

Briefing Memo

The purpose of this column is to respond to reader interests in security issues and at the same time to promote a greater understanding of NIDS.

A “briefing” provides background information, among others. We hope these columns will help everyone to better understand the complex of issues involved in security affairs. Please note that the views in this column do not represent the official opinion of NIDS.

Japan’s Response to Today’s New Threats —NIDS/IDA Joint Seminar—

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Modern society is exposed to a greater variety of threats than ever before. These threats extend beyond natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and typhoons, to include man-made disasters, infectious diseases on a massive scale, and terrorists intent on inflicting mass casualties. Looking back over just the past few years, some major natural disasters that can be recalled include the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (1995), the Miyake Island volcanic eruption (2000), and the Niigata-Chuetsu Earthquake (2004), as well as the Sumatra Offshore Earthquake (2004), the Northern Pakistan Earthquake (2005), and damage from a number of typhoons and hurricanes. In addition, man-made disasters include accidents related to nuclear power, such as the Tokaimura Criticality Accident at a uranium processing plant (1999) and the steam leak accident at Kansai Electric Power’s Mihama Nuclear Power Plant (2004), while massive outbreaks of infectious diseases that are still fresh in the memory include SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) (2003) and avian influenza (bird flu.) both last year and this year. For terrorism, there has hardly been time to enumerate the incidents, with the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system (1995), the events of September 11 (2001), and terrorist bombings in Bali, Indonesia (2002), Madrid (2004), and London (2005). These disasters, incidents, and accidents constitute a serious and current threat to safety and security, and all of them require appropriate responses. Moreover, international cooperation is sometimes needed in responding to these threats. Relief and assistance for natural disasters that cause damage to several countries at once is provided under multi-national auspices, and massive outbreaks of infectious diseases require efforts on a worldwide scale, since they can

spread across national borders so easily. Additionally, terrorist activities today are often not limited to a single country but are instead international in scale, so that the global society works together to suppress them. This does not mean, however, that domestic level responders can be allowed to be passive observers. The establishment of suitable domestic systems to respond to these threats is an urgent task. Each country should be developing its own domestic system along with its participation in international cooperation efforts.

Japan, as well, has in recent years been developing systems for responding to various threats like those listed above. The 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake completely destroyed the myth that Japan was safe from such natural disasters and pointed up the inadequacy of the government's risk management systems. This was taken as a wake-up call for change, after the establishment of a Cabinet-guided response system during the administrative reforms of 1998. This new system targeted natural disasters, man-made disasters, massive outbreaks of infectious diseases, and terrorism as situations requiring organized responses, and set up frameworks for handling each type of situation. For example, the legal framework in response to natural disasters included the Disaster Measures Basic Law, the Disaster Relief Law, and the Large-Scale Earthquake Countermeasures Law, which established the response procedures at the prefectural and central government levels. For the response to nuclear disasters, to accidents at large-scale facilities, or to massive outbreaks of infectious diseases, specific legislation such as the Nuclear Disaster Special Measures Law and the Infectious Disease Law were added to the above laws in an effort to keep losses from such incidents to a minimum. Furthermore, in response to deliberate acts of destruction with intent to do harm (terrorism, etc.), the Bill to Respond to Armed Attacks (the so-called "emergency legislation") was enacted to implement proper response procedures at the national level. In addition, to ensure suitable implementation of these response frameworks, disaster plans and citizen protection plans are being adopted at the central ministry and agency level, as well as at the prefectural and municipal government levels. Not only there, but also at designated public institutions, response manuals suited to each of these emergency situations are also being prepared. The central government and some local government authorities have already commenced tabletop and actual training exercises based on these plans and manuals.

However, these preparations are not yet finished. Efficient implementation of these systems will necessitate the adoption of measures for the development of a cadre of experts through

various training programs, and development of the knowledge and decisiveness needed for a firm grasp and identification of situations, as well as the adoption of measures assigning priorities to the suitable allocation of limited resources to the various targets for protection, and promoting educational activities for the populace in daily life. And while these initial efforts are now virtually complete, further studies are needed for these systems to continue over the long term. A huge number of issues remain to be resolved regarding effective responses to new threats.

Moreover, it is possible that responses to this kind of terrorism or natural disaster cannot be adequately implemented using conventional compartmentalized administration systems. These new threats are problems that cannot be handled by the Defense Agency and Self-Defense Forces alone, nor should they be left entirely up to the police institutions. Nor can they be independently handled by disaster prevention institutions, nor by any other public institutions. Instead, a flexible response extending laterally across all of these institutions is increasingly needed.

Since 2003, the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) has provided a venue to support improving the response situation in Japan. This venue is the National Institute for Defense Studies/Institute for Defense Analyses Joint Seminar (NIDS/IDA Joint Seminar), which convened this year for the third time. The Seminar was intended to bring together into one place people who are involved in responding to natural disasters or terrorist threats like those described above, and to give them a place where they can share knowledge and study response methods, as well as to help build up personal networks. Therefore, NIDS sought participants from a wide range of ministries and agencies, as well as from the private sector, who may be compelled to respond on the front lines. For the content of the Seminar, NIDS formed a partnership with the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), a US government nonprofit think tank specializing in research into security issues, in order to provide participants with insights and experiences gained in the course of that nation's territorial security and anti-terrorism activities. The Seminar was carefully planned and managed so that the participants could make appropriate comparisons between the American experience and Japan's situation, and could study methods for responding to natural disasters of various kinds, as well as threats such as terrorism.

The Seminar, launched in FY2003 and held this year for the third time, has so far attracted about 100 participants. They represent a wide range of organizations, including enterprises that support the social infrastructure, such as railroads, marine shippers, airlines, and electric or gas utilities, and extending to insurance companies, think tanks, industry associations, and medical organizations. A significant development is that every year newspapers, television, news agencies, and other representatives of the mass media join the participants. Because it is a problem to determine how much education to provide on a daily basis, and how much public reporting should be made regarding threats, the mass media and their representatives are too important to be ignored. Furthermore, a number of local government authorities have recognized the importance of the Seminar and sent representatives. Large numbers of participants have also come from the central government level, representing at least 10 different ministries and agencies, and other related institutions that must deal with threats. Over two days of concentrated Seminar sessions, these people can exchange opinions about what is the best response for threats that confront them today, based on their respective experiences, to stimulate their thinking in various ways.

This year's seminar consisted of a keynote address on the state of establishing government response systems and related issues by Kyoji Yanagisawa, Assistant Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, entitled "Government Risk Management Policies and Issues after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the events of September 11, 2001," and four sessions, on "The 21st Century Security Environment," "Challenges & Threats," "Information & Crisis Management," and "Homeland Security." Two scenarios on natural disasters and terrorism were also presented. Since participants are able to take texts distributed during the Seminar back home with them, their organizations can make use of the texts as references. In addition, application of the so-called Chatham House Rule (under which statements made during the Seminar cannot be quoted elsewhere without the original party's permission) helps to preserve freedom of expression as much as possible.

This year, the session participants obtained an overview of trends in the 21st century international society, with its progressively advancing globalization, and examined through lectures and discussions what threats Japan might be faced with in such an environment. They also studied what effect the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and radioactive substances can have on Japan, and what are the responses, and then went on to evaluate

Japan's present capabilities in the course of discussions about methods for handling and analyzing the information needed to respond to threats. In addition, the participants learned about the role of the military in US homeland security, and of systems for public-private cooperation in the US, and compared those with systems used in Japan.

In the scenario part of the Seminar, which examined what Japan should do if a nuclear power plant accident were to occur on top of a natural disaster such as a heavy snowfall or an earthquake, or if a terrorist attack were to occur at a festival with hundreds of thousands people in attendance, the participants used the knowledge learned in the earlier sessions to study possible responses. In both scenarios, there was a lot of information that is unclear yet very important, and the participants analyzed the significance of this information to consider what method should be taken, selected a method, and then actively debated such issues as how best to allocate and invest limited resources. Most participants afterward offered positive comments on the Seminar's effectiveness.

Seminars offering content like that described above can be expected to continue providing a venue for exchanges of information that can help to improve Japan's threat response capabilities as a whole. With the concept of security as it is understood today constantly expanding in scope, the targets for NIDS research and education also must change and expand. The NIDS/IDA Joint Seminar is playing an important role in that change and expansion of scope.

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