

Japan Defense White Paper Calls for "Country Capable of Meeting Threats"

Un communiqué du Centre de Presse du gouvernement Japonais

On August 5 the cabinet approved the 2003 White Paper on Defense, submitted by Defense Agency Director-General Shigeru Ishiba.

Regarding the future nature of Japan's defense capabilities, the white paper stresses the need to strengthen the ability to respond to such events as terrorism and missile strikes. At the same time, it recognizes for the first time that the likelihood of a large-scale invasion of the Japanese mainland in the near future is low and announces a policy of considering cuts in the weaponry needed to repel such an invasion.

The white paper clearly indicates a shift in the main focus of Japan's defense policy from a Cold War posture predicated on a large-scale invasion to one of being able to respond to new threats by such means as missile defense.

Based on changes in the international environment, the report eyes the creation of a new National Defense Program Outline and **the enactment of a permanent law to allow the overseas dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces.**

White Paper Reveals Direction of Defense Capabilities for First Time

Every year the Defense Agency collects information on basic defense matters relating to Japan and important events of the previous year and compiles the defense white paper. This is the twenty-ninth edition.

Up to now, defense white papers have been limited to descriptions of the past. This year, however, the white paper includes a new chapter titled "The Defense Agency and Self-Defense Forces in the Future," which addresses the future direction of defense policy, touching on such issues as the nature of the nation's defense capabilities.

Commenting on the international military situation, the white paper claims that **the main threats are not limited to states and that attention is being drawn to terrorist organizations and nonstate actors.**

It says that the continued existence of complicated and varied threats that are difficult to forecast is a major characteristic of the defense environment at present.

It also voices concern about the situation in North Korea, saying that the abductions of Japanese citizens were tantamount to terrorism. The white paper considers the recent series of actions in North Korea and concludes that there is a possibility that work on a nuclear-weapons program has proceeded quite some way. Of the possible launch of one of North Korea's Rodong missiles, which have a range great enough to strike anywhere in Japan, it states, "It will be difficult to detect signs ahead of time."

Concerning the United Nations peacekeeping operations that the SDF have taken part in since 1992, the white paper notes that the contributions of the SDF to international peace are adequately understood by the public. It says that citizens have expectations of SDF activities and that peacekeeping has become an important duty of the SDF, adding that the time has come to graduate from the "beginner stage" and realize that Japan is required to capably carry out duties that are more difficult than those performed so far. The white paper also reveals the desire for a permanent legal framework for dispatching the SDF overseas.

Ballistic Missile Defense Is a "Pressing Matter"

The chapter titled "The Defense Agency and Self-Defense Forces in the Future," which is included in the white paper for the first time, calls for the creation of a "country capable of meeting threats." It notes that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles and the presence of dictators and terrorists have completely changed existing conceptions of war. It concludes that Japan must aim to become a country that can quickly and capably respond to these types of threats. The white paper also places priority on responding to new threats in its discussion

of the future direction of defense armaments: "It is necessary to enhance the ability to offer a considered response to such asymmetrical attacks as international terrorism and missile strikes, to attacks from terrorist organizations and other nonstate actors, and to illegal acts." On the subject of missile defense, the report states, "Based on the current situation, in which Japan does not possess an effective missile defense system, ballistic missile defense is an important and pressing matter for our country's defense policy."

Considering Cuts in Armaments Needed to Repel Invasion

The white paper includes a major change in strategic focus: "More than 10 years have passed since the end of the Cold War," it states. "Considering the present circumstances of the countries surrounding Japan, it can be assumed that the likelihood of a large-scale land invasion of Japan, which would require massive preparations, is low." The paper calls for reductions in the armaments that would likely be required to fight a major land battle, such as tanks and artillery, stating, "Reductions in the armaments that would be used to repel a full-scale invasion will be considered." Preparing against an invasion of the Japanese homeland was a central theme in Japan's defense policy during the Cold War, and the Soviet Union (later Russia) was seen as a latent threat.

The SDF were manned and equipped mainly to be able to oppose a land invasion. With the conclusion of the Cold War, however, Japan-Russia relations have continued to improve, and it is believed that none of the countries surrounding Japan has the ability to mount an invasion. **Some observers say that this year's white paper represents a clean break with the past.**

Commenting on the white paper at a press conference, Defense Agency Director-General Ishiba said, "The danger and possibility of a land invasion have become extremely low.

While taking into account the demands of the people and limited fiscal resources, we must consider how to preserve the independence and security of the state."

The Defense Agency plans to introduce the missile defense system that the United States has decided to deploy, so a great deal of money will be needed for that purposes.

How adjustments will be made within the limited defense budget will become an important issue. In addition, the government by the end of this year will review the National Defense Program Outline that it formulated in 1995 in light of the dramatic changes that have taken place recently in the state of international military affairs and military technology. This year's white paper offers some clues as to what direction that review will take.

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