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Minister of Defense

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Defense policy must always be relevant to the constantly changing security environment. And now is precisely when Japan's defense policy is at a major turning point in our history.

Japan faces an increasingly severe security environment. China has increased its defense budget by over 10% for five consecutive years, strengthening its military forces broadly and rapidly. Chinese government ships conduct intermittent incursions into Japan's territorial waters. China carries out extremely dangerous acts that could cause unintended consequences, such as the flying of Chinese military fighter jets abnormally close to Self-Defense Force (SDF) aircraft. It has to be said that China lacks transparency on many fronts regarding its military affairs and security issues, including its rising defense budget. North Korea has conducted ballistic missile launches repeatedly, and its nuclear development and enhancement of ballistic missile capabilities constitute a serious and imminent threat to the security of Japan. Turning our attention to the rest of the world, Russia appears to have intervened directly or indirectly in its neighboring country Ukraine. The international terrorist group ISIL has been gaining strength in Syria and Iraq. Tragically, despicable acts of terrorism have occurred that killed or injured Japanese nationals outside of Japan. Domestically, many precious lives were lost as a result of the landslides in Hiroshima Prefecture and the eruption of Mt. Ontake. In Nepal, a massive earthquake took place that caused catastrophic devastation.

The Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the SDF are the final bastion in securing Japan's territorial land, water, and airspace in any situation. In this regard, it is critically important that the MOD and the SDF make ceaseless efforts and steadily improve their response capabilities. At the moment, Diet deliberations are under way on the Peace and Security Legislation, which enables seamless responses to any situations in order to secure the lives and peaceful livelihood of the Japanese people. Furthermore, the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation was revised for the first time in 18 years after the last revision to further deepen Japan-U.S. defense cooperation in a wide range of areas. Additionally, reforms of the MOD are being

undertaken, including the strengthening of the SDF's integrated operational functions and the new establishment of the Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency. Moreover, under Japan's policy of Proactive Contribution to Peace based on the principle of international cooperation, the MOD and the SDF promote United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), counter-piracy operations, and defense cooperation with countries mainly in the

Asia-Pacific region. We also continue to work to build a Dynamic Joint Defense Force that is necessary for effective deterrence of and response to various situations.

As these revisions to the defense policy get under way, every day SDF personnel are steadily performing diverse tasks in difficult conditions across Japan and across the world. These tasks include surveillance, exercises, U.N. PKO, disaster deployments, and logistics support to these missions. For me, as a former SDF personnel who worked on the ground, the ground represents my starting point. I have visited GSDF, MSDF, and ASDF units on the ground as well as South Sudan and Djibouti to offer encouragement to personnel. What I saw there were personnel making tireless efforts in order to live up to the trust placed in them by the Japanese people and the international community, even with the diversification of the SDF's tasks to adapt to the changing times.

Public understanding and support are indispensable for the defense of Japan. In addition, there is much significance to maintaining the transparency of Japanese defense policy for gaining the further understanding and trust of countries. We are pleased to learn that according to the Cabinet Office's FY2014 Public Opinion Survey on the SDF and Defense Issues, the public maintained an overall high level of interest in defense issues and a positive impression of the SDF, following on from the previous survey in 2012. The Defense of Japan has no doubt contributed to these results. As it happens, the aforementioned important and broad defense policy revisions are being carried out this year, which marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. I believe this year's Defense of Japan that outlines these revisions takes on added importance compared to previous years' white papers. It is my sincere hope that this year, once again, the Defense of Japan will be read by as many people as possible, and that they will have a deeper understanding of the MOD and the SDF.



Minister of Defense Nakatani visiting a "response at collapsed houses" exercise (GSDF Camp Nerima)