



# US-Japan Alliance Digest

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Source: [Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp. photo](#)

## Headlines:

- US-Japan reach deal on steel tariffs
- Trilateral defense talks on North Korea, security cooperation
- US-Japan joint exercise *Noble Fusion* begins in Philippine Sea
- Japan to divert LNG shipments to Europe at US/EU request
- Okinawa Governor appeals to Congress on Futenma base

## Details:

- The Biden administration reached a deal with Japan this week that **removes Trump era steel tariffs** on [1.25 million metric tons](#) of Japanese steel imports. According to US Commerce Secretary Raimondo, the move strengthens the American steel industry while creating greater access to cheaper steel which was a [“major irritant”](#) between Japan and the US. Biden’s team has been trying to repair partnerships with open-market democratic allies, but it has moved slowly out of domestic political concerns. To mollify US industry and labor, the deal limits Japanese imports to their 2018-19 average. It goes into effect on April 1.
- **US, Japan and Republic of Korea (ROK) defense officials** spoke on [regional security issues](#) during a video call on February 4. US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Affairs (Ratner), ROK Deputy Minister for National Defense Policy (Kim), and Japan Director General for Defense Policy (Masuda) discussed the threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear missile programs and opportunities to strengthen trilateral defense cooperation. Their ministers had a follow-up [call](#) on February 10. These calls came ahead of a trilateral foreign ministerial [meeting](#) in Hawaii on February 12, with a trilateral in-person [meeting](#) of the three countries’ envoys in charge of North Korea issues.
- Japan’s Maritime and Ground Self-Defense Forces (JMSDF and JGSDF) began joint [exercises](#) on February 3 with US Navy, Marine and Air Forces as a part of **Exercise Noble Fusion in the Philippine Sea**. For the first time since 2018, two Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)/Amphibious Ready Groups (ARG) are operating together in the Indo-Pacific as part of the exercise, this time along-side a Carrier Strike Group. Col. Michael Brennan stressed the importance of these [“sea-denial operations”](#) conducted in conjunction with JMSDF in preparation to face aggressive actions by adversaries in the First Island Chain. Alongside 15,000 US servicemembers were [1,000 members](#) of the JGSDF and JMSDF, including the [JS Kongo \(DDG 173\)](#) guided missile destroyer.
- Following a request by US and EU officials, **Japan will divert LNG (liquefied natural gas) surplus to Europe** as the spectre of conflict looms in Ukraine. The gas would help European citizens in the event of [energy shortages](#) should Russia invade Ukraine. US Ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, said Japan’s move is an example of how [like-minded partners](#) can work together in the face of Russian aggression. Emanuel’s statement follows his [Tweet](#) on February 7 voicing clear support for Japan’s claims to its Northern Territories, which Russia seized in 1945.
- Okinawa prefecture **governor Tamaki sent a letter to relevant US members of Congress** on February 2, explaining his decision last November to disapprove the central government’s application for design changes to land reclamation work related to the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF). The FRF is a bilateral agreement to build a runway and related facilities so US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma can move from its urban environment to a less populated coastal part of Okinawa. Tamaki requested Congress to direct the Defense and State Departments to review FRF feasibility, halt construction, and coordinate with the Japanese government to close MCAS Futenma.