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Japan's Defense--What Does the U.S. Seek?

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JAPAN’S DEFENSE—WHAT DOES THE US SEEK?

I am deeply honored to have the privilege of participating in the Morgan International Council meeting and to be included in such a distinguished group of Japanese and American scholars and leaders.

I welcome the increasingly realistic nature of the defense debate in Japan. A full examination of defense programs by the people and their elected representatives is essential to the development of a consensus on this issue.

As a result of the increasing tempo of the security debate, the subject of defense has received considerable attention here over the past several months. I read, almost on a daily basis, stories asserting that the US is "pressuring" Japan to do this or that and that Japan is unable to avoid "responding" to these "US requests" in some fashion or another.

Some stories profess to see a linkage between the defense issue and our bilateral trade and economic problems, suggesting that if Japan accommodates the US on trade, the US will ease the "pressure" on defense.

I would like to take a few moments here to explain what the United States is, in fact, seeking of Japan in the defense field and how we in the US see our respective military roles.

The United States is asking Japan, as we have our other allies,
TO IMPROVE ITS CAPABILITY OF DEFENDING ITSELF SO AS TO DETER POSSIBLE CONFLICT ARISING FROM AN INCREASINGLY SERIOUS AND VERIFIABLE SOVIET THREAT IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. I AM TALKING ABOUT THE MAJOR BUILD UP IN THE SOVIET OFFENSIVE MILITARY CAPABILITY IN THE ASIA/PACIFIC REGION OVER THE LAST DECADE. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE THE INTENTIONS OF THE SOVIETS, OR ANY NATION FOR THAT MATTER. INTENTIONS CAN CHANGE OVERNIGHT. WE MUST RATHER DEAL WITH SOVIET MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND THESE ARE FORMIDABLE INDEED.

IN A MILITARY SENSE WE REGARD JAPAN’S PRINCIPAL ROLE AS BEING PRECISELY THE SAME AS IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN, TO MAINTAIN FORCES CAPABLE OF MEETING AND RESISTING A CONVENTIONAL ATTACK ON JAPAN. THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT EXPECT JAPAN TO PLAY A REGIONAL MILITARY ROLE IN EAST ASIA. WE REMAIN FULLY CONSCIOUS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS ON THE SELF DEFENSE FORCES AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT THESE CONSTRAINTS LIMIT THE SDF’S ACTIVITY TO JAPAN’S TERRITORY AND, AS THE GOJ HAS STATED, ITS SEA LANES TO A DISTANCE OF SOME 1,000 NAUTICAL MILES.

CONTRARY TO SOME REPORTS I HAVE SEEN, THE US HAS NOT SUGGESTED SPECIFIC DEFENSE SPENDING LEVELS FOR THE SELF DEFENSE FORCES, NOR DO WE ANTICIPATE DOING SO. WE ARE WELL AWARE THAT MANY FACTORS, BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL, MUST BE CONSIDERED IN SETTING BUDGETARY PRIORITIES AND THAT THIS IS AND MUST ALWAYS REMAIN A SOVEREIGN DECISION FOR ANY COUNTRY.

I AM NOT ALTOGETHER SURE WHAT CONSTITUTES “PRESSURE”. CERTAINLY (IN KEEPING WITH OUR STATUS AS ALLIES UNDER THE MUTUAL SECURITY TREATY WHICH PROVIDES FOR A CONTINUOUS CONSULTATIVE PROCESS) WE HAVE CONFERRED REGULARLY AND FREQUENTLY WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN ON
defense matters. In general, we have found that its programs complement our own efforts in East Asia. In recent years, however, we have urged the GOJ to take the steps necessary to implement on an urgent basis the program goals it has set for itself. For instance, we hope that the defense goals set forth in Japan's National Defense Program Outline can be achieved as rapidly as possible.

Let me say now that the United States Government regards Japan's defense forces as being second to none in terms of devotion to duty, professionalism and dedication to their country. Japan can justifiably take pride in its forces. Nevertheless, in addition to the procurement of front-line equipment, Japan faces other defense needs which are equally important and which will require considerable resources to satisfy. Let me cite some examples:

-- enhancement of the JSDF's command, control and communications structure;
-- making SDF bases, radar and communications sites less vulnerable to attack;
-- bolstering the air defense capability of the SDF;
-- enhancing the anti-submarine warfare capability of the MSDF;
-- enhancing the training of SDF personnel, for example, increasing the flying time for pilots and the shipboard experience of its maritime personnel;
-- improving its logistics and support structure.

We have not spotted these problems for the Japanese; the Japan Defense Agency is fully aware of and is moving rapidly to correct them.
Despite talk of "US pressure", the primary beneficiary of the achievement of Japan's defense plans described above will be Japan, not the United States. It is true, however, that enhanced Japanese defense capabilities will, strengthen the overall deterrent value of our alliance.

Thus I believe that Japan's actions in the defense field, rather than being construed as a response to a "US request" should be viewed as its own response to a threatening international environment. We may have slightly different perceptions on the degree of the threat but we agree that it exists and has increased.

I am occasionally puzzled by efforts to portray US-Japanese defense cooperation as sinister or underhanded. For example, the US is depicted as having an ulterior motive in wishing to have access to Japanese defense technology or material, in spite of the fact that U.S. technology defense production "know how" has flowed to Japan for over a quarter of a century now. Similarly, discussions between us on a division of defense roles and our combined defense exercises, behavior which would seem natural, essential even for military allies, are sometimes portrayed as aimed at encouraging Japan to proceed once again down the path of militarism or to revise Japan's constitution or the Mutual Security Treaty. Japan's constitution is something for it alone to change or not change as the people of Japan so desire. As for the Security Treaty, my government has made it absolutely clear that we see no reason for it to be revised.

Occasionally, efforts are made to link the defense question with some of our bilateral trade issues. I do not believe they should be connected. No matter how smooth our economic relationship might be,
OUR TWO NATIONS WOULD STILL FACE A POTENTIALLY FLUID AND UNSTABLE POLITICO-MILITARY SITUATION IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD, AND WE WOULD STILL NEED TO ATTEND TO OUR DEFENSES. I HOPE THAT BOTH AMERICANS AND JAPANESE WILL THEREFORE CONTINUE TO SEPARATE THE TWO ISSUES OF TRADE AND DEFENSE.

FOR THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT TO REALIZE ITS STATED AIM OF ENHANCING ITS MILITARY POSTURE WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS IT WILL MOST LIKELY HAVE TO UNDERTAKE ANNUAL BUDGET INCREASES CONSIDERABLY LARGER THAN LAST YEAR’S VERY CREDITABLE EFFORT. THE UNITED STATES IS DOING PRECISELY THAT IN ORDER TO SECURE A STABLE BALANCE OF POWER.

I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS TYPE OF FRANK APPRAISAL CONSTITUTES PRESSURE. I CONSIDER IT TO BE CANDID CONVERSATIONS AMONG FRIENDS AND ALLIES.

IN CONCLUSION, LET ME REITERATE A FEW POINTS WHICH DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE SUFFICIENT PUBLIC RECOGNITION HERE:

-- THE UNITED STATES IS NOT SEEKING A DEFENSE ROLE FOR JAPAN WHICH EXCEEDS JAPANESE CONSTITUTIONAL OR POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS.
-- THE US IS NOT COMING AT JAPAN WITH VARIOUS "REQUESTS" WHICH WE HAVE DEvised. WE ARE ONLY SEEKING TO HAVE JAPAN ACQUIRE THE CAPABILITY OF FULFILLING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THE ROLE WHICH IT HAS DEFINED FOR ITSELF.
-- THE ACHIEVEMENT OF JAPAN’S GOALS IN THE DEFENSE AREA REQUIRE NOT ONLY PROCUREMENT OF DRAMATIC FRONT LINE EQUIPMENT ITEMS, BUT ALSO THE OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS, TRAINING, SUPPORT AND BASE STRUCTURE NEEDED TO MAKE THEM EFFECTIVE.
-- JAPAN HAS CONSIDERABLE GROUND TO COVER TO MEET THE GOALS
IT HAS SET FOR ITSELF IN ITS EFFORTS TO DEVELOP MORE EFFECTIVE DETERRENT POSTURE.

-- ACCOMPLISHING ALL OF THIS WILL REQUIRE THE EXPENDITURE OF CONSIDERABLE TIME AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES.

-- BILATERAL DEFENSE COOPERATION IN MATTERS SUCH AS EXERCISES, TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER, COST SHARING, AND JOINT PLANNING ARE OTHER ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN OUR BILATERAL ALLIANCE.

I LOOK FORWARD TO AN EVEN MORE PRODUCTIVE DIALOGUE BETWEEN OUR TWO NATIONS IN THE DEFENSE AREA.