



SASAKAWA USA
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Unprecedented research explores role of JSDF in U.S.-Japan Alliance

Publication details history of relationship in advance of Gen. Mattis trip

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Since the end of World War II, the key feature of Japan’s foreign relations has been its close alliance with the United States, spanning security, economy, and society. But what role have the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) played in sustaining and expanding the military alliance? A new research publication released today by Sasakawa USA brings clarity to this question, which will be more vital than ever when Defense Secretary James Mattis visits Japan this week as part of his first trip abroad.

“The U.S.-Japan Alliance and Roles of the Japan Self-Defense Forces,” co-authored by Lt. Gen. Yoshikazu Watanabe (Ret.), Japan Ground Self-Defense Force; Vice Adm. Masanori Yoshida (Ret.), Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force; and Lt. Gen. Masayuki Hironaka (Ret.), Japan Air Self-Defense Force, examines how the JSDF, since its inception, has contributed to sustaining and expanding the U.S.-Japan alliance. Based on the direct experiences of former JSDF senior officers, the publication also offers a look at future challenges for the U.S.-Japan alliance in a changing international security environment.

[Click here to download the publication.](#)

“Both the general interested public and military specialists will learn a great deal from this paper, especially in the context of a new U.S. administration, which may have differing views on U.S.-Japan security and economic ties,” said Sasakawa USA CEO and Chairman Adm. Dennis Blair (USN, ret.), who wrote the publication’s introduction. “The authors make a major contribution both to understanding the evolution of the Japan Self-Defense Forces and projecting the requirements of the future.”

“The relationship between the JSDF and the American military is the core of the U.S.-Japan alliance; however, it is not well known that within this changing security environment, the JSDF is sincerely endeavoring to protect our country and has come to contribute to the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan Alliance,” notes Gen. Ryoichi Oriki (JGSDF, Ret.), Former Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff Office, in the book’s preface. “...I sincerely pray that the excellent essays assembled by these three men, which span the past, present, and future, will widely inform the citizens of both Japan and the United States and will help to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance.”

To provide an historical overview, the publication examines the international security environment within different time frames, and from the perspectives of the Ground, Maritime, and Air Self-Defense Forces.

The authors ultimately conclude that “there is increasing pressure for the JSDF to operate more like other countries’ armed forces... To address this disparity and further the progress of the U.S.-Japan alliance, it is important for the JSDF to stop waiting passively for the U.S. Armed Forces to decide Japan’s roles and responsibilities. Japan must do its own thinking about how it can best contribute to the alliance, and how it should use its defensive force, based on global standards, to fulfill its missions and meet both today’s threats and future contingency situations.”

Lt. Gen. Hironaka, co-author of the publication, and Adm. Blair, Chairman and CEO of Sasakawa USA, which published the publication, are available to further discuss its contents and revelations. For more information, please contact Communications Manager Christa Desrets at cdesrets@spfusa.org or (202) 296-6694 x118.

About the Authors

Lt. Gen. Yoshikazu Watanabe (Ret.), Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF), is a senior fellow at the Harvard Asia Center. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Electronic Engineering from Tokyo University in 1978. He entered the JGSDF, serving as 28th Infantry Regimental Commander, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Eastern Army, Director of the Tokyo Metropolitan Cooperation Office, vice president of the National Institute for Defense Study, Director of Logistics in the Department of the Ground Staff Office (GSO), 2nd Division Commanding General, Vice Chief of Staff of the GSO, and Eastern Army Commanding General. He retired from the JGSDF in 2013.

Vice Adm. Masanori Yoshida (Ret.), Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), joined the JMSDF in 1979 as a graduate of the National Defense Academy, where he served mainly on surface ships as an Operations Officer. He has over thirty-five years of professional and managerial experience in Maritime Defense and Security. His off-shore duties have included serving at the Programing Generation Center, which developed antisubmarine warfare systems as part of the AEGIS program, and serving six times at the Maritime Staff Office of the Ministry of Defense, where he was in charge of welfare, education, operations, and intelligence. He also served as Defense Attaché in Japan’s U.S. Embassy. His final government assignment was as Commander of the Sasebo Regional Command. He joined Sojitz Corporation of America’s Washington, DC office in July 2015 as vice president, international security affairs.

Lt. Gen. Masayuki Hironaka (Ret.), Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF), is a senior fellow at the Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation in Tokyo. Concurrently, he also serves as a national security and foreign affairs research fellow at Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA and a non-resident senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security in Washington DC. He entered the JASDF as a graduate of the National Defense Academy. He was assigned to numerous operational, command, and staff positions, serving as Director of the Personnel and Training Department in the Air Staff Office, Director of the Operations Department in the Joint Staff Office, Commander of the Western Sector Air Defense Force, Commander of Air Support Command, and Commander of Air Training Command. He received a master’s degree from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, and was a military fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC and at Stanford University’s Center for International Security and Cooperation.

About Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA

Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA is an independent American, non-profit, non-partisan, institution devoted to research, analysis, and better understanding of the U.S.-Japan relationship. Through research and education programs, Sasakawa USA facilitates people-to-people exchange and dialogue between American and Japanese policymakers, influential citizens, and the broader public.