US-Japan Alliance Digest

Vol: 3.3

February 15, 2024

Image Source: US Army

Headlines:

- US, Japan, Australia boost mil coordination in Keen Edge exercise
- Center for Disease Control (CDC) opens regional office in Tokyo
- Toyota invests $1.3 billion for EV production in Kentucky auto plant
- Japan chip material maker JSR sued by a New York university affiliate
- US North Korean human rights envoy in Tokyo, supports talks w/ NK
- Japan signs MOU with Dem Rep of Congo on minerals collaboration

Details:

- The US-Japan military exercise **Keen Edge 2024 began on Feb 1** and included participation by Australian Defense Forces. The week-long joint/multilateral command post exercise focused on greater synchronization with US Space Command and US Cyber Command, and it will inform alliance efforts to modernize their command and control relationships for the future (see **relevant article** by Johnstone and Schoff). The results of this Keen Edge will be executed during the Keen Sword field training exercise in 2025. Separately, two US Navy aircraft carriers took part in a Multi-Large Deck Event alongside the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force in the Philippine Sea on Jan 31. Rear Adm Hitoshi said, "the purpose of this training is to improve the tactical skill and interoperability with the US Navy."
- The US Center for Disease Control **(CDC) opened a regional office in Tokyo** on February 5 in an effort to better handle future pandemics in the post-COVID-19 era. The duties of the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) office include expanding collaboration in the East Asia/Pacific region, increasing detection of health threats, and promoting knowledge exchange between the CDC and regional organizations. An opening ceremony was held at the US Ambassador's residence and attended by Japanese health minister Keizo Takemi and CDC chief Mandy Cohen.
- **Toyota announced it would invest an additional $1.3 billion into its Kentucky-based manufacturing plant** to begin production on a new electric SUV and to assemble battery cells for other EV models. On Feb 6, President of Toyota Kentucky, Kerry Creech said, "Today's announcement reflects our commitment to vehicle electrification and further reinvesting in US operations." The 40 year old Georgetown facility is the largest Toyota plant in the world, employing 9,400 workers and producing 550,000 vehicles annually. Gov Beshear said, "we are grateful that they [Toyota] continue to invest in our commonwealth and set a standard for high-quality, well-paying jobs for our citizens."
- A State University of New York (SUNY) affiliated **research foundation is suing chip material maker JSR** on grounds it is commercializing its technology without permission. The suit alleges that Inpria, a US-based subsidiary of Japan's JSR, has been selling chip materials utilizing the intellectual property (valued at ~$3bn) of a SUNY professor. The suit could delay a proposed $6.4 billion buyout of JSR by Japan Investment Corp (JIC), a Japan Government backed fund.
- The **US supports Japan's efforts to hold talks with North Korea** and hopes any dialogue would seek to resolve issues ranging from regional security to human rights, US envoy on North Korean human rights Turner said in Tokyo Feb 14.
- The **Minerals Security Partnership** (MSP), chaired by the United States, announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Japan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Feb 5. The MOU sets up a framework for cooperation between La Generale Des Carrieres Et Des Mines and the Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security for the exploration, production, and processing of certain minerals. The move aims to ensure a more secure supply chain around rare earths and provides economic benefits to source communities.

"US-Japan Alliance Digest" is a bi-weekly summary of bilateral and related developments compiled by Sasakawa USA's "US-Japan NEXT Alliance Initiative." To receive "Alliance Digest" via email, contact egulum@spfusa.org