

Section
6Information Gathering Activities for Ensuring the
Safety of Japan-related Vessels in the Middle East

1 Background of the Deployment of the SDF to the Middle East

Peace and stability in the Middle East are crucial to the peace and prosperity of the international community, including Japan. In addition, it is very important to ensure the safety of Japan-related vessels in the Middle East, which is the world's major energy source and on which Japan depends for about 90% of its crude oil imports.

In the Middle East, amidst rising tensions, there were incidents of attacks on ships. In June 2019, Japan-related vessels suffered damage. Under these circumstances, the United States, European countries, and other countries are taking steps to ensure the safety of navigation in the region by utilizing ships and aircraft.

In order to ease tensions and stabilize the situation in the Middle East, the Japanese government has actively promoted diplomatic initiatives, including Prime Minister Abe's visit to Iran in the same month, and the Japan-U.S. summit meeting during the UN General Assembly and the Japan-Iran summit meeting in September.

In this context, based on the discussions that took place among the Prime Minister and other relevant ministers at the National Security Council and other meetings, Japan has decided to take its own initiative to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East and the safety of Japan-related vessels. On October 18, the Chief Cabinet Secretary held a press conference to announce the government's policies that consisted of the following three pillars: (1) further diplomatic efforts to ease tensions in the Middle East and stabilize the situation; (2) thorough implementation of navigation safety measures, including close information sharing with relevant industries; and (3) commencement of specific studies on the use of SDF assets to strengthen information gathering posture. On the same day, in response to these policies, the Minister of Defense issued an instruction on the implementation of studies on the dispatch of MSDF vessels for the purpose of information gathering and on the possibility of utilizing the existing counter-piracy unit.

Following these instructions, the MOD held discussions on specific matters while coordinating with the Cabinet Secretariat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and other relevant ministries and agencies.

On December 27, following the above studies and the discussions held subsequently among the National Security Council, the Prime Minister, and other relevant ministers, the Cabinet decided on the government's policy on the efforts to ensure the safety of Japan-related vessels (details are given in the next section). While the information gathering activities could have been implemented within the scope of the MOD's jurisdiction, it was decided to carry out a Cabinet decision not just because comprehensive measures were to be taken under cooperation of different ministries and agencies as a whole-of-government approach, but also in order to clarify the importance of the deployment of the SDF overseas and ensure accountability to the public. For the same reasons, it was stipulated that the Diet is to receive a report whenever a Cabinet decision regarding the activities is made (including any changes to it) and a report on the results of such activities upon termination. At the time of the Cabinet decision, the report to the Diet was made immediately after the Cabinet decision was issued.

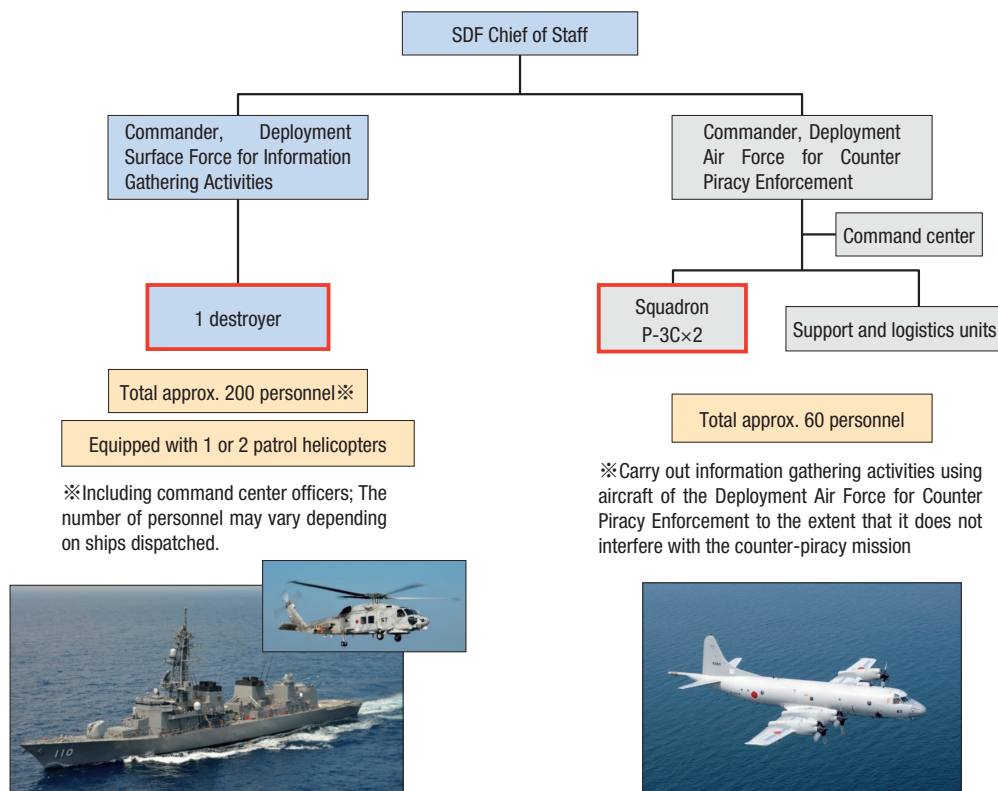
Following the Cabinet decision on the same day, the Minister of Defense instructed the MOD to begin various preparations, including preparations for the formation of units and education and training. With the participation of the relevant departments of the MOD and other relevant ministries and agencies, the MSDF took all possible measures to ensure the smooth execution of its activities, such as conducting a wargaming exercise on January 8 and 9, 2020, in order to strengthen the capabilities of commanders



MSDF Destroyer JS "Takanami" engaging in information gathering activities in the Arabian Sea

Fig. III -1-6-1

Units Engaged in Information Gathering Activities in the Middle East



at different levels to judge the situation and practice unit operation and liaison.

On January 10, a Defense Council meeting was held. After deliberations based on reports from the Chief of Joint Staff and the MSDF Chief of Staff on the preparations for the dispatch, the Minister of Defense ordered the implementation of information gathering activities necessary to ensure the safety of Japan-related vessels in the Middle East. In addition to the dispatch of a new destroyer for the Deployment Surface Force for information gathering, two P-3C fixed-wing patrol aircraft of the Deployment Air Force for Counter Piracy Enforcement (DAPE) will be utilized to the extent that it does not interfere with the counter-piracy mission. The area of operation includes three waters of high seas: the Gulf of Oman, the northern Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden to the east of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait (including the exclusive economic zones of the coastal states). Two fixed-wing patrol aircraft (P-3C) left Japan on January 11

to replace the counter-piracy unit and began an information gathering task on the 20th of the same month. Destroyer JS “Takanami” left port on February 2 and started to engage in information gathering activities in the sea areas above on February 26.¹ On May 10, 2020, Destroyer JS “Kirisame” left Japan to replace “Takanami.”

Information gathered by the SDF is shared with the Cabinet Secretariat, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), the MOFA, and other relevant ministries and agencies, as well as with relevant industries when necessary through public-private liaison meetings, to be used for the government’s navigation safety measures.

Q See Fig. III-1-6-1 (Units Engaged in Information Gathering Activities in the Middle East)
Fig. III-1-6-2 (Information Gathering Activities by the SDF [image])

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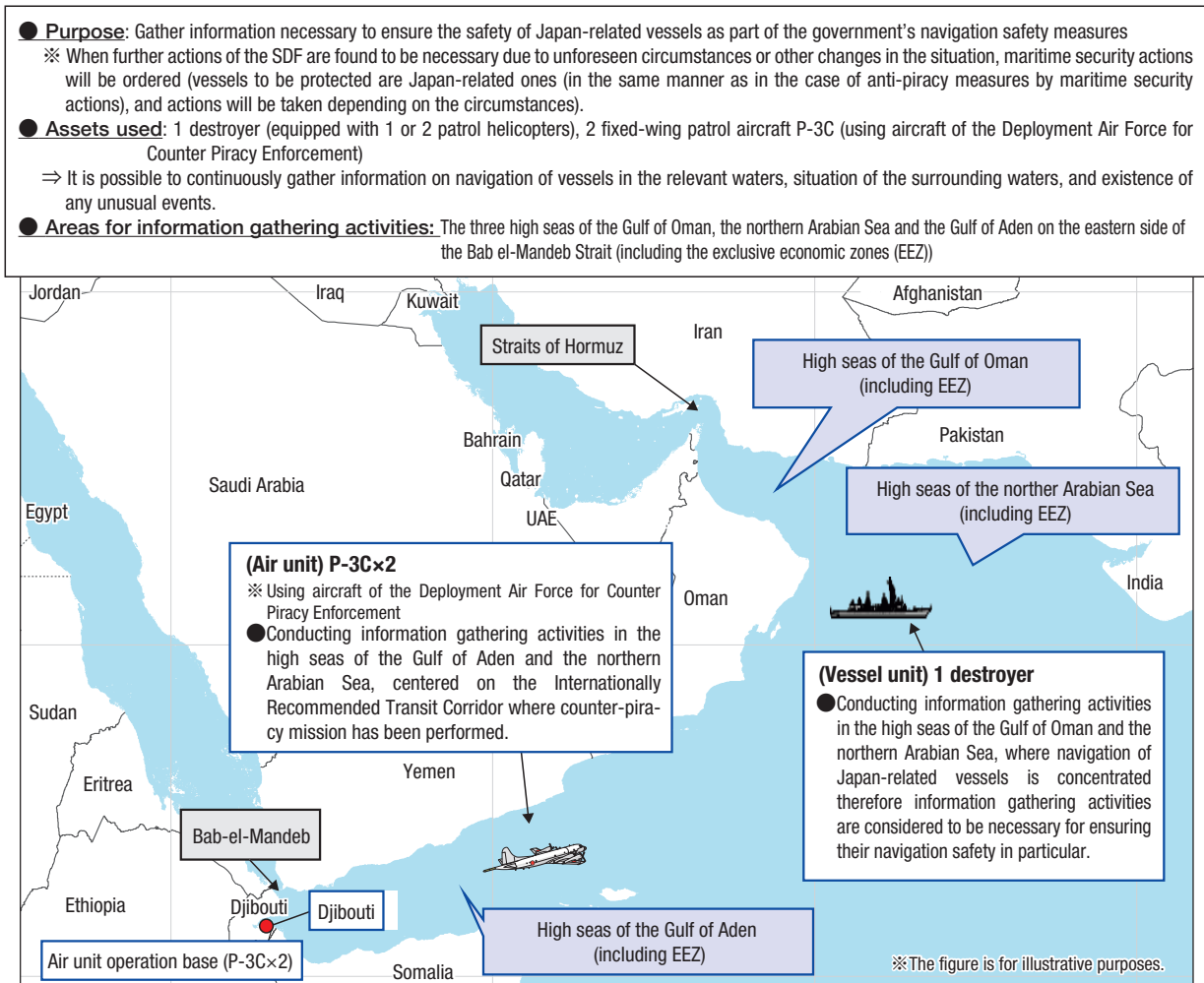
Outline of the Government's Efforts to Ensure the Safety of Japan-Related Vessels in the Middle East (Cabinet Decision)

The Cabinet decision titled “The Government’s Efforts to Ensure the Safety of Japan-Related Vessels in the Middle East” stipulates that the government will promote its own efforts to ensure peace and stability in the Middle East and the

safety of Japan-related vessels, such as: (1) further diplomatic efforts to ease tensions and stabilize the situation in the Middle East; (2) the thorough implementation of navigation safety measures, including close information sharing with

¹ From the start of the information gathering activity to the end of May 2020, no Japan-related vessels have been reported to encounter a distinctive event in the waters of operation. During this period, in the waters of operation, Deployment Surface Force for Counter Piracy Enforcement (DSPE) confirmed about 7,617 vessels in total, and DAPE confirmed about 9,150 vessels in total.

Fig. III -1-6-2 Information Gathering Activities by the SDF (image)



relevant industries; and (3) the use of SDF vessels and aircraft to strengthen information gathering capabilities. The Cabinet decision was made with an understanding of the significance of these measures, which are to be carried out by the following means.

1 Further diplomatic efforts

Japan has built good relations with countries involved in the stability of the Middle East, such as maintaining good relations with Iran for many years while being an ally of the United States. Taking advantage of these relations, Japan will make further diplomatic efforts, including reaching out to the countries concerned at various levels, to ease tensions and stabilize the situation in the Middle East. In addition, Japan will continue to seek cooperation from the coastal countries that play an important role in the safe navigation of vessels. Continued efforts will be made to gain the understanding of the countries concerned in the region regarding the SDF's information gathering activities.

2 Thorough implementation of navigation safety measures

Japan will thoroughly implement its navigation safety measures, including meticulous information sharing with related industries. Specifically, a system of cooperation within the government and between the government and related industries will be established, which will also cover the sharing of information obtained through the SDF's information gathering activities by related ministries and agencies. In addition, whenever information that suggests the existence of a risk to the safe navigation of vessels is obtained, the government will promptly share such information with related industries to call for vigilance in a timely manner, encouraging them to thoroughly implement navigation safety measures at their own initiative.

3 Information gathering activities by the SDF

Although there is no immediate need to implement protective measures for Japan-related vessels in the Middle

East, given the rising tensions in the region, it is necessary to strengthen the information gathering system to ensure the safety of Japan-related vessels. Therefore, Japan has decided to have the SDF conduct information gathering activities, considering the distance from Japan to the Middle East region, the SDF's experience in operating in the region, and the importance of cooperation with units and organizations from other countries.

The SDF's information gathering activities are part of the government's navigation safety measures and are aimed at collecting information necessary to ensure the safety of Japan-related vessels. The activities are to be conducted in accordance with the provisions of Article 4, paragraph (1), item (xviii) of the Act for Establishment of the Ministry of Defense, as they would need smooth decision making and order issuance in relation to Maritime Security Operations as measures for unforeseen circumstances or other changes in the situation, which are provided in Article 82 of the Self-Defense Forces Law.

(1) Information to Be Gathered

The SDF will gather information that directly affects or is necessary for ensuring safe navigation in the waters described in (3) below.

(2) Equipment

After necessary adjustments, one new destroyer will be dispatched. In addition, the SDF will also use fixed-wing patrol aircraft P-3C of the units currently engaged in the Counter-Piracy Operations under Article 7, paragraph (1) of the Acts on Punishment of and Measures against Acts of Piracy (Anti-Piracy Measures Act). Information gathering activities by the counter-piracy units will be carried out to an extent that does not interfere with the counter-piracy operation.

(3) Geographical Scope of Activities

The geographical scope of the information gathering activities by destroyers and fixed-wing patrol aircraft described in (2) consists of three waters of high seas: the Gulf of Oman, the northern Arabian Sea, and the Gulf of Aden to the east of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait (including the exclusive economic zones of the coastal states). For resupply, destroyers will call at a port facing the three seas.

(4) Responding to Unforeseen Circumstances Or Other Changes in the Situation

In the event of unforeseen circumstances or other changes in the situation, the relevant ministries and agencies will work together to understand the situation, share information closely and promptly with each other, and strengthen the government's response. Then, if further measures by the SDF are deemed necessary in response to the situation in question, Maritime Security Operations will be ordered in accordance with Article 82 of the Self-Defense Forces Law. When issuing such an order, the MOD will make best efforts for prompt decision making.

The measures that can be taken in the course of Maritime Security Operations will be based on international laws, including the flag state principle, and will vary depending on the circumstances, such as whether the protected vessel is a Japanese or foreign-flagged vessel and the type of infringement.

(5) Ensuring the Safety of the SDF Units

In conducting information gathering activities, the SDF units take all possible measures to ensure their own safety, including the collection of sufficient information on the situation in the areas of operation, the installation of equipment necessary to ensure safety, and appropriate prior education and training.

(6) Cooperation among Relevant Ministries and Agencies

In order to ensure the effectiveness of information gathering activities and responses to changes in the situation including the rise of unforeseen circumstances, relevant ministries and agencies will work closely together to share understanding regarding such responses, improve response capabilities through training, and develop a system that allows for a prompt response to the situation.

(7) Cooperation with Other Countries

Although Japan does not participate in any specific framework related to the safety of navigation in the Middle East and the SDF's information gathering activities are to be conducted at its own initiative, Japan will communicate and cooperate with other countries as necessary.

(8) Duration of the SDF's Activities

The period during which the SDF should engage in the information gathering activities (including preparation and training periods) under the Cabinet decision is from December 27, 2019, to December 26, 2020. If it is deemed necessary to extend the SDF's activities based on the Cabinet decision, another Cabinet decision or any changes to it will be made in that regard. If, prior to the expiration of the above period, the SDF's activities are no longer deemed necessary in light of the necessity described in this paragraph,² the SDF will terminate such activities at that point. If there is a noticeable change in the situation, the National Security Council will consider a response.

4 Report to the Diet

In view of the fact that matters pertaining to the SDF operations under the Anti-Piracy Measures Act are reported to the Diet in accordance with Article 7, paragraph (3) of the Anti-Piracy



Destroyer JS "Takanami" crew engaging in information gathering activities in the north of the Arabian Sea

Measures Act, the Diet is to receive a report whenever a Cabinet decision or any changes to it is made and a report on the results of such activities upon termination.

See Reference 15 (Government's Efforts to Ensure the Safety of Japan-Related Vessels in the Middle East)

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Engaging in Information Gathering Activities in the Middle East

Captain INABA Yosuke, Escort Flotilla 6 Commander, MSDF

As the commander of the Deployment Surface Force for Information Gathering (DSIG), on our unit, Destroyer JS "Takanami," I have engaged in information gathering in the waters of the Middle East since February 2020. Considering the fact that Japan depends on the Middle East region for approximately 90% of its crude oil imports, it is vital for Japan to ensure the safety of navigation for Japan-related vessels in the Middle East, which is a major energy source of the world. In the open sea of the Gulf of Oman and the northern Arabian Sea where we are working, a large number of tankers laden with crude oil, etc. are navigating from the Gulf countries toward Japan. Through these information gathering activities, all personnel of the Deployment Surface Force are proud of being able to contribute to the safety of Japan-related vessels by gathering information that directly impacts the safety of navigation of vessels and other information necessary to secure safe navigation.

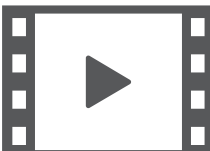
Since this is the first such activity, we were groping through



The author receiving a report on the bridge

trial and error for the mission. However, we were able to overcome challenges with significant support from various quarters and unified efforts of all personnel of the DSIG, who understand how important the mission is.

Today, too, we are making full efforts to ensure the safety of Japan-related vessels in this water.



Video: Information gathering activities necessary to ensure the safety of Japanese vessels in the Middle East

URL: <https://twitter.com/ointstaffpa/status/1232620231605899265?s=09>

² Refers to "3 Intelligence gathering activities by the SDF"

3 Communication and Cooperation with Relevant Countries

1 United States

As a result of a comprehensive review of what measures Japan should take to ensure the safe navigation of Japan-related vessels in the Middle East, Japan has started to implement efforts as Japan's independent initiative without participating in the International Maritime Security Construct led by the United States, considering the need for ensuring a stable supply of crude oil, relations with the

United States, and relations with Iran. At the same time, to ensure safe navigation in the Middle East, the SDF has been cooperating closely with the United States in various ways. In the information gathering activities, the SDF will also appropriately cooperate with the United States as an ally, while observing the government's policy of conducting navigation safety measures independently from any other country's initiatives. For this reason, an MSDF officer has been dispatched to the U.S. Central Naval Command in

VOICE

Response from Relevant Industries to the Information Gathering Activities in the Middle East

Based on a cabinet decision made in December 2019, the SDF has been carrying out information gathering activities in the Middle East. In this Column, we introduce responses from the relevant industries (The Japanese Shipowners' Association, the Petroleum Association of Japan and the All Japan Seamen's Union) to the activities.

Mr. NAITO Tadaaki, (President, the Japanese Shipowners' Association)

The Japanese Shipowners' Association welcomes the initiative of the Government of Japan that was approved by the cabinet on December 27, 2019. As tension has been rising in the Middle East since last year, crew members of ships navigating the waters are conducting operations with concern about safety. In this situation, the provision of information obtained by the SDF will contribute to the safe navigation of Japanese merchant vessels and increase the sense of security for crew members. The ocean shipping industry will closely share information with the government to fulfill our social responsibility to surely transport goods necessary for Japan.



Mr. NAITO Tadaaki, (President, the Japanese Shipowners' Association)

Mr. TSUKIOKA Takashi (President, the Petroleum Association of Japan)

I would like to express my gratitude for the initiative by the government for the safety of the navigation in the Middle East waters, which is an artery for energy supply to the country, as well as the SDF personnel who are gathering information in the field. Crude oil from the Middle East accounts for about 90% of the crude oil imports of Japan. The industry believes that safe navigation in the region is the foundation for Japan's stable energy supply and the peace of people's daily lives. The industry will continue to work for the stable supply of petroleum. I am grateful to the SDF personnel who are engaging in information gathering activities in the field every day and hope that all of them will safely return home after performing their duty.



Mr. TSUKIOKA Takashi (President, the Petroleum Association of Japan)

Mr. MORITA Yasumi (President, All Japan Seamen's Union)

As Japan, an ocean trade nation, transports 99.6% of export/import cargoes that are necessary for the maintenance of daily lives of its people and economic development by sea, in order to maintain stable marine transport, the safety of navigation is absolutely vital. We seamen can work in relief when the safety of the sea and waterways is confirmed.

On behalf of seamen, I would like to offer my genuine appreciation for activities by people of the MOD/SDF to ensure the safety of the sea and waterways.



Mr. MORITA Yasumi (President, All Japan Seamen's Union)

Bahrain as a liaison officer to share information with the U.S. Forces. At the Japan-U.S. defense ministerial meeting on January 14, 2020, Defense Minister Kono explained the deployment of the SDF to Secretary of Defense Esper, and the Secretary expressed his gratitude.

2 Coastal States in the Middle East

It is important to gain the understanding of the coastal states, including Iran, regarding the information gathering activities that Japan is undertaking as an independent initiative, and Japan has been explaining these activities to them with transparency. In addition, the coastal states play an important role in ensuring safe navigation in the Middle East. Japan has been reaching out to the coastal states to gain their understanding of Japan's efforts.

At the Japan-Iran Summit Meeting on December 20, 2019, Prime Minister Abe gave a detailed explanation of Japan's efforts. In response, President Rouhani said that Iran appreciates Japan's diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions in the region, understands Japan's intention to contribute to the safety of navigation through its own initiative, and also

appreciates that Japan is explaining its efforts to Iran in a transparent manner. Iran maintained the same stance as this also at the Japan-Iran foreign ministers' meeting held on February 15, 2020.

In a telephone conference between Defense Minister Kono and Iranian Minister of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics Hatami on January 9, 2020, Minister Kono explained the SDF's information gathering activities and asked Iran to cooperate as a coastal country to ensure the safety of navigation.

In January, Prime Minister Abe visited Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Oman, and held summit meetings with each of these countries. At the summit meetings, the Prime Minister gave an explanation on Japan's efforts, gaining support from the countries. Defense Minister Kono also explained the SDF's information gathering activities to Defense Minister Badr during his visit to Oman in December 2019, and to UAE Minister of State for Defense Affairs Bowardi in a telephone conference in March 2020. Japan intends to continue to communicate with the coastal states, including Iran.