

Chapter 8

Japan— National Defense Program Guidelines and Defense Capabilities for the 21st Century

On December 10, 2004, the Security Council of Japan and the cabinet adopted the National Defense Program Guidelines, FY2005–(hereinafter referred to as “the new NDPG”) and the Mid-term Defense Program (FY2005–FY2009)(“the new MTDP”). The new NDPG provides guidelines regarding Japan’s security and defense posture for the future. The new MTDP was formulated to achieve the defense force levels that Japan should possess as provided for in the new NDPG and serves as a basis for defense planning for FY 2005 through FY2009.

The new NDPG is built on efforts the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) and the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have made over the years. In the 1990s, Japan witnessed a number of serious incidents—the devastating Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the Tokyo subway sarin incident in 1995, to mention just two—that required rapid SDF responses. Meanwhile, North Korea was pressing ahead with a nuclear weapons development program and fired a ballistic missile over Japanese airspace, forcefully reminding Japan of the necessity to be ready to deal with such threats. On the other hand, Japan is expected to play an increasingly active role—such as its participation in a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operation (PKO) in Cambodia in 1992–1993—in international peace and security. Against this backdrop, since the early 1990s the Japanese government has enacted more than 20 pieces of legislation with a view to providing a legal framework to ensure Japan’s security, enhance the credibility of the Japan-US security arrangements, and promote cooperation with the international community.

With regard to the promotion of international cooperation, the Japanese government promulgated the International Peace Cooperation Law and amended the International Disaster Relief Law in 1992. The International Peace Cooperation Law authorizes the Japanese government to dispatch SDF contingents overseas to cooperate in UN PKOs and international humanitarian relief activities, and a 2001 amendment to the law lifted the freeze on the SDF’s participation in core PKO activities. Under the amended International Disaster Relief Law, the SDF can now participate in international disaster relief operations and provide transportation for such operations. Meanwhile, the Japan-US security arrangements have been strengthened. In 1997, the new Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation were formulated. Thereafter, to ensure the effectiveness of the guidelines, a Law Concerning Measures to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding

Japan and a Ship Inspection Operation Law were enacted. A Japan-US Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement was concluded in 1996 and twice revised to broaden the scope of the bilateral cooperation in this area. Various systems have been installed to effectively deal with various forms of emergency within Japan. Since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, legislation has been put in place to ensure a rapid and adequate SDF response in the event of a large-scale disaster. In order to establish a legal framework for a system to respond to armed attacks on Japan, the Three Laws Regarding Response to Armed Attacks were enacted in 2003. In 2004, Japan enacted the Seven Laws Related to Response to Armed Attack Situations, etc. and concluded three related treaties. By virtue of these measures, a legal framework that enables the JDA and SDF to effectively deal with various situations has been established. Building on these legal and administrative measures, the new NDPG that defines what Japan's defense forces should do and how they should carry out their missions in the future has been formulated.

The new NDPG has the following features worthy of note. First, it emphasizes Japan's effective response to new threats and diverse situations that might affect peace and security, and stresses its spontaneous and active efforts for improving the international security environment. Second, it makes clear the intention to carry out a sweeping review and a significant reduction of the equipment and personnel earmarked for response to a full-scale invasion, while retaining the most basic defense capabilities. Given the increasing financial and demographic constraints, achieving the level of defense capabilities prescribed in the new NDPG, while winning the understanding of countries in the region, will pose a challenge to the government.

1. An Outline of the New National Defense Program Guidelines

The new NDPG and new MTDP were formulated in accordance with a policy document entitled "On Introduction of Ballistic Missile Defense System and Other Measures" adopted by the Security Council and the cabinet on December 19, 2003. With this document, the Japanese government decided to introduce a ballistic missile defense (BMD) system and to conduct a review of Japan's defense capabilities.

The new NDPG's predecessor, the National Defense Program Outline in and after FY1996 (hereinafter referred to as "the 1995 NDPO"), was formulated in November 1995 to meet the sea change that occurred in the international arena following the end of the Cold War. Meanwhile, the new NDPG starts with an explanation of the changes in the global and regional security environment surrounding Japan that necessitate a review of its defense posture. First, the new NDPG points out that it has now become a pressing issue for the international community to respond to new threats and various situations that might affect peace and security (hereinafter referred to as "new threats and diverse situations")—for instance, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic missiles and the activities of international terrorist organizations. On the other hand, the new NDPG takes into account the deepening cooperation and interdependence among major countries, as exemplified by the growing trust between the United States and Russia.

With regard to the situation in areas surrounding Japan, the new NDPG takes the view that unpredictable and uncertain factors—such as problems relating to the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait—still remain unsolved. North Korea, in particular, is engaged in the development, deployment, and proliferation of WMD and ballistic missiles, and maintains large special operations forces—a major destabilizing factor for regional and international security. China continues to modernize its nuclear forces and missile capabilities as well as its naval and air forces and is also expanding the area of its naval operations, in which context the new NDPG states that Japan has to remain attentive to actions China may take in the years ahead. It also says that, under such circumstances, the close and cooperative relationship between Japan and the United States based on the Japan-US security arrangements continues to play an important role for the security of Japan as well as for peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mindful of the new challenges, including the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missiles and the increasing threat of international terrorism, the new NDPG designates the effective response to new threats and diverse situations as the primary role of the defense forces. Attaching importance to the activities that nations of the world cooperatively undertake to improve the international security environment (hereinafter referred to as "international peace cooperation activities"), the new NDPG argues for the establishment of the necessary infrastructure that will enable the SDF to rapidly deploy its units

overseas and sustain their operations, and for making the necessary arrangements including the proper positioning of international peace cooperation activities in the SDF mission priorities.

Until recently, Japan has been building defense capabilities primarily to deter and repel a full-scale invasion of Japan. However, based on the assessment that the likelihood of a full-scale invasion of Japan has declined, the new NDPG announces that Japan will modify its current defense force buildup concept that emphasized Cold War-type antitank, antisubmarine and antiair warfare, and will significantly reduce the personnel and equipment earmarked to meet a full-scale invasion. In the “Attached Table” (see Table 8.1), the new NDPG sums up the specifics of the posture to be taken by the SDF. The table shows the reduction of the authorized number of Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) personnel to 155,000 as well as the scale of reductions in major equipment—GSDF tanks and main artillery pieces, Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) destroyers and combat aircraft, and Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) combat aircraft. The new MTDP limits the total amount of defense-related expenditures needed for the program, applicable to the next five fiscal years (FY2005–FY2009), to approximately ¥24.24 trillion at 2004 prices, down from ¥25.1 trillion planned for the same period under the previous Mid-term Defense Program (Fiscal 2001–2005) (hereinafter referred to as “the 2001 MTDP”).

In mapping out a new vision for the defense forces, the Japanese government has systematically reviewed the objectives of Japan’s security policy and the means needed to achieve them, on the basis of which the new NDPG defined Japan’s defense capabilities. It sets out the following as Japan’s security policy objectives: (a) to prevent any threat from reaching Japan and, in the event that it does, to repel it and minimize any damage; and (b) to improve the international security environment so as to reduce the likelihood that any such threat reaches Japan. Japan will endeavor to achieve these objectives through a combination of three efforts—its own efforts, cooperation with its allies and cooperation with the international community. With regard to its own efforts, Japan will utilize all appropriate means available to prevent any threat from directly affecting Japan, and engage in diplomatic and other activities with a view to improving the international security environment and thereby forestalling such threats. In the event that these efforts fail to prevent a threat from reaching Japan, the Japanese government will take a swift and appropriate decision and respond to it in an integrated manner. The new NDPG defines Japan’s defense

Table 8.1. Defense posture as prescribed in the new NDPG

		1995 NDPO	End of FY2004	New NDPG		
GSDF	Authorized personnel strength	160,000	166,832	155,000		
	Regular	145,000	157,828	148,000		
	Ready Reserve	15,000	9,004	7,000		
	Major units	Regionally deployed units	8 divisions 6 brigades	9 divisions 3 brigades 2 combined brigades	8 divisions 6 brigades	
		Mobile operations units	1 armored division 1 airborne brigade 1 helicopter brigade	1 armored division 1 airborne brigade 1 helicopter brigade	1 armored division Central Readiness Group	
		Surface-to-air guided missile units	8 antiaircraft artillery groups	8 antiaircraft artillery groups	8 antiaircraft artillery groups	
	Major equipment	Tanks	Approx. 900	976	Approx. 600	
		Artillery pieces	Approx. 900	943	Approx. 600	
	MSDF	Major units	Destroyer units (mobile operations)	4 escort flotillas	4 escort flotillas (12 divisions)	4 escort flotillas (8 divisions)
			Destroyer units (assigned to regional districts)	7 escort divisions	7 escort divisions	5 escort divisions
		Submarine units	6 submarine divisions	6 submarine divisions	4 submarine divisions	
		Minesweeping unit	1 minesweeper flotilla	1 minesweeper flotilla	1 minesweeper flotilla	
		Patrol aircraft units	13 squadrons	13 squadrons	9 squadrons	
Major equipment		Destroyers	Approx. 50	53	47	
		Submarines	16	16	16	
	Combat aircraft	Approx. 170	Approx. 170	Approx. 150		
ASDF	Major units	Air warning and control units	8 warning groups 20 warning squadrons 1 squadron	8 warning groups 20 warning squadrons 1 squadron	8 warning groups 20 warning squadrons 1 airborne early-warning group (2 squadrons)	
		Fighter aircraft units	9 squadrons (interceptor) 3 squadrons (support fighter)	9 squadrons (interceptor) 3 squadrons (support fighter)	12 squadrons	
		Air reconnaissance unit	1 squadron	1 squadron	1 squadron	
		Air transport units	3 squadrons	3 squadrons	3 squadrons	
		Aerial refueling/transport unit			1 squadron	
		Surface-to-air guided missile units	6 groups	6 groups	6 groups	
	Major equipment	Combat aircraft	Approx. 400	Approx. 390	Approx. 350	
		Of which, fighters	Approx. 300	Approx. 300	Approx. 260	
	Major BMD equipment and units	Aegis-equipped destroyers		1	4	
		Air warning and control units			7 warning groups 4 warning squadrons	
Surface-to-air guided missile units			1 group	3 groups		

Sources: Data from the *National Defense Program Guidelines, FY2005–*; Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan 2004*, and other related documents.

capabilities as the ultimate guarantee of its national security, representing Japan's collective will and ability to repel any threat that might reach its shores. It is on this basis that the new NDPG defines the roles to be played by the SDF.

The new NDPG is also characterized by its inclusion as part of Japan's security policy of matters that do not fall under "national defense" in its traditional rendition and rather are usually encapsulated under foreign policy. This is indicative of the government stance that the security policy of Japan can be only delivered by unified, government-wide efforts, not just by individual ministries. The new NDPG lists under Japan's cooperative efforts with the international community the following activities: active engagement in diplomatic efforts such as the strategic utilization of official development assistance; active participation in international peace cooperation activities; promotion of stability in regions stretching from the Middle East to East Asia through cooperation with other countries sharing common security concerns; active engagement in the UN reform; and promotion of multilateral regional security frameworks such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and of multilateral efforts to address common agendas such as counterterrorism and counterpiracy.

2. Effective Response to New Threats and Diverse Situations

The new NDPG attaches importance to effective response to new threats and diverse situations, and lists the following five categories: (a) response to ballistic missile attacks; (b) response to attacks by guerrilla and special operations forces; (c) response to an invasion of Japan's offshore islands; (d) patrol and surveillance in the sea and airspace surrounding Japan, and response to the violation of Japan's airspace and the intrusion into Japanese territorial waters by armed special-purpose ships and other similar ships; and (e) response to large-scale and/or special-type (nuclear, biological, chemical, and radiological) disasters.

Japan's existing defense capabilities are not adequate to deal with all of these situations. Since terrorist attacks are difficult to predict or deter and the damage caused by them is likely to spread rapidly, response must be both rapid and effective. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain initial response capabilities at high levels of readiness. Controlling the spread of chaos such attacks would cause requires unit mobility.

Up to now, the Japanese government has embraced the Basic Defense Force Concept, which was introduced in the NDPO of 1976 and basically reaffirmed in the 1995 NDPO. This approach is based on the thinking that, rather than building up defense capability directed towards a particular military threat, Japan should possess the minimum necessary defense capability for an independent nation in such a way that it would not become a source of instability in the surrounding region by creating a power vacuum. This was the concept that put premium on the deterrent effect produced as a result of the very existence of a defense capability. The 1995 NDPO listed “response to large-scale disasters and various other situations” as a role of Japan’s defense forces. However, this outline’s overall emphasis, as noted earlier, was still on the prevention of an invasion of Japan. Such an approach would be inadequate for effectively dealing with new threats and diverse situations that are often impervious to deterrence.

Besides, in order to deal with asymmetric attacks such as terrorist and missile attacks, Japan must possess specialized capabilities geared to responding to such forms of attack. Under the present system, however, SDF capabilities are inadequate in these respects. The SDF will have to acquire such capabilities in the years to come.

The new NDPG takes the view that Japan’s future defense forces should be capable of effectively responding to new threats and diverse situations while maintaining those elements of the Basic Defense Force Concept that remain valid. It also states that Japan will deal effectively with the new threats and diverse situations by developing highly responsive and mobile defense force units that are capable of properly responding to various different situations. Should such a situation emerge, the defense forces would respond quickly and appropriately in smooth and close collaboration with other government agencies, thereby providing a seamless response to the situation in accordance with circumstances and designated roles.

Having provided general directions for dealing with new threats and diverse situations, the new NDPG shows how the defense forces will respond to each of the five categories of the new threats and diverse situations outlined above. Specifically, the new MTDP relates major projects regarding defense capabilities to each of the five categories (see Table 8.2 overleaf).

As a concrete example of its response to ballistic missile attacks, the new NDPG mentions the introduction of BMD systems following the government

Table 8.2. Major projects related to SDF capabilities, as shown in the new MTDP

Situation to be dealt with	Major project
Response to ballistic missile attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve capability of Aegis-equipped destroyers and Patriot surface-to-air guided missiles • To improve BADGE • To start building a new warning and control radar that can detect and track incoming ballistic missiles
Response to attacks by guerrillas and special operations forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve readiness and mobility of ground units • To strengthen capability of infantry units • To procure light armored vehicles, multi-purpose helicopters (UH-60JA, UH-1J) and combat helicopters (AH-64D) • To improve ability to deal with nuclear, biological and/or chemical attacks
Response to an invasion of Japan's offshore islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To procure transport helicopters (CH-47JA/J), tanker-transport aircraft (KC-767), fighters (F-2), and new transport aircraft to replace C-1s • To add necessary equipment to transport aircraft (C-130H) to enable in-flight refueling of rescue helicopters (UH-60J)
Patrol and surveillance of the sea and airspace surrounding Japan, response to violation of Japan's airspace or intrusion by armed special-purpose ships	<p data-bbox="430 651 941 738">For constant and continuous patrol and surveillance of sea and airspace surrounding Japan, and for proper response to armed special-purpose ships and submerged foreign submarines navigating in Japan's territorial waters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To procure destroyers (DDH and DD), patrol helicopters (SH-60K), and minesweeper-transport helicopters (MCH-101) • To modernize early-warning aircraft (E-2C) • To modernize BADGE air control and warning systems • To procure new patrol aircraft to replace P-3Cs • To launch modernization program for early-warning and control aircraft (E-767) <p data-bbox="430 914 815 935">For response to violations of Japan's airspace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To expedite fighter modernization program (F-15) • To procure new fighters to replace F-4s
Response to large-scale and/or extraordinary types of disaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To take measures to help SDF units improve necessary capabilities

Source: Data from the Mid-term Defense Program (FY2005–FY2009).

decision of December 2003, entitled “On Introduction of Ballistic Missile Defense System and Other Measures.” Despite international nonproliferation efforts, ballistic missiles and WMD have been spreading, demonstrating the limits of such efforts. Worse still, there is a growing realization of the real danger of WMD falling into the hands of non-state actors. Furthermore, North Korea has been developing and deploying ballistic missiles and WMD. These developments serve to show that the existing policy of actively participating in an international effort for nuclear disarmament while relying on the nuclear deterrence provided by the United States is not sufficient to defend the country against nuclear threats.

In the “Attached Table,” the new NDPG offers a list of major units and equipment to be acquired that can be used for the BMD, including four Aegis-equipped destroyers, air warning and control units (seven warning groups and four warning squadrons), and surface-to-air guided missile units (three groups). Before the new NDPG, BMD system development funding was already included in the budget for FY2004 (ended March 2005). Following the efforts made during FY2004, the new MTDP makes clear that the Japanese government will achieve the BMD capability levels stipulated in the new NDPG by: improving the capabilities of three Aegis-equipped destroyers and the equivalent of two groups of Patriot surface-to-air guided missiles, plus those necessary for training purposes; improving the base air defense ground environment (BADGE); and starting to build a new warning and control radar that can detect and track ballistic missiles.

Irregular armed attacks on Japan’s highly urbanized population centers by guerrillas or special operations forces are conceivable. Guerrillas might attack public facilities or personnel, while enemy special operations forces are likely to engage in sabotage, the assassination of leading figures in and outside the government, or in a surprise attack on SDF command and control centers. On the Korean Peninsula, infiltration into South Korea by armed North Korean agents—such as the infiltration into South Korea by crewmembers of a North Korean midget submarine in 1996—has occurred on repeated occasions. There has been a growing awareness of the danger that such an event could occur in Japan too. Though the 1995 NDPO did not touch on the matter, the 2001 MTDP incorporated plans to create specialized units to deal with attacks by guerrillas or enemy special forces and to improve the equipment and training of relevant SDF units. The GSDF has started training its units to deal with such attacks and has also conducted bilateral exercises with combat-tested US forces units. A Special Operations Group specializing in fighting terrorists and special forces was also formed in March 2004. Building on these measures, the new NDPG announced a policy of further enhancing the readiness and mobility of SDF units to respond rapidly and flexibly to attacks by guerrillas or enemy special forces. The new NDPG thus stipulates the development of a defense force posture by which Japan can effectively cope with such situations. As specific measures to implement this policy, the new MTDP includes plans to strengthen the capability of the infantry and to procure light armored vehicles and various types of helicopters.

Although the likelihood of a full-scale invasion has diminished, for a country like Japan that is made up of about 5,000 islands, the serious challenge remains of how to secure an effective response to an invasion of any of these islands. As very few have GSDF units stationed on them, reinforcements would have to be transported by sea or by air in the event of an invasion. In this regard, the 2001 MTDP says that new units with enhanced deployment and information-gathering capabilities shall be established to make the GSDF better prepared to cope with such invasion and other related situations. In accordance with the 2001 MTDP, the GSDF in 2002 newly organized within the Western Army, which covers many inhabited islands, a Western Infantry Regiment that is mobile and highly capable of intelligence gathering and efficient communications. Following these initiatives, the new NDPG states that Japan will maintain a force structure that can effectively respond to invasion on Japan's offshore islands backed by rapid transport and deployment capabilities, and the new MTDP lays out various plans to improve such capabilities.

The new NDPG also provides for measures to be taken to properly deal with armed special-purpose ships operating in the waters surrounding Japan and submerged foreign submarines infiltrating its territorial waters—all in the light of the suspicious boats incidents off the Noto Peninsula in 1999 and in the waters off southwest Kyushu in 2001, as well as the Chinese nuclear submarine incident of November 2004.

Dealing with armed agents or armed special-purpose ships is, by definition, the responsibility of the police and the Japan Coast Guard (JCG). Therefore, cooperation and coordination between the SDF and these agencies is essential. The new NDPG explicitly acknowledges the importance of such coordination. As early as 2000, the basic agreement (concluded in 1954 between the JDA and the National Public Safety Commission) for cooperation procedures between the SDF and the police in the event of the SDF's public security operations to suppress mass violence was revised to empower the SDF, together with these agencies, to deal with illegal activities carried out by armed foreign agents. By the end of May 2002, GSDF divisions/brigades had concluded agreements with local police forces regarding the dispatch of GSDF units for public security operations. By March 2004, SDF divisions/brigades and the police forces of 28 prefectures had conducted joint simulation exercises. Moreover, based on the lessons learned from the suspicious boats incident off the Noto Peninsula, the JDA together with the JCG formulated a Manual on Joint Strategies

Concerning Suspicious Boats that stipulates the initial responses to be taken in the event of a suspicious boat being detected in Japan's territorial waters and the role-sharing between the two agencies before and after the issuance of a maritime security operation order. The MSDF and JCG have since conducted joint exercises in accordance with the manual.

These measures included in the new NDPG are not entirely new. Some of them had actually been carried out before the new NDPG was adopted. Building on the efforts that the SDF had already made, the new NDPG has regrouped these measures as “effective responses to new threats and diverse situations” and afforded them an appropriate position in the SDF's mission priorities in the light of their importance for Japan's security.

3. Efforts to Improve the International Security Environment

The new NDPG notes that Japan's future defense forces should be able to facilitate Japan's spontaneous and active participation in international peace cooperation activities. To do so, the new NDPG argues that the SDF should develop education and training systems, a highly responsive force posture for relevant units as well as transport and other required capabilities; establish the necessary infrastructure to quickly dispatch units to where they are needed and carry out their missions continuously; and make the necessary arrangements including the proper positioning of international peace cooperation activities in the SDF mission priorities. In addition, the new NDPG states that the SDF will actively promote measures—such as the promotion of security dialogue and defense exchange with other countries concerned, and cooperation in arms control and disarmament—that are conducive to international peace and stability.

Behind this emphasis on the SDF's international activities are changes in the way the Japanese perceive such activities. The 1995 NDPO characterized the

A member of a GSDF contingent engaged in water-supply operations in Samawa, southern Iraq (December 2004) (Kyodo Photo)

SDF's international activities as "contribution to building a more stable security environment," thus locating them among the roles of Japan's defense forces. At that time, such operations tended to be regarded as an altruistic "contribution" to others—something that represents Japan's will to contribute to international community not only in terms of money and goods but also in terms of human resources. However, the situation has since changed: as demonstrated by international terrorism, failed states, and the proliferation of WMD, the Japanese people have since come to keenly realize that their peace and security are heavily dependent on global peace and security. As a result, there has emerged a growing sense that spontaneous and active participation in activities aimed at improving the international security environment is not a mere one-way charitable "contribution" but an act of serving its own interests—the security of Japan. The very fact that the new NDPG included as Japanese security policy objectives the improvement of the international security environment on a par with the prevention and repulsion of threat indicates such changes.

The SDF's international operations have been steadily expanded since the early 1990s. These activities used to be regarded as a secondary mission to be performed using the existing capabilities insofar as they would not hinder the execution of the SDF's primary mission of dealing with an armed invasion. However, they have seen a remarkable expansion since the enactment of the International Peace Cooperation Law of 1992. Generally speaking, militaries of many countries have come to take on diverse and wide-ranging roles in the international community—from deterring and responding to armed conflicts to preventing conflict and providing reconstruction assistance. Under these circumstances, the SDF's activities for international peace and stability will need to be redefined as its primary mission, which in turn requires the creation of a posture capable of rapidly dispatching SDF units overseas and sustaining their operation for this purpose.

In accordance with the new NDPG, the new MTDP spelled out a plan to create an SDF unit for education and research on international peace cooperation activities. This would facilitate, as the new MTDP stresses, rapid and continuous deployment of SDF units for such activities. In this respect, funds to finance the creation of the education/research unit were appropriated in the budget for FY2005. The new MTDP also notes plans to expand and improve the current rotational standby system for SDF units/personnel earmarked for international peace cooperation activities and to procure equipment designed for use in such activities.

4. Reducing Equipment and Personnel while Providing against a Full-scale Invasion

The new NDPG sets forth a policy that modifies the current defense force building concept that emphasized Cold War-type antitank, antisubmarine, and anti-air warfare and that will significantly reduce the personnel and equipment earmarked to defend the country from a full-scale invasion. At the same time, aware that the original role of defense forces is to deal with a full-scale invasion of a country, and that such defense forces cannot be built up in a short period of time, the new NDPG attaches importance to securing the most basic capabilities of its defense forces. This is the policy that had already appeared in “On Introduction of Ballistic Missile Defense System and Other Measures” adopted by the Security Council and the cabinet in December 2003.

There were three factors behind the timing of this policy’s adoption. Firstly, the likelihood of an enemy launching a full-scale invasion against Japan has significantly decreased. Since 1990, Russian forces in the Far East have steadily shrunk and are currently much smaller than their peak period around 1989. It is highly unlikely that their force level and posture will be restored to those of the Cold War era. Furthermore, Russia has since built a relationship of trust with the United States, deepening its integration into the international community. In view of such changes in the international situation, the JDA’s *Defense of Japan 2003* took the view that “more than a decade has passed since the collapse of the bipolar Cold War structure, and the circumstances in neighboring countries at present indicate little likelihood of an amphibious assault against Japan on a scale requiring massive preparations.”

The second factor is the strengthened Japan-US security arrangements, which are an indispensable part of Japan’s security policy. The two countries reviewed the Japan-US alliance in the light of the changes that have occurred since the end of the Cold War. A Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security issued at a Japan-US summit meeting held in April 1996 reaffirmed that the Japan-US security relationship, based on the bilateral Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, remains the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives and maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region. As mentioned earlier, the new Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation were formulated in 1997, and various measures have since been carried out to ensure their effectiveness. Thanks to these measures, Japan-US

defense cooperation has become more effective, and the credibility of the Japan-US security arrangements has been strengthened. It may be pointed out that the thus well-functioning Japan-US security arrangements have enabled Japan to change its defense posture in keeping with the new security environment without creating a power vacuum.

The third and final factor is the decision to introduce the BMD system and the resulting fiscal constraints. “On Introduction of Ballistic Missile Defense System and Other Measures” says that implementing such a large-scale project as the introduction of a BMD system requires a sweeping review and streamlining of the existing organizations, systems, and equipment and that, in view also of Japan’s severe economic and fiscal situation, defense-related expenditures will need to be restrained.

However, the original mission of the defense forces to deal with a full-scale foreign invasion still remains unchanged; and it is impossible to create such a defense posture in a short period of time. In this sense, it is conceivable for Japan to try to secure the most basic capabilities of its defense forces to deal with a full-scale foreign invasion, while taking advantage of its advanced science and technology and keeping an eye on changes occurring in neighboring countries. This being the case, the new NDPG has set out a policy to introduce advanced equipment that benefits from the fruits of technological innovation in order to make up for the potential shortfalls created by cuts in personnel and equipment.

5. Changes in the SDF Force/Organizational Structure

In order to fulfill the various roles expected of the SDF, it is necessary to build efficient defense forces by shedding outdated elements and introducing innovative ideas and technology. Conscious of such needs, the new MTDP sets forth an outline of changes to be introduced into the JDA and SDF organizations, with a view to helping the defense forces fulfill the role prescribed in the new NDPG. This includes strengthening their joint operations capabilities, converting GSDF divisions and combined brigades into brigades, and consolidating MSDF units.

With respect to the strengthening of the joint operations capabilities, the new MTDP lays out a plan to establish a new joint staff organization and reorganize the staff offices of the three services. The policy for strengthening the joint operations capabilities was developed in the *Report on the Study of Joint*

Operations (released in December 2002), which was drawn up under instructions from then Minister of State for Defense Gen Nakatani. This report outlined the need to switch the system from the one in which each SDF service basically operates independently to the one in which joint operations are the norm. It recommended the following

measures: (a) to unify professional military assistance to the minister of state for defense; (b) to establish a staff to oversee joint operations; and (c) to strengthen the joint operations capabilities of all three services. “On Introduction of Ballistic Missile Defense System and Other Measures” also stated that the Japanese government would establish an organization to assist the minister of state for defense in running SDF joint operations.

As regards the reorganization of the GSDF, the new MTDP states that while reducing the number of tanks and main artillery pieces, the GSDF will reorganize five divisions, one brigade and two combined brigades (one division and two combined brigades will be converted into three brigades) to further improve their readiness and mobility. The proposed reorganization is in line with the 1995 NDPO, in which the GSDF’s regionally deployed units composed of 12 divisions plus 2 combined brigades would be converted into eight divisions plus six brigades. In accordance with this outline, work had been under way to complete the conversion of four divisions and two combined brigades by around the year 2010. As of the end of FY2004, when the 1995 NDPO was abolished and replaced by the new NDPG, three divisions had already been realigned into three brigades, creating a force structure of nine divisions, three brigades, and two combined brigades. As noted above, under the new MTDP this structure will be changed into the one consisting of eight divisions and six brigades. The mobile operations units and special tasks units will be consolidated into a newly created Central Readiness Group in order to centralize work related to the GSDF’s international peace cooperation activities. Previously, the Ground Staff Office and the headquarters of each

A GSDF CH-47 helicopter on the deck of LST *Kunisaki* prior to being sent to Indonesia for an international disaster relief operation (Kyodo Photo)

GSDF army (the GSDF has five armies—Northern, Northeastern, Eastern, Middle and Western) had to coordinate planning and training for a GSDF contingent before it was dispatched overseas on an international peace cooperation mission. The Central Readiness Group will take on a task of planning and command and control for such operations.

Under the MSDF reorganization plan in the new MTDP, the mobile operations destroyer units that previously consisted of four escort flotillas, each of which was equipped with eight destroyers in order to effectively conduct antisubmarine warfare, will be reorganized into units each equipped with four destroyers. The purpose here is to make them better prepared to deal with ballistic missile attacks and armed special-purpose ships and participate in international peace cooperation activities. With this reorganization, the number of destroyers assigned to an escort division will be increased from two/three to four, while the existing 12 escort divisions will be consolidated into 8. The seven escort divisions currently assigned to MSDF regional districts will be reduced to six. While maintaining the number of submarines at 16, the existing submarine divisions will be cut from the current six to five. The existing eight squadrons of fixed-wing patrol aircraft units will be consolidated into four, and the rotary-wing patrol aircraft units to five. With a few exceptions, the reorganization of the MSDF force structure is expected to proceed within the new MTDP timeframe (FY2005–FY2009) to achieve the force level of the new NDPG.

With regard to the ASDF's reorganization, an airborne early-warning squadron operating E-2Cs and an airborne early-warning and control squadron with E-767s will be newly formed within the airborne early-warning group. On fighter units, the ASDF will maintain a posture of major units to take immediate measures against enemy aircraft violating Japan's territorial airspace, but will cut the number of fighters from about 300 to about 260 by efficiency improvements. To carry out various other missions including international peace cooperation activities, the ASDF will form an aerial refueling and transport unit and introduce the new C-X transport aircraft that has a longer range and a larger cargo capacity than those currently in service (C-1s). Furthermore, three of the six existing surface-to-air guided missile groups will acquire the capability to detect and track incoming ballistic missiles.

6. Future Challenges

The new NDPG set out a new vision of the SDF structure and missions in the years to come—effective responses to new threats and diverse situations, spontaneous and active participation in international peace cooperation activities, and the maintenance of the most basic capabilities to deal with a full-scale invasion. However, the SDF will face a number of challenges.

As the new NDPG noted, the roles the defense forces are called upon to perform have been expanding. By definition, an increase in the roles to be played requires larger resources. However, Japan is under heavy constraints, fiscal as well as demographic. This being the case, the new NDPG came up with a set of policies designed to enhance the utilization of limited resources by improving efficiency and rationalization instead of relying on an enlarged scale. Building defense forces capable of meeting expanding roles under tight fiscal and demographic constraints represents a challenging task.

In addition, the new NDPG touches on the unified, government-wide efforts Japan has to take to ensure its security. The diversity of threats now facing the nation calls not only for defense capabilities but also a comprehensive security policy utilizing all resources available—including diplomatic and economic. To accomplish these objectives, Japan must have strong leadership, a flexible and prompt decision-making mechanism, and close coordination among government agencies under such enlightened leadership. The administrative responsibilities of the Japanese government are divided among the ministries and agencies; and this has often been blamed for producing the adverse effects of administrative compartmentalization. In response, efforts have been made to remove these effects by encouraging comprehensive and strategic planning from a national standpoint. The new NDPG is a culmination of such efforts. The approach taken by the drafters of the new NDPG will take on increasing importance in planning a comprehensive security policy from the national perspective.

Opinion is divided among foreign watchers of Japan's defense policy. Some of them take a favorable view of the new NDPG, while others do not. (See "Other countries' views on the new NDPG" below). Contrary to the views taken by some countries, the basic policy underlying Japan's defense policy—that Japan is resolutely committed to an exclusively defense-oriented policy and will not become a military power that might pose a military threat to other countries—remains unchanged under the new NDPG. Some within and outside

Japan argue that the new NDPG views China as a threat to its security. However, references to China included in the new NDPG are rather limited to factual statements of recent developments and do not signify Japan's perception of China as a threat. Though based on a misunderstanding, the simple fact that there are such views suggests the importance of an effort on Japan's part to build confidence with other countries through various forums such as the ARF and defense exchange programs.

Previous NDPOs did not specify the timetable for their revisions. The NDPO of 1976 was revised in 1995 into the 1995 NDPO, which was revised nine years later into the present NDPG. The new NDPG provides a vision for the defense forces for the next 10 years, but it also says that it may be reviewed and revised within five years, or when changes in Japan's security environment or the international community demand. In other words, it is subject to a revision at regular five-yearly intervals at least in order to fine-tune it in response to any changes in the intervening period. The Japanese government has to make continuous efforts to review the new NDPG so that it can provide adequate guidance to the country's defense policy in light of any changes that might occur in Japan's security environment.

Expectations are high in Japan that the JDA and SDF will deliver appropriate responses to new threats and diverse situations, carry out activities for the improvement of the international security environment, and ensure Japan's security (see "Changes in Japanese public opinion and a review of Japan's defense forces"). There are also countries that express hopes for greater Japanese involvement internationally. The JDA and the SDF will make further efforts to meet these expectations and perform their designated roles.

Other countries' views on the new NDPG

Foreign countries have reacted variously to the new NDPG. Based on the idea that the Japan-US security arrangements are indispensable to maintaining the security of Japan, the new NDPG says that Japan will proactively engage in strategic dialogue with the United States on matters relating to security and actively cooperate in such areas as intelligence exchange, operational cooperation, cooperation on BMD, and equipment and technology exchange. The United States values Japan's cooperation and contribution highly. In a speech delivered on December 16, 2004, Lincoln P. Bloomfield, Jr., US assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, touched on Japan's contribution to international security and said that, together with Japan's military presence in Iraq, its leadership among donor nations aiding Iraq and Afghanistan, and its commitment to playing a key role in missile defense, the new NDPG's continued strong support for the US-Japan alliance will send a hugely important message to those who promote Islamic extremism or believe they can benefit from nuclear and missile proliferation.

While wary to a certain degree of the changes in Japan's defense policy under the new NDPG, South Korea seems to show some understanding toward it. In a meeting with Minister of National Defense Yoon Kwang-ung of South Korea in Seoul in January 2005, Minister of State for Defense Yoshinori Ohno explained the new NDPG and told the South Korean national defense minister that while the JDA and SDF will tackle international peace cooperation activities as one of its primary missions in coming years, Japan's commitment to the exclusively defense-oriented policy as its basic security policy has not changed. In response, National Defence Minister Yoon thanked Minister of State for Defense Ohno and expressed his understanding of the explanations given. He said that recent changes in Japan's defense policy should be implemented in such a way as to contribute to the stability and peace of the region. He also stressed the South Korean government's position that Japan should pursue its defense policy in a transparent manner and should not arouse the mistrust or concern of its neighboring countries, and that it should stick to its traditional principles—the exclusively defense-oriented policy, the pacifist constitution, and the three nonnuclear principles. There are countries that express hope for Japan's role as outlined in the new NDPG. Minister of Defense Najib Razak of Malaysia, for instance, said that the two countries should let bygones be bygones, and expressed the hope that Japan will play a greater role in international affairs.

On the other hand, there are countries that have expressed concern over the policies outlined in the new NDPG. China showed its displeasure about those passages that touched on the modernization of China's military forces and their expanding areas of operation at sea as well as about the changes it stipulated in Japan's defense posture. In a comment on the new NDPG made on December 10, 2004, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhang Qiyue said that "we express our deep concern over the major readjustment of Japan's military and security strategy." She further pointed out that "due to historical reasons, the developments in Japan's military and security have always been a very sensitive

issue,” and expressed the hope that “the Japanese side will take full account of the concerns of the people in its neighboring countries in Asia, and Japan should stay on the path of development through peace and behave with prudence on the military and security issue.” Regarding the references made to China in the new NDPG, she also criticized the new NDPG by saying that “Japan publicly plays up the so-called ‘China threat’ in its official documents. It is completely groundless and extremely irresponsible.” *China’s National Defense in 2004*, a white paper released by the Chinese government on December 27, 2004, says in a passage dealing with Japan: “Japan is stepping up its constitutional overhaul, adjusting its military security policies and developing the missile defense system for future deployment. It has also markedly increased military activities abroad.” This assessment, too, appears to be made with the new NDPG in mind.

North Korea, another country referred to in the new NDPG, expressed its strong resentment. According to the Korean Central News Agency, *Rodong Sinmun*, the organ of the Workers’ Party of Korea, said in its commentary dated December 21, 2004, that the new NDPG had changed the exclusively defense-oriented policy into a definite offensive strategy, thereby effectively lifting the restrictions imposed on Japan’s military actions. Commenting on a statement contained in the new NDPG describing North Korea’s military movement as “a serious factor destabilizing the security of the region,” it said that North Korea has never posed any “military threat” and that Japan cited the threat from North Korea as a pretext for justifying the new NDPG.

Changes in Japanese public opinion and a review of Japan’s defense forces

Changes that have occurred in the situation of countries surrounding Japan or those that have taken place in Japan’s SDF are not the only factors that have prompted the JDA and SDF to review Japan’s defense posture this time around. Changes in popular perception reflecting changes in the security environment of Japan and the rising expectations of the SDF are also at work behind the review.

For one thing, the active involvement of SDF units in international peace cooperation activities has gained wider popular understanding. According to an opinion poll conducted by the Cabinet Office in 2002, the ratio of those who “approve” or “tend to approve” the SDF involvement in overseas disaster relief operations accounted for 78.5 percent, up from 54.2 percent in a similar poll conducted in 1990. Those who “approve” or “tend to approve” of the SDF’s involvement in UN PKOs accounted for 70.2 percent in 2002, up from 45.5 percent in 1990. Those who “approve” or “tend to approve” dialogue and exchange with foreign defense officials accounted for 72.8 percent in a similar opinion poll conducted in 2002. It is therefore fair to say that, as the SDF has steadily participated in activities for international peace and security, popular understanding of the importance of the SDF’s role has deepened.

The popular perception of threats has also changed. According to opinion polls conducted by the Cabinet Office, in response to a question “Do you think there is a danger of Japan getting involved in a war?” the percentages of those who answered “there is a danger,” “it’s possible” or “there is no danger” have increased or decreased by about 10–40 percent, respectively, since 1969. Since 2000, however, the percentages of those who replied “there is a danger” and “it’s possible” have increased sharply, and the combined percentage of those two groups rose to 80 percent in 2003. During this period, a number of incidents occurred: North Korea launched a ballistic missile across Japanese airspace in 1998; suspicious boats were spotted within Japanese territorial waters off the Noto Peninsula in 1999; the September 11 terrorist attacks occurred in the United States in 2001; and North Korea’s nuclear weapons development program came to light. It is thought that these incidents jolted the Japanese people into realizing the existence of various threats to Japanese security.

A searching look into the popular perception of threats shows that the Japanese people are keenly aware of new threats. According to an opinion poll conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in March 2002, 86.5 percent of the respondents thought that there are threats to the security of Japan. More specifically, they point out as a source of threat terrorist attacks (51.8 percent), cyber attacks and attacks using biological and chemical weapons (42.5 percent), infiltration of Japan by foreign special operations forces or guerrillas (40 percent), and missile attacks (32.8 percent). The aforementioned opinion polls by the Cabinet Office found that many respondents cited disaster relief (67.8 percent) and prevention of an invasion of Japan (57.6 percent) as areas to which the SDF should devote major efforts, while others approved of the use of SDF units in such missions as participation in international peace cooperation activities (37.1 percent), dealing with suspicious boats and armed foreign agents (27.9 percent), and dealing with international terrorism (25.8 percent). According to an opinion poll conducted by the *Asahi Shimbun*, a leading Japanese daily, on February 19–20, 2005, 67 percent of the respondents said that the BMD system was necessary, suggesting that a large number of people expect the SDF to deal with ballistic missile attacks.

Effectively dealing with new threats and participating in international peace cooperation activities present the JDA and the SDF with major challenges, while the Japanese people are seriously concerned about new threats and hold high expectations for the SDF’s active role in this area. It may be said that such changes in popular perception, coupled with other factors, have helped push for a review of Japan’s defense posture.