

Chapter 1

The Realignment of US Forces and the East Asian Security

The core of the Bush administration's defense policy is the "transformation" of its armed forces, reforming US forces from a Cold War set-up to a 21st century one. At the same time, the Bush administration has been pressing ahead with a review of the posture of US forces in its homeland and overseas, known as Global Posture Review (GPR) or Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy (IGPBS).

US forces are thus undergoing a major change. This reflects a change in the basic idea underlying US defense policy from a "threat-based approach" to a "capabilities-based approach." In line with this change in basic concept, US forces are moving from a posture focusing on deterrence in order to contain hostile forces to one that puts emphasis on their capability to undertake expeditionary operations in order to prepare for contingencies in unpredictable places and at unpredictable times. US forces in the Asia-Pacific region are no exception. As the Asia-Pacific region has a number of destabilizing factors to contend with, US forces in this region have to meet two competing requirements, namely, a reduction in troop size and maintenance of deterrence and rapid reaction capabilities.

As US forces in East Asia fulfill a critical role in maintaining the security not only of Japan but also of the Asia-Pacific as a whole, their realignment will have a great impact on Japan's security. With a view to hammering out a realignment plan that is beneficial to both countries, the Japanese and the US governments have discussed various options on a number of occasions. At a Japan-US Security Consultative Committee (SCC) meeting ("2+2" talks) held in Washington, D.C., on February 19, 2005, the governments of the two countries agreed on their common strategic objectives. Pursuant to this agreement, on October 29, representatives from both sides worked out a joint document on the realignment of US forces, *Japan-US Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future* (the SCC Document).

1. The Background to the Realignment of US Forces

(1) A Change in US Defense Strategy: Toward a Capabilities-based Approach

Since the inauguration 2001, the Bush administration has pursued a sweeping overhaul of defense policy. At the heart of this is a shift in strategic thinking from a “threat-based approach” to a “capabilities-based approach.” The threat-based approach assumes certain scenarios. The source of a threat is predetermined, capability is built up to deal with it, and troops are deployed in advance to prevent it materializing. In practice, however, this approach proved impaired. Since the 1990s, the United States has been gearing up for a conflict with Iraq and North Korea. Instead, conflicts have occurred in the Balkans, Somalia, and East Timor; then came the September 11 terrorist attacks, and these were followed by war in Afghanistan.

Every four years, the Department of Defense (DOD) publishes a report known as the *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR). This is designed to spell out US defense strategy, which is based on *National Security Strategy*, by setting forth the force structure, modernization plans, and budget proposals that underpin it. The QDR released on September 30, 2001, (2001 QDR) immediately after the September 11 terrorist attacks, revealed that a new capabilities-based approach would be adopted as a basic strategy in lieu of the traditional threat-based approach, in keeping with the changed reality of the post-Cold War world. Instead of recognizing specific sources of threat, the capabilities-based approach identifies the different ways adversaries of the United States fight, and builds the capabilities required to counter them. Hence, while the threat-based approach presupposes specific adversaries, such as Iraq and North Korea, the capabilities-based approach does not. Instead, it urges that the United States be ready to deal with capabilities that an unidentifiable adversary might use against it.

This change in policy will have a far-reaching impact on the overseas US military presence. Under the threat-based approach, since potential hot spots are identified, US troops are deployed nearby in advance to contain the threats. By contrast, the capabilities-based approach assumes that the United States does not know where and when a conflict will occur. Consequently, its forces will be deployed at strategic locations at home and abroad, from which they can be rapidly deployed in a contingency, and not stationed at locations near the anticipated fighting.

It follows that military bases that once played an important role during the Cold

War but have outlived their usefulness will be streamlined, and those located in places convenient for rapid deployment will take on greater importance. More specifically, bases will be classified into three categories: main operating bases (MOB), which are the most important strategic sites; forward operating sites (FOS), where a minimum number of personnel and



US special forces operating on horseback in Afghanistan (November 2001) (DOD photo)

prepositioned stocks are deployed in time of peace and are used as staging areas in case of contingencies; and cooperative security locations (CSL), which are managed by an ally and where no US troops are stationed in time of peace. The United States selectively deploys its troops to these bases.

A factor that plays a significant role in the review of the deployment posture is the revolution in military affairs (RMA). In testimony given at a hearing of the Senate Committee on Armed Services on September 23, 2004, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, in setting out guiding principles for reviewing overseas military posture, said that the DOD had given up the old reliance on presence and mass, which reflected industrial-age thinking, in favor of using advanced capabilities. In other words, thanks to the RMA, even a smaller unit is now capable of displaying combat capabilities equal to, or better than, the traditional-sized unit.

Until recently, “heavy” units had to be deployed forward to cope with a large-scale conflict as “light” units were weak. However, heavy units lacked strategic mobility, making them unsuited to the capabilities-based approach for dealing with conflicts that could occur anywhere, any time. Above all, the capabilities-based approach requires lighter units, and they must be simultaneously strong enough. Through extensive use of high-tech equipment, information technology, and networks—the major pillars of RMA—the DOD is trying to make units lighter, but sufficiently strong at the same time. This type of new strategy and technological innovation are behind the various reforms now being pursued by the US military.

(2) Transformation and the Global Posture Review (GPR)

The term “transformation” first appeared in *Transforming Defense: National Security in the 21st Century*, a report released in 1997 by the National Defense

Panel, set up pursuant to the Military Forces Structure Review Act of 1996. The idea behind the transformation is to wean the US military away from Cold War-era thinking and transform it into an organization attuned to the changed security environment of the 21st century.

Needless to say, transformation cannot be achieved overnight. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld himself said in an article appearing in *Foreign Affairs* in 2002, “Transforming the military is not an event; it is an ongoing process. There will be no point at which we can declare that US forces have been ‘transformed.’” The present guidelines for transformation are spelled out in the *Transformation Planning Guidance* (TPG), which was released by the DOD Office of Force Transformation, in March 2003. It says that transformation is built on three pillars: how to fight, how to do business, and how to cooperate with others. “How to fight” deals with a series of programs designed to strengthen the combat capabilities of US forces by stepping up informatization of the military and by introducing high-tech and stealth technology. “How to do business” is aimed at cutting costs by improving the efficiency of the DOD’s bureaucratic procedures and at enabling expeditious business decision-making and action. For example, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld is, as part of the project, pushing for a simplified and more efficient research and development (R&D) process. “How to cooperate with others,” guidance issued particularly with the war on terror in mind, is designed to contain the activities of terrorist organizations by strengthening information-related cooperation among the law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and other departments and agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security that are engaged in counter-terrorism operations.

In this context, a review of the deployment posture of US forces across the globe is being conducted. This is called Global Posture Review (GPR) or Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy (IGPBS). This started pursuant to the 2001 QDR and at present has two objectives. The first, as noted earlier, is to change the deployment posture in step with the shift to a capabilities-based approach. More specifically, it is to optimize the network of bases by shifting away from the Cold War-era containment posture (which aimed at deterring potential adversaries by deploying a large number of troops on forward bases) to an expeditionary posture that can respond rapidly to conflicts occurring in an unexpected area. The second is to enable military personnel and their dependents to remain stationed on the US mainland as long as possible. Since the end of the Cold War, overseas deployment

of US forces for activities such as peace operations have increased, lengthening the amount of time military personnel spend abroad. As a result, morale and skill levels of military personnel have fallen, and their recruitment and retention have become increasingly difficult. The DOD is trying to remedy the situation by cutting the length of overseas tours of duty and by reducing the number of troops stationed overseas. This plan would make it easier to maintain the required force level in Iraq. Even two years after the end of the Iraq war, the United States has to maintain more than 100,000 troops there because of the uncertain security situation. Keeping so many troops in the Middle East while maintaining a military presence in Europe and Asia has become a heavy burden on the US military, and reducing the number of troops stationed in areas other than Iraq has become an urgent necessity.

(3) Realignment of Bases in the United States: The BRAC Process

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) within the United States is being carried out in parallel with the GPR. Actually, BRAC was first conducted immediately after the end of the Cold War well ahead of the Bush administration's defense transformation. Four rounds of BRAC have been carried out—in 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995—in the process of which 97 major bases in the United States have been closed and 55 others have been consolidated. As a result, 21 percent of domestic bases have been cut at a saving of approximately \$7 billion a year.

The BRAC process is being carried out pursuant to the Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990. The act is noteworthy for its mechanisms designed to prevent Congressional interference or obstruction. Large-scale base closures throw many people out of work and have a serious impact on local economies. In 1988, Senators and Congressmen representing constituencies targeted for base closing objected strongly and the planned realignment and closure of bases for that year was effectively watered down. Therefore, the Base Realignment and Closure Act of 1990 was fashioned with that lesson in mind. According to this act, a major part of the BRAC process will be handled by the DOD and the BRAC Commission appointed by the president. First, the DOD will draw up a list of bases recommended for closure or realignment, then submit the list to the BRAC Commission for vetting. Subsequently, the commission will submit its recommendation to the president, who will either approve or reject it. If the president approves it, the list of bases to be closed or realigned will be referred to Congress. However, Congress

can only approve or disapprove the list in its entirety; it cannot “modify” it in any way. This fast-track procedure prevents members of Congress representing affected areas from arbitrarily tinkering with the list.

Implemented in 2005, the fifth plan for base closures was called the “2005 round.” However, the work did not go smoothly. Preparations for the 2005 round got under way in November 2002, pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2002, but Congress dragged its feet. On May 18, 2004, Senator Trent Lott argued that the DOD should first decide on closure of overseas bases ahead of domestic ones, and introduced an amendment to the bill to put off the BRAC till 2007. Although his amendment was defeated, on May 20, 2004, the House of Representatives passed an amendment that would have postponed implementation till 2007. In response, President Bush hinted at exercising a veto over the amendment. At a hearing of the Senate Committee on Armed Services held on September 23, 2004, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld testified that the plan to repatriate 70,000 troops from overseas US bases was tightly linked to the BRAC then in progress. When the House and the Senate finally agreed on the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2005 at a conference on October 8, 2004, they also agreed on the 2005 round, on the initiative of pro-BRAC chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, Senator John Warner. From this point, the BRAC process has thus started moving forward in earnest.

In the meantime, an Overseas Basing Commission (OBC) was appointed pursuant to the Military Construction Appropriation Act for FY2004 on the initiative of Senators Kay Hutchison and Dianne Feinstein. This commission was established to investigate, on behalf of Congress, the work being done by the DOD under the GPR and the BRAC. The OBC submitted an interim report on May 9, 2005, and its final report on August 15, and overall both adopted a critical tone toward the DOD. The final report pointed out the possibility that various costs—the costs of implementing the base realignment and closure plan prepared by the DOD, those required by the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and those necessary to the transformation of the military—might squeeze the budget for GPR. The report concluded by saying that Congress needs to provide more active oversight of the BRAC process carried out by the DOD. However, as noted earlier, opportunity for the involvement of Congress in the BRAC process is severely limited. Therefore, the OBC’s report will have only limited impact on the work actually being done.

At present, there are supposed to be 319 major military bases in the United States, and under the new plan for base realignment and closure drawn up by the DOD, 33 major bases will be closed and 29 other major bases will be realigned over the next six years. They include the closure of the Portsmouth Navy Yard, the relocation of the US Army special forces based in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, home of the US Air Force special forces, and the consolidation of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda.



Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld testifying before the Senate Committee on Armed Services on the BRAC (May 16, 2005) (DOD photo by US Air Force Tech. Sgt. Cherie A. Thurlby)

The DOD's base realignment and closure plan was forwarded to the BRAC Commission on May 16, 2005, and it was reviewed by the commission. In a modified version of the plan forwarded to the president on September 8, the BRAC Commission deleted the Portsmouth Navy Yard from the DOD's list, and its final version recommended the closure of 21 major bases and the realignment of 33 others. According to the commission, its revised version of the plan, when implemented, would save \$35.6 billion in defense spending over the next 20 years. President Bush approved it and forwarded it to Congress on September 15, 2005. Under the provision of the Base Realignment and Closure Act, it would automatically take effect unless Congress rejected it by a joint resolution of both houses within 45 legislative days. As Congress had not passed a joint resolution by this deadline (November 8), the base realignment and closure plan is now binding. The plan will be implemented by the DOD over the next six years ending in 2011.

2. Changes in US Forces in the Asia-Pacific Region

(1) Need of "Deterrence" and "Rapid Deployment"

As discussed above, the United States is pressing ahead with the transformation of its defense posture. The role and posture of US forces in the Asia-Pacific region will change in step with this.

The regions in which the United States has its major military presence are

Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific. As these regions have different strategic characteristics, US forces have varying functions and roles depending on where they are stationed.

The Asia-Pacific region, in particular, consists of a more complicated security environment than other regions. For one thing, embers remain from the Cold War—namely, the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait—that make them potential hotspots. For another, there is China, a country that may one day challenge the hegemony of the United States in this region. Given this situation, US forces in the Asia-Pacific, unlike those in Europe, cannot entirely shift to a force structure geared to rapid deployment for extra-regional contingencies. Up to a point, they need to maintain forward-deployed forces in accordance with the traditional threat-based approach. This is simply because the United States has to maintain deterrence in the face of destabilizing factors in the region (i.e., the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait), and more importantly, it has to prevent the regional hegemony of the United States from being chipped away in the face of a rising China.

On the other hand, the Asia-Pacific region also has to contend with the threats of the 21st century, such as the activities of international terrorist organizations, and ethnic- and religious-inspired separatist movements. Nobody knows when and where such destabilizing factors will surface. Hence US forces in the region must be able to respond swiftly to such challenges. Moreover, as Japan and other US allies in the region have only limited rapid deployment capability, US forces must play a leading role in time of contingency.

Thus, given the particulars of the Asia-Pacific, US forces stationed in the region are required to maintain deterrence while keeping in a state of readiness for rapid reaction. At the same time, they are under pressure to reduce troop strength in the medium and long term. Therefore, in reviewing its force posture in the region, the United States must find a solution that meets these mutually-competing requirements.

(2) Six Changes in US Forces in the Asia-Pacific Region

As described above, US forces in the Asia-Pacific region must contend with two competing objectives: reducing troop numbers, and maintaining deterrence and rapid reaction capability. To accomplish these objectives, the following changes are seen occurring.

The first change is a reduction in the number of forward-deployed ground

The Realignment of US Forces and the East Asian Security

troops. As the US Forces Korea (USFK) and US Marines in Okinawa are the only major ground force presence in the region, they will become targets of possible troop reduction. However, the functions performed by these two are very different. While the mission of the former is to defend South Korea from North Korea, that of the latter is to respond to various security challenges arising throughout the Asia-Pacific. The US Marines in Okinawa are capable of dealing with a wide range of threats including terrorism, but the USFK may have difficulty in responding promptly to such threats. As the transformation of the US military is designed to shift from a Cold War-era positional defense posture to a 21st-century flexible one, the ax will have to fall on the USFK. In fact, the United States is already implementing a plan to cut its force level in South Korea by 12,500 personnel. However, while there is a possibility of changing the deployment posture of the US Marines in Okinawa, a scale-down of Marine forces in the West Pacific as a whole is highly unlikely.

The second change is the greater importance attached to precision strike capability. A stronger precision strike capability would directly make up for a decline in combat capability caused by a force reduction. Gen. Leon LaPorte, commander of the USFK, testified before the Senate Committee on Armed Services on September 23, 2004, with reference to the proposed troop cuts in South Korea. He said that what is truly important is capability, not troop numbers, and that even if the number of ground troops was cut, the USFK has secured the necessary capability through capability enhancement, including upgrading AH-64 attack helicopters to AH-64D Apache Longbows and the introduction of the F/A-18E/F Superhornet.

However, this does not mean an increase in the number of air force units in the region. Forces forward-deployed in time of peace are those that will take on a mission of initial response; when a full-scale war starts, they will be reinforced with forces from the United States. For this reason, air bases within the region will take on greater strategic importance. Needless to say, aircraft carriers will play a critical role in maintaining air combat capability in the region, as evidenced by the US decision to deploy another aircraft carrier in the Pacific. Moreover, President Bush announced in an address on August 16, 2004, that additional strike assets would be deployed in the West Pacific.

The third change is the strengthening of rapid deployment capability to complement force reduction on the frontline, and to deal promptly with conflicts that may occur at unpredictable times and places. With this in mind, US forces



A B-2 Spirit and F-15E Strike Eagles being deployed to Guam (US Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Cecillio Ricardo)

have been making combat units lighter and strengthening their mobility. General LaPorte stressed that rapid reinforcement of regional-positioned US forces should be facilitated by introducing C-17 transport aircraft and high-speed vessels. In addition, US forces will try to increase the efficiency of the strategic transportation network in which

Yokota and Guam air bases work as the hubs.

The fourth change is the strengthening of joint command and control capability. Instead of the services fighting separate wars, “jointness” among them will be strengthened in such a way as to mutually enhance the performance of each service. In particular, in order to maintain deterrence and rapid reaction capability with fewer troops, joint operation capability must be enhanced. For example, in the case of precision strike capability, to which greater importance is attached, close coordination between the air force and the troops on the ground is necessary to maximize its effect.

The fifth change is the response to threats posed by missiles. It is a widely shared concern that US forward-deployed forces are increasingly vulnerable to enemy access-denial capability including missiles, as pointed out in the 2001 QDR. If a large number of troops are deployed to bases within range of hostile missiles, most of them could be destroyed by preemptive missile strikes. From the standpoint of risk management, therefore, it is necessary for the United States to neutralize the missile threat: by establishing bases somewhat removed from the frontline, by sea basing, or by deploying missile defense systems.

The sixth change is the strengthening of cooperation with allies. Since US allies in the Asia-Pacific region, unlike those in Europe, have only limited expeditionary capability, the United States must shoulder almost all the burden of rapid deployment missions. However, given its finite resources, the United States cannot always deal with all the contingencies single-handedly. Moreover, assuming that the tendency toward reduced forward-deployed presence is largely unchanged, increased dependence on allies’ resources would be a logical necessity. While the

capabilities-based approach stresses not individual weapon systems, units, or bases but their aggregate capabilities, cooperation with allies is also considered as a component of that capability. In a press interview given on March 18, 2005, Douglas Feith, then undersecretary of defense for policy, stressed the importance of cooperation with allies. He said that given the importance of sharing a common perception on the war on terror, the DOD was interested in having allies participate in the QDR process. This ultimately led to the 2006 QDR, released February 2006. Consequently, cooperation with allies in strategy development and operational areas has tended to grow stronger and closer.

(3) The Evolving Nature of US Forces in Northeast Asia

In Northeast Asia, US bases are concentrated in Japan, South Korea, and Guam, and each differs in character. Following is an examination of their characteristics analyzed in terms of five variables: (a) necessity for defense of host countries, (b) necessity for regional stability, (c) force protection, (d) infrastructure in host countries, and (e) financial assistance from host countries.

First, “necessity for defense of host countries” is assessed by determining the degree to which the ally in question needs US forces for its defense. South Korea, which still faces an imminent threat from North Korea, has a substantial need for US forces. However, thanks to an improvement in South Korea’s military capability, this need is less pressing than before. In the case of Japan, the likelihood of it being subject to direct invasion is low in the current international climate, but as the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) are supposed to depend on US forces for strike capability, there is a real necessity for US forces to be present.

Second, “necessity for regional stability” is assessed by determining the need for the presence of US forces from the standpoint of ensuring the security of the entire Asia-Pacific region. In this context, Japan is important as it provides hub bases for US naval and air forces that have high operational flexibility; and Guam because it is located at a strategic point for providing access to Southeast Asia. On the other hand, the USFK has traditionally been a bulwark against North Korea. The United States is discussing the issue of its “strategic flexibility” with South Korea during its talks on USFK realignment with a view to enabling the USFK to be employed to support the stability of the region. However, unless the USFK is allowed to be sufficiently “strategically flexible,” South Korea won’t rank very high in importance in this regard.

Third, “force protection” depends on how well-protected or less vulnerable forward-deployed US forces are to possible enemy attack. South Korea, facing imminent threat from North Korea, ranks low in terms of force protection, and Japan also faces a considerable threat as it is located within range of a large number of medium-range missiles.

Fourth, “infrastructure in host countries” indicates the status of maintenance and repair facilities in host countries that support operations of US forces. As typified by Yokosuka dockyard, which caters to the maintenance needs of US Navy vessels, Japan has the highest degree of infrastructure. It is followed by South Korea, while Guam has few such facilities.

Fifth, in the area of “financial assistance from host countries,” Japan, which provides US forces with large sums in host-nation support, ranks high, followed by South Korea. In this sense, Guam is the most costly for the United States among the three. Table 1.1 shows how the countries rank when assessed in terms of these criteria.

As is apparent from the above, in light of current US defense policy that stresses flexible response to contingencies occurring at unexpected times and places, the United States will attach importance to Japan and Guam. Both provide bases for US forces necessary for the maintenance of regional stability. However, while Japan is well appointed in many regards, some force protection concerns will remain until its ballistic missile defense (BMD) become fully operational. Guam, on the other hand, which is an island half the size of Okinawa, does not have as developed an infrastructure as Japan. Further, while Japan is conveniently located in terms of access to Northeast Asia, Guam offers better access to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. It follows, therefore, that the United States may build what might be called “a triangle hub system” with Hawaii at the apex and Japan and Guam serving as mutually complementary strategic bases.

Table 1.1. Characteristics of Japan, South Korea, and Guam as deployment bases of US forces

	Japan	South Korea	Guam
Necessity for defense of host countries	medium	medium	—
Necessity for regional stability	high	low	high
Force protection	medium	low	high
Infrastructure in host countries	high	medium	low
Financial assistance from host countries	high	medium	—

(4) The US Military Presence in Northeast Asia, and Its Future

Let us now examine how the six changes that are expected in US forces in the Asia-Pacific region as a whole (see “[2] Six Changes in US Forces in the Asia-Pacific Region”) would be reflected in the realignment of US forces in Japan, South Korea, and Guam.

First, regarding force reduction, the United States plans to reduce the number of its ground troops in South Korea. In Japan, the spotlight will shine on the US Marine Corps. However, the size of marine forces in the West Pacific as a whole is unlikely to be reduced. This is simply because that would undermine the capability of US forces to deal effectively with an unexpected contingency in the region. In fact, the realignment of marine forces referred to in the Japan-US SCC Document on the realignment of the US forces in Japan released in October 2005 involves the relocation of marine headquarters and certain support units from Okinawa to Guam, with the marines’ overall presence in the West Pacific kept intact.

Second, the policy of attaching importance to precision-strike capability is expected to be applied in all three areas, particularly to South Korea, where the reduction of US troops on the ground will make the role of air bases in surrounding areas more important.

Third, the policy of strengthening rapid deployment capability will be implemented in all three areas—the introduction of high-speed vessels and large prepositioning ships to the marines, and conversion of army brigades into Stryker brigades—all of which are part of the program carried out by the US military as a whole. In addition, the strategic transportation network centering on Yokota and Guam will be strengthened.

Fourth, the policy for strengthening joint command and control capability applies to Japan and Guam. Major units of the navy, the marines, and the air force are stationed in Japan, where the infrastructure is highly developed. The October 2005 SCC Document on the realignment of US forces in Japan states, “The capabilities of the US Army Japan’s command structure will be modernized to a deployable, joint task force-capable operational headquarters element.” A strengthened joint command and control capability of US forces in Japan would facilitate operational cooperation with the SDF and help strengthen the Japan-US alliance. The headquarters of the III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF) will be moved from Okinawa to Guam. It is capable of exercise command of a joint task force, which will be formed when the necessity arises.

Table 1.2. Prospects for US forces in Northeast Asia

	Japan	Guam	South Korea
Number of troops	unchanged		decrease
Emphasis on precision-strike capability	increase	increase	increase
Rapid-deployment capability	increase		increase
Joint command and control capability	increase	increase	unchanged
Response to ballistic missile threat	decrease	increase	decrease
Strengthening alliance	increase	—	not clear

Fifth, under the policy of dealing with missile threats, some measures to hedge against the risk of missile attack must be taken as South Korea and Japan are within range of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles deployed in East Asia. A reduction in troop numbers is an option, but efforts will be made to neutralize the threat of hostile ballistic missiles by building up missile defense capability.

Sixth, the US alliances with Japan and South Korea will be strengthened. However, South Korea, which has grown increasingly sensitive to its relations with China, is wary that strengthening its alliance with the United States, as typified by the “strategic flexibility” issue, might undermine its relations with China. Therefore, it is uncertain which way the US-South Korea alliance will be headed in coming years. Meanwhile, Japan and the United States agreed on the necessity to strengthen their alliance further to ensure the security of the region, following on from which the SDF and US forces in Japan are expected to enhance their cooperation, which in turn should strengthen the alliance. The above analyses are summarized in Table 1.2.

3. The Realignment of US Forces in Japan

(1) From SACO to the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI)

Against the backdrop described above, the deployment posture of the US military in the Asia-Pacific region and across the world is undergoing realignment. In Japan, efforts for the realignment of US forces are under way in a series of Japan-US talks called Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI), and on October 29, 2005, the SCC released a joint document on the progress to date.

The realignment of bases now in progress, following an agreement reached at the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) between the two countries in 1996, is the second round of a large-scale redeployment of US forces in Japan since the end of the Cold War. The SACO was created in the aftermath of the rape

of a Japanese girl by US service members in September 1995. Its purpose was to facilitate relocation and consolidation of US bases in Okinawa, and to reduce the burden on the local communities. The SACO agreement included the relocation of the Futenma Air Station to waters off Henoko, the consolidation of installations at 10 locations and the return of the vacated sites to Japan, and the implementation of noise-reduction measures. When the agreement is completely implemented, about 5,000 hectares of land will be returned to Japan, decreasing the ratio of US military bases in Okinawa to those in Japan as a whole from the present 75 percent to 70 percent. At present, only the Aha Training Site and the northern part of Camp Kuwae have been returned to Japan and the return of the rest of the bases is progressing, if belatedly.

Although arrangements have been made with the local authorities for the return of Futenma Air Station, which has come to symbolize the SACO agreement, and an environmental assessment and technical survey of the site have begun, work has been delayed on account of the protests by environmental activists. Given the situation, Japan and the United States have decided to carry out the DPRI in a way designed to facilitate an early implementation of the SACO agreement.

However, there is a basic difference between the DPRI and the SACO agreement. The DPRI process is not simply about the realignment of bases. It has been carried out with a view to comprehensively strengthening the Japan-US alliance by taking various changes into consideration. In the second half of the 1990s, the Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security (1996) (that outlined the future of the Japan-US

Table 1.3. Status of implementation of the SACO agreement

Northern Training Area	An environmental impact assessment in the area where a helicopter landing zone is to be relocated is under way.
Sobe Communication Site	The work of developing land and the construction of buildings have been completed. At present, the construction of a communications system is in progress.
Yomitan Auxiliary Airfield	The airfield is to be returned after the Sobe Communication Site was relocated.
Camp Kuwae	The northern part of the camp (38ha) was returned.
Senaba Communication Station	The land development project was completed, and the construction work of buildings and communications systems is under way at present.
Naha Port	Urasoe City has accepted relocation of port facilities.
Consolidation of housing facilities in Camp Kuwae and Camp Zukeran	The second-phase construction work has been completed.

alliance), the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation (1997) (that set forth specific measures to strengthen defense cooperation between the two countries), and the 1996 SACO agreement were implemented. They all culminated in the DPRI process, which encompasses the issues dealt with in the above agreements.

Given that the rape of a girl by US Marines led to the creation of SACO, the SACO agreement was directed more than anything else toward reducing the burden on Okinawa of hosting US bases. However, the agreement came at a time when the United States had yet to clarify its post-Cold War Asia strategy; thus, reducing its presence in Okinawa at that point would have carried the risk of sending the “wrong” signal to the countries in the region, suggesting that the United States was prepared to scale down its commitment to Asia in the long run. Therefore, the United States decided to stick to the status-quo on troop numbers in Japan, while trying to streamline bases in Okinawa. On the other hand, behind the DPRI process are the aforementioned changes in US strategy. With the new focus on capabilities rather than numbers as Defense Secretary Rumsfeld pointed out, the number of troops was no longer a determining factor in maintaining deterrence. Furthermore, 10 years after SACO, no country in the region has been left in any doubt that the United States will remain committed to Asia in coming years. In other words, fewer people—fewer than at the time the SACO was established—think that a force reduction in Japan would undermine the capability of US forces stationed there, and the risk of sending a wrong signal to neighboring countries has significantly diminished.

Meanwhile, nuclear weapons possessed by North Korea have become an imminent threat. China has been actively modernizing its navy and air force over the past 10 years on the back of its economic growth—“so much so that we must keep an eye on it to see whether or not China’s goal of modernization of its military overreaches the level that is necessary for the defense of China, and we must keep watching the modernization of the armed forces of China in coming years,” according to Japan’s *Defense White Paper 2005*. Moreover, threats such as those posed by non-state actors that cannot be dealt with by traditional concepts of deterrence are on the rise. Therefore, although the danger of sending a wrong signal has diminished, the need for US forces to act as a physical deterrent or to have rapid reaction capabilities will by no means diminish.

Reflecting these changes in strategy and security environment, Japan and the

United States are pushing ahead with the dynamic transformation of their alliance, which encompasses not only realignment of US bases but also cooperation in other areas including operations.

(2) The Three-phase Approach: Common Strategic Goals; Role, Mission, and Capability; Realignment of Bases

Japan's basic view on the realignment of US forces in Japan is summed up in the *National Defense Program Guidelines* formulated anew in 2004 (2004 NDPG) (for details, see Chapter 8). The main feature of the 2004 NDPG is the thinking that in a 21st century world, where the concept of security is taking on a global dimension, Japan's own efforts alone cannot cope with new forms of threat such as terrorism; therefore, Japan must deal with regional or global security problems by expanding and deepening cooperative efforts with the international community. Consequently, the 2004 NDPG defines two objectives for Japan's security policy: (a) to prevent any threat from reaching Japan and, in the event that it does, repel it and minimize damage; and (b) to improve the international security environment so as to reduce the chances of any threat reaching Japan in the first place. The 2004 NDPG states Japan should achieve these two objectives by combining three approaches: (a) Japan's own efforts, (b) cooperation with the United States, and (c) cooperation with the international community. In the DPRI process, where realignment of US forces has been discussed, planners of Japan's side were keenly aware of the need to contribute to achieving these two objectives.

At the same time, while noting that the threat of a full-scale invasion against Japan has diminished, the 2004 NDPG showed awareness of the need to build up capabilities to respond to "new threats and diverse situations" such as ballistic missile attacks or invasions of Japan's offshore islands. This newfound awareness has become an important element for Japan in during the DPRI process.

What is more, the 2004 NDPG explicitly set forth the process for carrying out consultations about the realignment of US forces in Japan by saying, "Japan will proactively engage in strategic dialogue with the United States on wide-ranging security issues such as role-sharing between the two countries and US military posture, including the structure of US forces in Japan, while working to harmonize our perceptions of the new security environment and appropriate strategic objectives." In other words, Japan will seek: first, to hammer out a position on strategic thinking common to both countries that is tailored to meet the current

situation; second, to work out an arrangement for sharing roles, missions, and capabilities between US forces in Japan and Japan's SDF; and third, to realign US bases in Japan in accordance with such strategic thinking.

In addition, in September 2004, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi defined two principles for talks on the realignment of US forces in Japan—the maintenance of deterrence and a reduction of the burden on communities hosting US military units. These objectives, principles, and procedures guided Japan's course of action during the DPRI. For starters, Japan sought to coordinate a common perception of the existing strategic environment surrounding Japan and the United States, and the two countries agreed to common strategic objectives at a meeting of the SCC in February 2005. Among other things, both sides confirmed that new forms of threat—international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—have emerged, and that persisting uncertainty and unpredictability and emerging new threats in the Asia-Pacific region are their common security challenges. On the basis of such shared recognition, they adopted common strategic objectives for the region and the world as a whole. The regional strategic objectives include: (a) ensuring the security of Japan; (b) strengthening peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region; (c) supporting peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula; (d) seeking peaceful resolution of issues related to North Korea; (e) welcoming China's responsible and constructive role and developing a cooperative relationship with China; (f) encouraging a peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait; and (g) encouraging China to improve the transparency of its military affairs. The global common strategic objectives include: (a) promoting fundamental values such as human rights in the international community; (b) promoting nonproliferation of WMD; and (c) preventing and eradicating terrorism.

Following the agreement on their common strategic objectives, Japan and the United States discussed issues relating to roles, missions, and capabilities of the armed forces of the two countries, and to the realignment of US forces in Japan. On October 29, 2005, the SCC released a report, *The Japan-US Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future*.

(3) Japan-US Agreement of October 2005

After the series of meetings referred to above, Japan and the United States agreed at a meeting of the SCC in Washington, D.C., on October 29, 2005, to a joint

document titled *The Japan-US Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future*, or more commonly called “interim report.” This SCC Document consists of two parts: one describes the roles, missions, and capabilities of the SDF and US forces, and the other explains the realignment of US forces in Japan.

In examining the roles, missions and capabilities of the SDF and US forces, the SCC Document looks at them in the context of (a) defense of Japan and responses to situations in areas surrounding Japan (including responses to new threats and diverse contingencies) and (b) efforts to improve the international security environment, such as participation in international peace cooperation activities. These two correspond to the two objectives set forth in the 2004 NDPG: preventing and defending against threats to Japan, and improving the security environment. The SCC Document delineates “cooperation with the United States” among the three approaches for ensuring Japan’s security as referred to in the 2004 NDPG. The above similarity in the contents of the two documents is testament to the fact that these are closely related and actually complement each other.

The SCC Document, following the two objectives for the security policy of Japan as defined in the 2004 NDPG, contains two noteworthy statements. First, it reaffirms role- and mission-sharing and the mechanism for the defense of Japan and regional cooperation in Northeast Asia. Second, it clearly announced that bilateral cooperation for the improvement of the international security environment has become an important element of the alliance. The former refers to the bilateral cooperation agreed to in the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation of 1997, while the latter is aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of Japan-US cooperation in the global arena, which has been actively carried out since the September 11 terrorist attacks. As this is an area in which Japan can extend meaningful international cooperation even under the present interpretation of the Constitution, the formulation of a cooperative framework with the United States, a country that has information-gathering and strategic transportation capabilities on a global scale, is of profound significance. If cooperation between the two countries gathers pace in the areas of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), humanitarian relief efforts, reconstruction assistance operations, and mutual logistics support activities (such as supply, maintenance, and transportation, including mutual provision of aerial and maritime refueling)—areas listed in the SCC Document as examples of improving bilateral security and defense cooperation—the capability of the Japan-US alliance to tackle global security challenges will be greatly

strengthened and contribute substantially to improving the international security environment.

More important, the SCC Document lists as measures essential to strengthening the posture of bilateral security and defense cooperation the following seven steps: close and continuous policy and operational coordination, accelerating bilateral contingency planning, improving

Members of the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee following a meeting (October 29, 2005)
(Reuters/Kyodo Photo)

information-sharing and intelligence-gathering cooperation, enhancing interoperability, increasing training opportunities in Japan and the United States, shared use of facilities by the SDF and US forces, and BMD. More particularly, if policy and operations at all levels from the unit tactical level through strategic consultations are coordinated, if a common operational picture shared between US forces and the SDF can be developed, if the two sides work out a common operational plan pursuant to the 1997 Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation, and if they carry out plans for information-sharing and cooperation on intelligence-gathering at all levels, then the operational cooperation between the SDF and US forces will be greatly strengthened, underpin the deterrence of adversaries in the region, and enhance their capability to deal with contingencies.

The other pillar of the SCC Document is the force posture realignment. The SCC Document sets forth the view that the presence of US forces in the Asia-Pacific region is imperative to its peace and security; that their capabilities will be strengthened through realignment and through the coordination of their roles, missions, and capabilities with those of the SDF; that improvement in coordination between their respective headquarters and in their interoperability are of critical importance; that shared use of facilities and bases between the SDF and the US forces in Japan will enhance the effectiveness of the bilateral cooperation; and that special care should be exercised with respect to the possibility of restructuring force structure in areas where US military installations and bases are concentrated. On the basis of such thinking, the two countries agreed to the realignment of US

Table 1.4. The future of US forces in the Asia-Pacific region

	Japan	Guam	South Korea	Hawaii and others
Troop reduction	7,000 marines will be transferred outside Okinawa. This includes relocation of the III MEF headquarters to Guam.		Number of personnel will be reduced by 12,500.	
Emphasis on precision strike		Strike assets will be deployed to the West Pacific.	Firepower will be strengthened with AH-64D and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional aircraft carrier will be deployed. • Air force warfighting headquarters will be established.
Rapid deployment and strategic mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening contingency use by US forces of the ASDF bases at Nyutabaru and Tsuiki. Improving contingency use by US forces of civilian facilities • Mutual logistics support activities such as supply, maintenance, and transportation 	Strengthening of the function of Andersen Air Force Base	Deployment of a Stryker brigade	Stryker brigades will be co-located with high-speed vessels and C-17 transport in Hawaii and Alaska.
Joint command, control capability	Modernizing capabilities of the US Army Japan's command structure to a deployable, joint task force-capable operational headquarters element	Relocation of III MEF headquarters		Establishment of a standing joint headquarters as a support organization
Response to ballistic missile threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployment of US X-Band radar system • The US will deploy active defenses. 		Southward shift of deployment	Development and deployment of BMD
Strengthening of the alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous examination of the role, mission, and capabilities of the SDF and US forces • Establishment of a bilateral and joint operations coordination center at Yokota Air Base • Co-location of headquarters of the ASDF Air Defense Command and the US 5th Air Force 		"Strategic flexibility"	

Sources: Data from *The Japan-US Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future* (October 29, 2005) and others.

Note: In addition, measures agreed upon for reducing the burden on local host communities include: an examination of possible options for relocation within Okinawa Prefecture that could accelerate return of Futenma Air Station; the relocation of the carrier air wing from Atsugi Air Facility to Iwakuni Air Station; the dispersal of training; and the consolidation of Marine Corps units that remain in Okinawa into a smaller total land area.

forces in Japan. Agreements already reached between the two countries relating to the realignment and other realignment plans for the Asia-Pacific region that have been made public so far are summarized in Table 1.4.

During the SCC meeting in October 2005, Japan and the United States agreed to draw up plans for the realignment of US bases in Japan, including a definite timetable, by the end of March 2006. These plans will constitute a unified package and will be implemented as soon as the two sides agree.

(4) Challenges Ahead

The SCC Document released in October 2005 consists of an agreement concerning the sharing of roles, missions, and capabilities that could greatly push forward the cooperation between the two countries pursuant to the Japan-US alliance and contribute to international security, and a bold realignment plan that would greatly reduce the burden on local communities hosting bases and give stability to the stationing of US forces. The task the Japan-US alliance has to come to grips with over the next 10 years or so is to implement these plans. However, the problems facing the two countries cannot be solved easily, as they involve drafting a specific and effective plan for bilateral operation, policy and operational coordination of field tactics and national strategy at all levels of government, information-sharing and cooperation in intelligence-gathering, not to mention construction of an alternative air station in lieu of Futenma. In order to realize the objectives of the Japan-US alliance as envisioned in the SCC Document, therefore, not only the Defense Agency but the Japanese government as a whole must exert persistent efforts.