² in total) and two vessels, including private ship Hakuou under contract with the MOD.

2 Disaster Relief for Reinforcement of Border Control against COVID-19

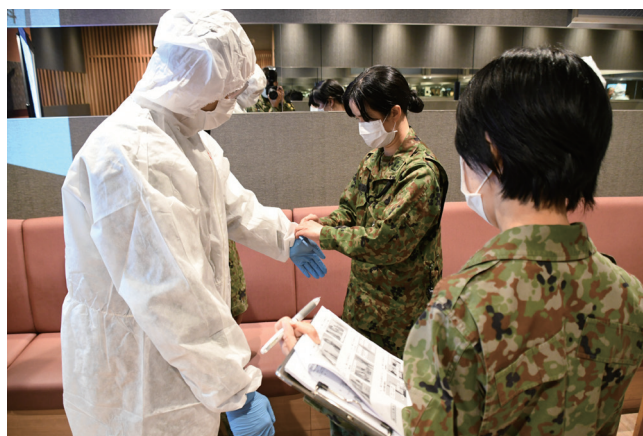
In March 2020, considering the government's policy to further reinforce border control for entrants and returnees in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the SDF implemented Disaster Relief Operations for reinforcement of border control against COVID-19 (65 days from March 28 to May 31). Given that supporting for reinforcement of border control required a especially urgent response, it was hardly possible to expect governors and other authorities to request the dispatch of the SDF concerning the overall situation, the SDF conducted the operations by its judgment without request.

Specifically, the SDF medical officers and others supported quarantine at Narita and Haneda airports by collecting specimens from approximately 20,400 of the approximately 46,000 returnees and entrants. The specimens accounted for approximately 44% of all the specimens collected at the airports during the period from March 28 to May 31. The SDF also transported approximately 6,100 returnees and entrants in total from Narita, Haneda, Kansai and Chubu airports to the accommodation facilities³ where they stayed until PCR test results came out, and provided life support including meal support for approximately 17,200 returnees and entrants in total staying in the accommodation facilities, for example.

This mission involved approximately 8,700 field personnel (overall approximately 13,400 personnel) in total but none of them became infected.

3 Disaster Relief in Response to Community-acquired Infection of COVID-19, etc.

Since April 3, 2020, after receiving a disaster relief request from the Nagasaki Governor, and in response to disaster relief requests from the governors of 29 prefectures, the SDF sent liaison officers to the prefectures in order to prevent the spread of community-acquired infection of COVID-19. In close coordination, they carried out air transportation of patients, life support in accommodation facilities, support of education on infection protection for employees of the local governments and the private accommodation facilities (approximately 1,700 employees in total) and other support activities (as of May 31, 2020). To the cruise ship Costa Atlantica (approximately 620 crew members) where a mass infection occurred while being moored at a quay in Nagasaki Prefecture, the SDF sent a CT diagnosis vehicle in addition to collection of specimens necessary for PCR tests and medical support for the crew.



GSDF personnel providing education on infection prevention to local government officials (April 2020)

² Number of overall personnel includes maintenance, communication, command, standby/backup and other rear-service personnel in addition to the personnel worked in the field.

³ Hotel Grand Hill Ichigaya run by the MOD mutual aid association also accepted 840 returnees and entrants waiting for the result of a PCR test (as of May 31, 2020).

VOICE

A Private-ship Captain Who Fought Against COVID-19 Virus Together with SDF Personnel

Mr. INOUE Shiro,
Captain of Hakuo, Yutaka Shipping K.K

Since 2016 the company has been operating a passenger ship "Hakuo" for unit training and response to large-scale disasters by the MOD/SDF. The ship has transported SDF personnel and equipment, and provided support for victims of earthquake or wind and flood damage.

Against the spread of the COVID-19 infection, after receiving an emergency request from the MOD to use the ship as a temporary accommodation facility for the returnees from Wuhan, the company made an emergency call to seamen across the country while preparing Hakuo for departure. The ship left its home port, Aioi (Hyogo Prefecture) on January 31, 2020, and arrived at Tokyo Bay on the next day. Usually preparation for departure takes approximately 72 hours but we were able to complete the preparation in 32 hours or so as a result of the united efforts by the people involved.

Later, the ship moved to the MSDF Yokosuka Base (Kanagawa Prefecture) and was preparing for acceptance of returnees by loading bedding, daily commodities and the like, when a large number of the COVID-19 infections were found on a large cruise ship Diamond Princess. In response, it was decided to move Hakuo to Honmoku Wharf of Yokohama Port to use the ship as the activity base of the SDF personnel who provided medical and living support on Diamond Princess.

At first we were a little confounded by the sudden change in the work contents but we worked thinking that we were

playing a very important role that directly supported the SDF mission to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 infection. During about a month of disaster relief activities at Yokohama Port, the SDF personnel were busy leaving Hakuo in the early morning and returning late at night. We strived to ensure their recovery from exhaustion and nutrition support through boiler works for bathing late in the night and well-balanced meals cooked on the ship for each personnel, for example. None of the personnel worked on Diamond Princess became infected and we are proud that our support for the activities contributed to the wonderful achievement. This has become a big asset for us.

At first, COVID-19 caused a big concern also for us, but clear separation of the activity area of the SDF personnel and that of the crew members as well as education provided by SDF medical troops to prevent infection established sufficient infection control measures on the ship, which dispelled the initial concern and we were able to work without fear.

As the spread of the COVID-19 infection is a national crisis that Japan has never experienced before, we had various difficulties but were able to gain a very valuable experience through the activities. I pray for a speedy end to the spread of the COVID-19 infection and wish to serve the SDF well through a quick departure of Hakuo at the time of a natural disaster or other emergency based on the knowledge and experience obtained through the activities.



Hakuo at Honmoku Wharf on March 15, 2020



The author on the bridge of Hakuo



Education before the activities

3 Activities at the SDF Hospital, etc.

The SDF hospitals and the National Defense Medical College Hospital (NDMCH) have been accepting COVID-19 patients since February 1, 2020. The SDF Central Hospital and the NDMCH are designated as medical institutions of Class 1 infectious disease (with two beds that conform to the standards

determined by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare in a depressurized room that can handle Class 1 infectious diseases) by Tokyo and Saitama Prefectures respectively. The two hospitals had been prepared to accept infectious disease patients at all times and expanded acceptance of

Column

“Fight against an Invisible Enemy (Novel Coronavirus)”–Achieved Zero Secondary Infections

From January 31 to March 16, 2020, the SDF engaged in disaster relief operations in order to prevent the expansion of the outbreak of the infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus based on an order issued by the Minister of Defense.

During this period, the SDF personnel who engaged in the disaster relief operations conducted various support activities for Japanese people who had stayed at government facilities after returning from abroad, and for the crew and passengers of the cruise ship Diamond Princess at Daikoku Pier. In this fight against an “invisible enemy” in the form of the new coronavirus, the SDF achieved no secondary infections among the dispatched personnel.

The disaster relief operations were concluded without any secondary infections among the dispatched SDF personnel because the MOD/SDF constantly reviewed and revised the standards for protective gear and other matters in accordance with the job duties and the commanders at all levels fully enforced the standards, and also because individual personnel had a high level of awareness about guarding against infection. Here, we explain the standards for protective gear and for health management, and the manual for the improvement of the environment.

The standard for protective gear prescribes the types of protective gear that should be worn by personnel when engaging in on-site activity according to their job duties. The standard requires personnel at the greatest risk to wear full infection protective clothing and personnel at the lowest risk to wear only masks, gowns, and gloves.

The standard for health management stipulates that all personnel should undergo a PCR test on the premise that following the completion of onsite activity, the personnel should either be subjected to follow-up observation in isolated rooms

or return to their respective units in accordance with the level of infection risk. (As a result of the PCR test, no personnel tested positive. Personnel who tested positive should be hospitalized at SDF Central Hospital. In addition to accepting people who tested positive among cruise ship crew and passengers (including foreigners) and returnees from abroad, the SDF Central Hospital conducted PCT tests.)

The manual for the improvement of the environment prescribes the procedures for implementing disinfection, zoning (segregation between the hot zone, where infection risk exists, and the cold zone, where safety is assured) and waste disposal.

Meanwhile, the Ground Component Command included personnel from the GSDF’s NBC Countermeasure Medical Unit, who are knowledgeable about prevention of infection in the dispatched unit. As a result, by taking advantage of those personnel’s knowledge, it became possible to fully ensure protection against infection and provide education to members of the dispatched unit who came from the MSDF and the ASDF.

Furthermore, MSDF Yokosuka District and Air Defense Command actively implemented measures to guard against infection through medical personnel. As a result, the SDF achieved no secondary infections.

This achievement represents the synergy of the results of NBC exercises routinely conducted by various units, the maintenance of good health due to sufficient diet, rest and bathing, and efforts made by all personnel who engaged in on-site disaster relief activities, worked at command and control facilities, or provided logistics support (including GSDF Central Transportation Command, which was responsible for supervising activity on the “Hakuo,” on which dispatched personnel stayed, and the “Silver Queen,” a private ferry).



Zoning at SDF Central Hospital



Education about guarding against infection



Taking a meal on the “Hakuo”

such patients to beds for general patients in response to the increase in patient numbers. The SDF Sapporo Hospital and other district hospitals also started to accept patients according to the requests from the local governments. The SDF Central Hospital accepted the people infected on the Diamond Princess, compiled an analysis of the symptoms of the 104 patients in a short period of time, and published the results on March 19, 2020. The SDF hospitals and NDMCH accepted 430 COVID-19 patients (as of May 31, 2020).

The SDF Central Hospital and NDMCH started a clinical trial of Avigan tablets (favipiravir) (developed by FUJIFILM

Toyama Chemical Co., Ltd.) concerning COVID-19 infection. Since March 2020, the MOD has been gathering experience in treatment using Avigan tablets within the framework of compassionate use of unapproved drugs and also participated in the process of its validation through clinical trials, which is necessary for the drug to be officially approved as a remedy for COVID-19 infection.

The MOD/SDF actively fulfilled their roles in the fight against COVID-19 infection not only by treating patients but also through cooperation with the development of therapeutic drugs for the treatment of COVID-19.

VOICE

Response to the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

Captain KODAMA Tatsuya,
Medical Officer of Pulmonary Medicine,
the SDF Central Hospital (Setagaya Ward, Tokyo)

I have been treating COVID-19 patients at the SDF Central Hospital since February 2020 as a member of the COVID-19 intense care team from many departments of the hospital. We, as one team, have been working together, while bouncing ideas off each other, to best provide medical care to critically ill patients who need intense care including a ventilator support.

Since early February the hospital has been accepting COVID-19 patients, starting from returnees from Wuhan and passengers/crew members of the Diamond Princess cruise ship. At first, medical practitioners and hospital personnel were working under significant physical and mental stress

because many things were unclear about the disease state and treatment of the infection, and there were a risk of nosocomial infection and a language barrier in communication with foreign patients.

However, I was filled with a sense of fulfillment as a medical practitioner when seriously ill patients recovered and left the hospital. As a medical officer, I am also proud that I can work at the front line of the national crisis and that we received a high evaluation for our efforts to publicize new insights on this infectious disease and to effectively prevent hospital infection. Hereafter, I would like to share this experience with my juniors, which would be useful for response to a future spread of the next emerging or re-emerging infectious disease.



Mini conference of doctors handling infections based on electronic medical records
(author: right in the front line)



The author (left) wearing personal protective equipment for treating a seriously ill patient

Column**A Letter of Thanks from a German Couple**

As part of the SDF's disaster relief activities to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the SDF Central Hospital accepted foreign passengers and crew members of the Diamond Princess. Units and others engaged in the disaster relief vigorously worked for foreign and other passengers and crew members and successfully completed the activity.

Let us introduce a letter of thanks from a German couple, Mr. Janssen and Ms. O'Neal, to the Chief of Staff, GSDF. They were passengers of the ship, admitted to the SDF Central Hospital and returned to their home country later.

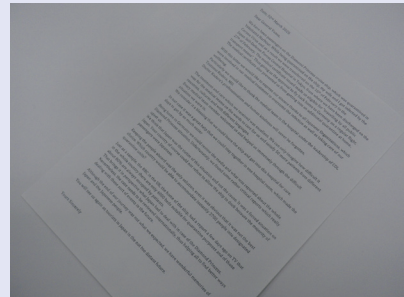
After returning to their country, the couple sent us a letter of thanks: "We are especially grateful for the medical team of the SDF Central Hospital. We will never forget their professionalism and empathic support. Support for us was wonderful. When

patients of many nationalities flooded the ward and the medical staff faced a difficult situation, all members of the medical team welcomed and provided vigorous support for us who were feeling insecure in the hospital. –snip- We made good memories about Japan and Japanese people." Minister of Defense Kono referred to the letter of thanks at the Japan-Germany telephone conversation on April 24, 2020, and German Federal Minister of Defence Kramp-Karrenbauer expressed her gratitude for the SDF assistance. The letter is symbolic of the fact that the disaster relief activities were beneficial not only for Japan but also for other countries too. The SDF is proud of this.

The SDF will continue to contribute to the defense of Japan, and to the stability and peace of the world.



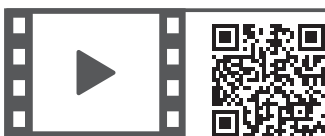
Mr. Janssen and Ms. O'Neal hospitalized in the SDF Central Hospital



A Letter of Thanks from the Couple to the Chief of Staff, GSDF

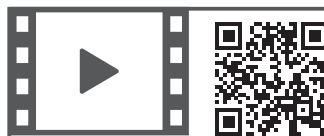
4 Activities for Sending Out and Sharing of Information at Home and Abroad

The MOD/SDF disclosed protective measures of "JSDF's standards"⁴ in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection and also shared through embassies, etc. with the defense authorities the materials compiling the SDF activities in response to the infection, factors that prevented infection of the SDF personnel while working on the Diamond Princess, an outline of symptom analysis at the SDF Central Hospital and other matters.



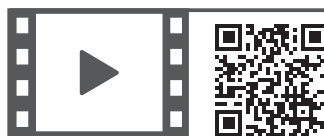
Video: Introduction on protective measures of JSDF's standards (Washing hands)

URL: <https://youtu.be/5QXtgrUJnCM>



Video: Introduction on protective measures of JSDF's standards (Putting masks on/off)

URL: <https://youtu.be/F5TbW0G8NQs>



Video: Introduction on protective measures of JSDF's standards (Etiquette when coughing and sneezing)

URL: <https://youtu.be/4KWZ7bvj21M>

⁴ Joint Staff Website "In Order to Ensure Your Safety Against COVID-19" (https://www.mod.go.jp/js/Activity/Gallery/images/Disaster_relief/2020covid_19/2020covid_19_guidance1.pdf)

Since April, Minister of Defense Kono held conference calls with the defense ministers of 15 countries,⁵ including the United States, Australia, India, the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries, the United Kingdom, France and other European countries, Canada and New Zealand, and exchanged opinions on the roles of the defense authorities in light of the global expansion of the COVID-19 infection. Japan-US defense minister conference calls, in particular, were made twice in total in April and May. During the calls, the ministers confirmed that the two countries would ensure close coordination and maintenance of their response capabilities amid the current situation in addition to close collaboration to win the battle against COVID-19. Through conference calls with other countries, the defense authorities agreed to share information, lessons and knowledge obtained primarily while taking infection control measures and confirmed the need to share the understanding of the threat

based on the current situation and the understanding of the impact of the infection expansion on the countries' defense policy considering the roles of the defense authorities. The ministers also agreed to continue communication between the defense authorities and strong promotion of defense cooperation and exchange toward maintenance and strengthening of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific."

In the situation where the COVID-19 infection is spreading, it is important to actively communicate with foreign countries. It is also necessary to pay great attention to the new international order after the end of COVID-19 pandemic. The MOD/SDF recognizes the importance of further cooperation with foreign countries that share values and interests in order to maintain the free and open international order that has supported the world's peace and prosperity.

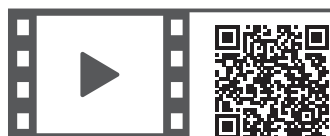
5 Efforts of the MOD/SDF to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 Infection

With the recognition that the MOD/SDF, whose purpose is to defend the lives and safety of the people, never allows those lives and safety to be threatened through its activities, the MOD/SDF is powerfully promoting initiatives of reducing

contact with other people in its education/training, working patterns, holding of events, and visits from outside, for example.

6 Other Efforts

On May 29, 2020, in order to pay the MOD/SDF's respect and gratitude to medical professionals handling COVID-19 infection as an organization also responding to the infection, Blue Impulse made a demonstration flight in the sky over central Tokyo.



Video: Flight by Blue Impulse to pay respect and gratitude to medical professionals handling COVID-19 infection
URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tP6CFDQTrVs>



Blue Impulse performing demonstration flights to pay respects and gratitude to healthcare workers (May 2020)

⁵ Conference calls were held with 15 countries: France, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, India, the Philippines, New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia, Italy, Mongolia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Papua New Guinea in the order of the implementation (as of June 16.)