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JAPAN

Digest

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Japan's Strategic Documents

Marking a major shift in its security policy, Japan released three strategic documents on December 16 including the revised National Security Strategy (NSS), the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the Defense Buildup Program. While the NSS outlines Japan's future thinking on national security, the NDS, earlier known as the National Defense Program Guideline, charts the roadmap to achieve the goals. The Defense Buildup Program, previously known as the Medium-Term Defense Program, outlines the defence expenditures and procurement volumes for major equipment for the next five years.

The NSS is revised for first time since its establishment in December 2013. The revised NSS argues that amidst “the most severe and complex security environment since World War II”, Japan will reshape its security strategy with doubling of defence spending and acquiring counter-strike capability. The 2022 edition of the NSS recognised China as “the biggest strategic challenge” for Japan in contrast to the 2013 version which identified China as an “issue of concern to the international community.” North Korea has been identified as posing “an even more grave and imminent threat to Japan's national security than ever before”. In the context of Russia, the NSS stated that “Russia's external and military activities and others in the Indo-Pacific region, including Japan, together with its strategic coordination with China, are of strong security concern”.

The NSS has underscored that key to deterring invasion is counterstrike capabilities that leverage stand-off defence capability. As such, the NSS states that: in

the next five years, that is by FY 2027, Japan will strengthen its defence capabilities to the point at which “Japan is able to take the primary responsibility for dealing with invasions against its nation, and disrupt and defeat such threats while gaining the support of its ally and others”. Furthermore, in the next ten years, “Japan will reinforce its defence capabilities to the point at which it will be possible to disrupt and defeat invasions against its nation much earlier and at a further distance”.

The defence spending will increase to the NATO standard of 2 per cent of the national GDP in 2027. The NSS has identified seven priority areas as Tokyo intends to “drastically strengthen” defence capabilities, including stand-off defence capabilities such as mass production of longer-range missiles; Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) capabilities to defend against adversarial missile attacks; unmanned asset such as the use of drones; cross-domain operational capabilities in the space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic domains; command and control and intelligence-related functions; manoeuvring and deployment capability to send troops and supplies to the front line; and sustainability and resiliency of the Self-Defence Forces (JSDF) as Japan draws lessons from the Ukraine war.

US-Japan alliance, including the provision of extended deterrence, continue to remain the cornerstone of Japan's national security policy. In addition, Japan with its Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) outlook will cooperate with allies and like-minded countries including Australia, India, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, South Korea, and Southeast Asian nations, amongst other nations.

Japan's Defence Budget

Japan has decided to boost defence spending to the tune of ¥43 trillion, or over \$315 billion dollars in the next five-years (FY2023-2027). This represents around 1.6 times compared to the current five-year total.

In this regard, on December 23, Japanese cabinet has approved 6.82 trillion yen (\$51.4 billion) defence spending for FY 2023. This marks a northward movement in defence budget for the ninth consecutive year. The initial draft budget for FY 2023, including expenditures related to hosting American bases, is up 26.3 per cent in the current fiscal. Defence ministry has reportedly secured ¥828.3 billion for ammunition-related spending, which is around 3.3 times higher than the current fiscal. It also kept ¥211.3 billion for procuring long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles as Tokyo intends to develop counterstrike capabilities. Japan is likely to get Tomahawk Block V to be equipped onto Aegis-equipped destroyers. Additionally, the ministry has kept ¥33.8 billion to develop an extended-range version of the domestically produced Type 12 Surface-to-Ship Missile (SSM) as a stand-off missile. Japan will also spend ¥93.9 billion to mass-produce the upgraded version of its ground-launched Type 12 standoff missiles, with extended range of 1,000 km. Furthermore, ¥58.5 billion will be used to develop a hypersonic cruise missile in the early 2030s. In an important move, Japan allocated ¥102.3 billion to pursue its next-generation fighter programme in cooperation with Italy and the UK.

Meanwhile, the Maritime Self-Defense Force secured ¥5.2 billion in order to

modify its two Izumo-class helicopter carriers, JS Izumo and JS Kaga into aircraft carriers that is capable of enabling Lockheed Martin F-35B fighter aircraft operations. Furthermore, ¥35.7 billion will be used to acquire four 1,900 tonne-class next-generation offshore patrol vessels (OPVs). This will be specialized in warning and surveillance.

Japan-UK-Italy announced the Global Combat Air Programme

In early December, Japan-UK-Italy announced their Global Combat Air Programme that aims to field sixth-generation fighter by 2035. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries together with UK's BAE Systems and Italy's Leonardo will work on the fighter.

Japanese Defence Minister, Hamada Yasukazu argued that it is the start of a new era of cooperation that will “encourage innovation in our country’s broader economy and serve as a foundation for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific as well as European regions”.

Japanese Air Self-Defense Force’s (ASDF) current fighter jets including the F-35, F-15, and F-2 were built either by American firms or developed in collaboration with American firms which helped in advancing interoperability.

The ministry was reportedly negotiating with Lockheed Martin to make a next-generation jet with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, but not much progress was achieved. Meanwhile, the UK wanted to update its Eurofighter jet and Italy is a joint developer of the Eurofighter.