

Toward Improving the Effectiveness of Extended Deterrence in the Japan-U.S. Alliance

-To make the “nuclear umbrella” be real-



June 2025

Sasakawa Peace Foundation

Japan-U.S. and Security Studies Unit
National Security and Japan-U.S. Program

Preface

The Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) held a workshop in Honolulu on March 7 and 8, 2025, inviting experts with a wealth of practical experience to improve the operational effectiveness of extended deterrence in the Japan-U.S. alliance, and compiled the following recommendations as indicated in the title.

Following experts had participated; from Japan side, Admiral Katsutoshi Kawano, former Chief of Staff, Joint Staff Office; General Koji Yamazaki, former Chief of Staff, Joint Staff Office (Senior Fellow, SPF); Admiral Tomohisa Takei, former Chief of Staff, Maritime Self-Defense Force (Senior Fellow, SPF); Lieutenant General Sadamasa Oue, former Commander of Air Material Command, Air Self-Defense Force (Senior Fellow, SPF); Mr. Nobukatsu Kanehara, former Deputy Director General, National Security Secretariat (Executive Director, SPF); Ms. Aya Murata, Director, National Security and Japan-U.S. Program, SPF; Rear Admiral Katsuya Yamamoto, Director, Strategy and Deterrence Program, SPF; and Mr. Junichi Fukuda, Senior Research Fellow, National Security and Japan-U.S. Program, SPF. From the U.S. side, Admiral Dennis Blair, former Director of the U.S. National Intelligence and Commander, U.S. Pacific Command; Admiral Charles Richard, former Commander, U.S. Strategic Command; and Dr. Brad Roberts, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy. (See chapter 3 for Summary of the Statements and Discussions in the workshop.)

The following recognition of the issues and recommendations are compiled by the Japanese participants with reference to the discussions at the meeting mentioned above with the goal of submitting to Japanese government officials.

Contents

1. Recognition of the issues by the Japan side at the start of this workshop.....	1
(1) Situation surrounding Japan	1
(2) Current Situation in Japan	1
(3) Current Status of the Japan-U.S. Alliance.....	3
2. Recommendations	5
(1) Strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance.....	5
(2) Strengthening the Posture of the Self-Defense Forces.....	7
(3) Preparedness and Review in Japan	9
(4) International Risk Reduction Efforts.....	12
3. SPF Japan-U.S. Alliance Extended Deterrence Workshop 2025.....	14
Summary of the Statements and Discussions, March 7-8, 2025, Honolulu	

List of Recommendations

(1) Strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance

- 【Recommendation 1】 Establish peacetime Japan-U.S. consultations on operational aspects of extended deterrence.
- 【Recommendation 2】 Review the third principle of the three non-nuclear principles, “Do not allow to bring nuclear weapons into Japan,” to realize the joint plan.
- 【Recommendation 3】 Initiate Japan-U.S. extended deterrence consultations related to contingency operations with the assumption of escalation to the nuclear level.

(2) Strengthening the Posture of the Self-Defense Forces

- 【Recommendation 4】 Prepare operational plans and basic response policies in preparation for a full-scale contingency.
- 【Recommendation 5】 Accelerate the operational readiness of Japan’s Joint Operations Command (JJOC).
- 【Recommendation 6】 Strengthen the resilience of the SDF’s kill chain.
- 【Recommendation 7】 Improve the SDF’s operational capabilities related to nuclear deterrence and promote nuclear introduction and nuclear sharing.

(3) Preparedness and Review in Japan

- 【Recommendation 8】 Re-organize the Prime Minister’s decision-making chain in contingency.
- 【Recommendation 9】 Strengthen the contingency response functions of the Prime Minister’s Office.
- 【Recommendation 10】 Acquisition of early warning intelligence and development of a decision-making system between Japan and the U.S.
- 【Recommendation 11】 Strengthen intelligence functions in preparation for contingency
- 【Recommendation 12】 Explanation of Japan’s nuclear related policies to the public.

(4) International Risk Reduction Efforts

- 【Recommendation 13】 Advocate for the initiation of arms control and disarmament negotiations among the U.S., China, and Russia.
- 【Recommendation 14】 Establish nuclear strategic consultations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- 【Recommendation 15】 Advocating abolition of theater-range missiles in Northeast Asia

1

Recognition of the issues by the Japan side at the start of this workshop

(1) Situation surrounding Japan

Japan is directly facing China, North Korea, and Russia, which possesses nuclear weapons, and the nuclear threat has become a real issue due to the intimidation by Russia to use the nuclear weapons in the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In particular, if China attempts to unify Taiwan by force, it is envisioned that Japan will take measures for the defense of Japan and for regional peace and security (Note: the U.S. force's use of the U.S. bases in Japan: obligations under the Article 6 of the Security Treaty. However, prior consultation with the Japanese government is required for the use of bases for direct combat operations such as air strikes), and Japan-U.S. joint operations (including the logistic support in the Important Influence Situation or the exercise of the right of collective self-defense (including the use of armed force) in the Survival Threatening Situation).

In such a situation, China may intimidate to use the nuclear weapons, or actually use the tactical nuclear weapons, etc., to weaken the political commitment of Japan and the U.S. to the defense of Taiwan, to decouple Japan and the U.S., to achieve the anti-access/area denial against the U.S. forces, or to interfere with the deterrence and response posture of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and U.S. Forces.

The impact of President Trump's negotiations over a ceasefire in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine on the credibility of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and U.S. alliance posture and extended deterrence should also have to be closely monitored.

(2) Current Situation in Japan

The 2022 National Security Strategy states that "Japan will fundamentally reinforce its defense capabilities and deepen security cooperation with the United States. By undertaking such efforts, Japan will further strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, including extended deterrence by the U.S. that is backed by its full range of capabilities, including nuclear."

In December 2024, the "Government of the United States of America- Government of Japan Guidelines for Extended Deterrence" was developed. The main contents of the Guidelines are: (1) reinforcing the Alliance's existing consultation and communication procedures related to extended deterrence, (2) addressing strategic messaging to maximize deterrence, and (3) enhancing measures for U.S. extended deterrence, bolstered by Japan's defense capabilities. The Guidelines set the specific direction for future Japan-U.S. extended deterrence consultations.

The "Japan's defense capabilities" indicated in (3) "enhancing measures for U.S. extended

deterrence, bolstered by Japan's defense capabilities" in the above Guidelines refers primarily to cyber, space, ballistic missile defense (BMD), and standoff capabilities, etc.

In this context, in a counterstrike utilizing standoff capabilities, it is envisioned that in addition to the SDF's unilateral operations, joint operations will be conducted by operating conventional and other missiles of the U.S. land, sea, and air forces. Since this operation will directly strike the target country, it needs to be managed with an awareness of escalation to the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, closer coordination between the Japan and U.S. governments and between the SDF and U.S. forces will be necessary. In doing so, the sharing of classified information and communication between the U.S. Strategic Command and the SDF will become an important issue which have been weak so far, in addition to between the Indo-Pacific Command and the SDF.

On the other hand, we recognize a number of issues related to the current situation regarding Japan-U.S. joint operations by the Government of Japan, the Self-Defense Forces, and the U.S. forces, as listed below. These problems need to be properly addressed and efforts to make them effective must be made as soon as possible.

- ① Despite the fact that the security environment surrounding Japan has become the most severe since the end of World War II and the nuclear threat has become a reality, neither the Japanese government nor the Japanese people have been able to break free from the traditional mindset of "dependence on the United States to deal with nuclear threats." As a result, there has been insufficient consultation on the operational aspects of nuclear weapons at the political, practical, and military levels. This is an area in which the Japan-U.S. alliance lags far behind the NATO and the U.S.-ROK alliance.
- ② Discussions about nuclear weapons, such as on the three non-nuclear principles which Japan maintains and nuclear sharing etc. still tend to be evaded in Japan. Besides, while a discussion on nuclear deterrence and a discussion on nuclear disarmament are debated in parallel in normal countries, in Japan, however, the two are seen as ideologically entangled and debated dichotomously, and discussions on nuclear deterrence have hardly deepened at all.
- ③ In particular, among the three non-nuclear principles, "Do not allow (the U.S.) to bring nuclear weapons into Japan" means that in the event of a Taiwan contingency, nuclear-equipped U.S. land, sea, and air forces capable of striking China cannot be deployed or ported in Japan, which undermines the national security interest in the meaning that it reduces the effectiveness of the U.S. extended nuclear deterrence. It should be "Do not let (China) strike Japan by nuclear weapons," while the original principle is perverse as a security logic. Therefore, both the government and the Japanese people have stopped thinking about the operational aspect of how Japan itself can make the U.S. nuclear umbrella effective.
- ④ Although there have been strategic communications on the importance of extended deterrence and the provision of extended deterrence by the U.S. at the Japan-U.S. Summit, Japan-U.S. "2+2," and other occasions, July 2024 was in fact the first time that extended

deterrence was discussed at a Japan-U.S. “2+2” ministerial meeting. Working-level extended deterrence consultations have been held regularly since 2010, and detailed discussions have developed, but it is assumed that they have not yet gone into substantive details that would improve the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence in operational terms.

- ⑤ In the first place, at the highest level of the Japanese government, it is not sufficient enough to build a crisis management posture for contingencies, including a command function at the Prime Minister’s Office in anticipation of contingencies, a basic response policy governing what all ministries should do, a operational plan of SDF, exercises based on that plan, and Japan-U.S. cooperation. It cannot be said that the country is ready to launch a wartime cabinet to cope with a contingency.
- ⑥ Japan’s intelligence capabilities are significantly inferior to those of other countries in both human and cyber intelligence, due to insufficient autonomous intelligence gathering capabilities, and the intelligence community itself does not have a posture to respond in a time of war.
- ⑦ At the national level, preparation for civil defense is not sufficient, such as dissemination of knowledge on necessary actions to be taken in the event of nuclear weapons used, evacuation action plans, and shelter arrangements. The situation is quite different from that of Taiwan, with its population of 23 million, which has shelters for 40 million people.

(3) Current Status of the Japan-U.S. Alliance

Japan and the United States have the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) established for the purpose of “addressing issues seamlessly and effectively any situation that affects Japan’s peace and security or any other situation that may require an Alliance response.” However, in the past, the ACM was mainly utilized for limited activities, such as countering North Korean ballistic missiles and responding to China’s military activities in the sea and airspace around the Senkaku Islands. Therefore, it can be inferred that the current ACM is not prepared to deal with a large-scale contingency such as the Taiwan contingency.

In particular, organizational, operational, and policy coordination regarding nuclear deterrence in the event of a Taiwan contingency remains blank. Compared to NATO, which has nearly 80 years of experience in nuclear deterrence, the Japan-U.S. alliance’s joint planning building function regarding nuclear deterrence is almost nonexistent.

The overall assessment of the current operational posture of the SDF and U.S. forces is as follows.

- ① The Bilateral Planning Mechanism (BPM), established between Japan and the U.S. for the purpose of “implementing the development of bilateral plans in peacetime in order to enable effective bilateral responses to contingencies relevant to Japan’s peace and security,” has taken root in the SDF, Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. Forces in Japan, and the bilateral

plans are being developed within this framework.

- ② The alliance maintains an extremely high-level coordination and readiness in the land, sea, and air domains of conventional forces, and possesses a high-level capability of implementing Japan-U.S. joint operations.
- ③ In the new domains of cyber, space, electromagnetic, and cognition, Japan and the U.S. have begun to improve their joint operational capabilities, but this is still insufficient. It is necessary to develop and improve the SDF's capabilities in these domains in the future, but support is needed from the U.S. military, which has strong capabilities in these areas. This will improve the effectiveness of the Japan-U.S. alliance's extended deterrence by conventional forces through the enhancement of the SDF's capabilities.
- ④ With regard to counterstrike capability utilizing standoff capability, the SDF is at the stage of beginning to possess counterstrike capability, including the purchase of Tomahawk missiles from the United States, enhancing the capability of domestically produced Type 12 surface-to-ship guided missiles (SSM), and development and introduction of domestically produced hypersonic missiles. This is the first attempt by the SDF to launch a counterstrike on an opponent's origin of operations since the establishment of the SDF, and its implementation involves many issues to be considered, such as intelligence gathering, analysis, target selection, and determination of the effectiveness of implementation, and requires the support of the U.S. forces, which has superior capabilities and long experience in strategic bombing and missile attacks. In addition, for a joint Japan-U.S. counterstrike with U.S. Forces, it is necessary to formulate an operational plan and conduct training.
- ⑤ Counterstrike by Japan and the U.S. at the origin of an opponent's operation requires joint Japan-U.S. escalation management. This is because a counterstrike against China or North Korea, which have both conventional and nuclear weapons, risks for making the opponents to escalate the situation to the use of nuclear weapons. However, there has been no serious Japan-U.S. coordination on how to position nuclear weapons in this escalation management (when, where, under what circumstances, for what purpose, with what red lines, what targets, and which nuclear weapons to use, etc.).
- ⑥ In March 2025, the Japan Self-Defense Forces Joint Operation Command (JJOC) was established to command the Ground, Maritime, and Air Self-Defense Forces in a unified manner. In order to further improve the SDF's joint operational capability and Japan-U.S. joint operational capability, it is necessary to quickly bring the SDF into operational capability through SDF joint exercises and Japan-U.S. joint exercises, and it is also important to improve the coordination organization between Japan and the U.S. (especially between the SDF and U.S. forces) based on future operations and training results. Currently, the reorganization of the U.S. Forces Headquarters in Japan is also planned in step with the creation of JJOC on the Japanese side. It is also necessary to examine the framework for Japan-U.S. consultations with the Indo-Pacific Command, Strategic Command, Cyber Command, and Space Command, and the nature of command and control between Japan and the United States.

2

Recommendations

As described in the first chapter, while policy consultations on extended deterrence between Japan and the U.S. have been enhanced, the major issue at hand is the inadequate improvement of operational effectiveness. In order to improve the effectiveness of extended deterrence in the Japan-U.S. alliance, we make 15 recommendations focusing on improving the operational effectiveness of extended deterrence: (1) Strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance, (2) Strengthening the posture of the SDF, (3) Preparedness and Review in Japan, and (4) International risk reduction efforts.

(1) Strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance

[Recommendation 1] Establish peacetime Japan-U.S. consultations on operational aspects of extended deterrence.

Under the direction of the Prime Minister, and in accordance with the “Government of the United States of America- Government of Japan Guidelines for Extended Deterrence” (December 2024), we propose the following to the United States and establishing a Japan-U.S. special team on the nuclear issues for strategic and operational discussions.

- ① Establish a consultative framework for strategic and operational aspects of extended deterrence, including nuclear deterrence, within the Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM). A small elite special team should be established as they are expected to conduct highly classified work.
- ② On the strategic side, let the National Security Secretariat, the Ministry of Defense and the Department of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of State of both Japan and the U.S. consider the Japan-U.S. extended deterrence strategy. Political engagement, including participation in ministerial dialogues and tabletop exercises, will also be pursued.
- ③ On the operational side, within the Bilateral Planning Mechanism (BPM), a special small elite team will be established to develop a joint plan for extended deterrence, including nuclear deterrence. This team will consist of representatives from the SDF, the Indo-Pacific Command, and the U.S. Strategic Command. In formulating the joint plan, substantial participation of not only the Indo-Pacific Command but also the U.S. Strategic Command with regard to nuclear operations is essential, and the SDF will adopt measures to strengthen cooperation with the Strategic Command from peacetime.
- ④ At the conclusion of the study of Japan-U.S. extended deterrence strategy and the joint plan for extended deterrence, the contents shall be reported to the Japan-U.S. “2+2” and the leaders of the two countries.

【Recommendation 2】 Review the third principle of the three non-nuclear principles, “Do not allow to bring nuclear weapons into Japan,” to realize the joint plan.

- ① Japan’s three non-nuclear principles, which do not allow nuclear-capable U.S. vessels and aircrafts to make port calls or pass through territorial waters or airspace, need to be revised in accordance with the government’s view that exceptions to the three non-nuclear principles can be made at the discretion of that time administration if nuclear introduction into Japan becomes necessary in the event of an contingency situation in the future (Then Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada’s response at the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives on March 17, 2010).
- ② Of the three non-nuclear principles, the third principle, “Do not allow to bring nuclear weapons into Japan” should be changed to “Do not let the opponent strike Japan by nuclear weapons.” Otherwise, the Japanese government will lose its voice opportunity regarding the operational options for U.S. tactical nuclear weapons as stated in **【Recommendation 3】**.
- ③ In line with this, the U.S. should consider bringing U.S. nuclear weapons into Japan and nuclear sharing efforts between Japan and the U.S., etc., as indicated in **【Recommendation 7】** below.

【Recommendation 3】 Initiate Japan-U.S. extended deterrence consultations related to contingency operations with the assumption of escalation to the nuclear level.

- ① The small elite special teams of the Japan-U.S. Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) and the Bilateral Planning Mechanism (BPM) described in **【Recommendation 1】** should consult regularly on extended deterrence operations involving the use of nuclear weapons and consider specific operations within the framework of Japan-U.S. extended deterrence consultations, based on updated joint plans.
- ② This detailed consultation on extended deterrence will be a forum for discussing operational concepts and plans for extended deterrence (including U.S. nuclear forces and the SDF’s standoff capabilities) between the U.S. and SDF. The Japan-U.S. joint operations at each stage of escalation, from peacetime to gray zone to contingency (especially in the exercise of counterstrike capability, including objectives of counterstrike, expected effects, target lists, intelligence collection and analysis, means to be used for counterstrike, command and control, support by the SDF conventional forces to the U.S. nuclear forces operations, etc.) will be consulted.
- ③ At the operational plans,, the SDF’s capabilities (especially the long-range ground attack capability used for counterstrike capability) must be organically integrated into the U.S. nuclear deterrence posture. The U.S. nuclear force (the traditional nuclear triad, consisting of intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and strategic bombers) must be integrated with Japanese and the U.S. conventional forces to make the escalation ladder of nuclear deterrence functional.
- ④ Specifically, strategic communication including red line statements (the declaration policy

on the use of nuclear weapons), military signaling including explicit changes in nuclear force posture, and flexible deterrent options (FDO) related to the operation of nuclear weapons should be considered. This review should be conducted with respect to both U.S. strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. In particular, with respect to tactical nuclear weapons, Japan and the U.S. need to jointly study where and how to deploy the forthcoming air-launched nuclear-capable cruise missile (LRSO), the sea-launched nuclear-capable cruise missile (SLCM-N), and the ground-launched, nuclear-capable, theater-range missiles (expected to be deployed at such as remote islands if it were developed), in addition to the current aircraft-borne B-61 free-fall bombs in the event of contingency and how to present them to the other side to ensure deterrence. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure smooth implementation of such operations in contingencies through joint Japan-U.S. trainings and exercises.

- ⑤ As mentioned in **【Recommendation 1】**, such review essentially requires collaboration not only with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command but also with the U.S. Strategic Command.
- ⑥ Consultation, coordination, and implementation on extended deterrence between Japan and the U.S. regarding operations must be based on a formal process between Japan and the U.S. not only in peacetime, but also in contingencies.

(2) Strengthening the Posture of the Self-Defense Forces

【Recommendation 4】 Prepare operational plans and basic response policies in preparation for a full-scale contingency.

- ① Japan needs to formulate operational plans and prototype basic response policies for each contingency scenario (Taiwan, Korean Peninsula, Senkaku Islands, etc.) based on the Armed Attack Situation Response Law and other relevant laws.
- ② When considering operations to improve the effectiveness of extended deterrence, it is necessary to examine the nature of extended deterrence with respect to the Taiwan contingency, the Korean Peninsula contingency, and the Senkaku (Japan) contingency in accordance with each scenario (Note: See page 14~16 of the summary of the workshop discussion). To respond to changes in circumstances in a timely and appropriate manner, preparation from peacetime can be the difference between the matter of life and death. The prototype of basic response policies must be compiled from peacetime, with the decision by the Cabinet in accordance with the Armed Attack Situation Response Law, not only for the SDF's operational plans, but also for all ministries and agencies, including foreign affairs, defense, police, land and transportation, general affairs, and finance.
- ③ Based on the above operational plans and basic response policy prototype, exercises including the participation of the Prime Minister and Cabinet members shall be conducted annually.

[Recommendation 5] Accelerate the operational readiness of Japan's Joint Operations Command (JJOC).

- ① In order to proceed with the above work, it is essential to accelerate the operational readiness of the JJOC. Through the joint SDF exercises and Japan-U.S. joint exercises after the JJOC's establishment, the SDF's integrated operational capability to make extended deterrence effective must be further improved, and its organization must be fulfilled based on the results and lessons learned.
- ② It is also necessary to strengthen cooperation between the JJOC and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (including future reorganization of the U.S. Forces Command in Japan), Strategic Command, Cyber Command, and Space Command from peacetime.

[Recommendation 6] Strengthen the resilience of the SDF's kill chain.

- ① For the counterstrike capability that Japan will possess, it will be necessary to construct an autonomous and self-contained kill chain (target detection, identification, target assignment, attack instruction, attack, and battle damage assessment). To ensure its resilience, it will be necessary to employ multiple routes (in particular, to strengthen the resilience and redundancy of command and control).
- ② In addition to traditional domains, operations in all domains, including space, cyber, and electromagnetic, are necessary to be incorporated into the operational framework of extended deterrence, to be coordinated, and to strengthen deterrence capabilities.
- ③ By further improvement and enhancement of standoff capabilities, it is necessary to make additional efforts to expand and refine the range of possible attacks (introduction of ballistic and hypersonic missiles, increase of destructive power, possession of various types of warheads, and enhanced accuracy, survivability, and anti-jamming capabilities that can localize collateral damage, etc.).

[Recommendation 7] Improve the SDF's operational capabilities related to nuclear deterrence and promote nuclear introduction and nuclear sharing.

- ① In order to promote consultation and cooperation with the U.S. side on nuclear operations, even to the point of promoting nuclear introduction and nuclear sharing with Japan, it is necessary to improve expertise on nuclear weapons within the Self-Defense Forces.
- ② To this end, it is necessary to dispatch Self-Defense Forces' personnel to the U.S. military field units that operate, maintain, and manage nuclear weapons (the U.S. Strategic Command, nuclear submarine and strategic bomber units, etc.) and train experts familiar with the U.S. nuclear strategy, operational planning, C4ISR, logistics, maintenance and storage, etc.
- ③ In addition, Japan and the U.S. need to commonize their security clearance systems (operations, communications, information, and personnel) to enable the above. In particular, sufficient reinforcement of cyber security is required on the Japan side.
- ④ At the same time, the SDF should explore options for contributing to Japan-U.S. nuclear operational cooperation. These include escorting U.S. bombers (B-2, B-52H, B-21, etc.) with

JASDF fighters, conducting aerial refueling, and supporting U.S. nuclear submarine operations with the Maritime Self Defense Force's anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities.

- ⑤ In the future, as mentioned in **【Recommendation 2】**, Japan should modify its three non-nuclear principles and seek to realize bringing nuclear weapons into Japan, including allowing U.S. nuclear submarines equipped with SLCM-N to make port calls. In addition, consideration should be given to starting preparations for equipments (including making JASDF's F-35A fighters dual-capable aircrafts = DCAs), storage facilities, and handling personnel with the support of the U.S. forces in order to enable nuclear sharing or deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in Japan. In doing so, however, attention should be paid to the enhancement of security measures related to nuclear weapons and to build the resilience of command and control.
- ⑥ Japan should also announce the deployment of theater-range, ground-based missiles (including hypersonic weapons) with U.S. conventional warheads in Japan. At the same time, Japan should explore the possibility of developing and deploying similar missiles with nuclear warheads, although the U.S. has no such plans at this time. Furthermore, using such deployment as a bargaining tool, negotiations with China on arms control related to this type of forces should also be explored, as discussed in **【Recommendation 15】** below.
- ⑦ Japan and the U.S. should also consider the possibility of joint development of hypersonic missiles.
- ⑧ Japan and the U.S. should promote missile defense cooperation in regard with the regional deterrence architecture in response to the U.S. Trump administration's "Golden Dome for America Initiative."

(3) Preparedness and Review in Japan

【Recommendation 8】 Re-organize the Prime Minister's decision-making chain in contingency.

- ① In the event of contingency, the Prime Minister, as the supreme leader of the Japanese government and at the same time the supreme commander of the SDF, should be briefed on the Chinese government's foreign and war guidance policy, timely information on Chinese military dynamics, the U.S. government foreign and war guidance policy, SDF/U.S. military operations, and developments in the governments and forces of like-minded countries and neutral countries. It is necessary to brief the Prime Minister through the National Security Secretariat and to make the military brief through the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a timely and appropriate manner, and to obtain the Prime Minister's decision on important matters.
- ② To this end, it is necessary for the National Security Secretariat, the Ministry of Defense and the Self-Defense Forces, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prepare and train for contingency responses from peacetime.
- ③ In case the Prime Minister be killed in a decapitation attack by the opponent, etc., it is necessary to establish in advance who will assume supreme command of the SDF and the

pecking order. Another issue is survivability hardening of the Prime Minister's Office and other decision-making bases to prevent the decapitation strike itself.

[Recommendation 9] Strengthen the contingency response functions of the Prime Minister's Office.

- ① Establish a special command post to deal with the situation within the Prime Minister's Office with a high-level of security clearance measures to deal with the situation. In the event of contingency, the Prime Minister and the Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff should always be at the Office and be able to grasp the situation of the SDF, U.S. forces, Chinese forces, etc., not only in the Japan's mainland and surrounding sea areas, but also in Taiwan and the Philippines, which are included in the front line of the theater like Japan, and in China, the East China Sea, the South China Sea, and Northwest Pacific, which are included in a wider theater, at the same level as the central command post established at the Ministry of Defense.
- ② In addition, a secret hotline with a high-level of encryption between the Prime Minister and the U.S. President will be established to enable the sharing of information between Japan and the U.S.

[Recommendation 10] Acquisition of early warning intelligence and development of a decision-making system between Japan and the U.S.

- ① It is necessary to develop a decision-making system to report early warning intelligence obtained from the U.S. (e.g., intelligence on nuclear weapon launches by opponent) to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs for a decision, and to communicate Japan's response to the U.S. side. In particular, it is necessary to develop a decision-making mechanism between the leaders of Japan and the U.S. regarding whether or not to launch a counterstrike with U.S. nuclear weapons. It should be noted that in the event of a nuclear attack on U.S. forces or the U.S. mainland simultaneously with an attack on the Self-Defense Forces, the time available for consultation from the U.S. side to the Japanese side would be very short.
- ② In addition, it is necessary to prepare in advance decision-making procedures of the Japan's National Security Council to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to various changes that may occur after a nuclear weapon is launched by an opponent.
- ③ The SDF's own early warning capabilities must also be improved, such as by possessing early warning satellites.

[Recommendation 11] Strengthen intelligence functions in preparation for contingency

- ① It is necessary to strengthen the intelligence posture to contribute to the Prime Minister's decision-making in preparation for contingencies. Japan's intelligence community (Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office in Cabinet Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, National Police Agency, Public Security Intelligence Agency, Ministry of

Economy, Trade and Industry, Ministry of Finance, Japan Coast Guard, Financial Services Agency, Immigration Services Agency, and other ministries) must be strengthened from peacetime so that they can respond in times of war.

- ② In particular, there is an urgent need to expand the military section of the Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office in Cabinet Secretariat. All-source analysis should be used to analyze the situation at the national level in the event of Taiwan contingency and to be able to create a unified view for a brief to the Prime Minister. In this way, it will be possible to constantly coordinate analysis with the top intelligence agencies of the U.S., led by the Director of National Intelligence, as well as with the top intelligence agencies of Western countries in the event of contingency.
- ③ In addition, it is necessary to further expand and enhance the capabilities of the Defense Intelligence Headquarters (DIH) in the Ministry of Defense, which becomes the key in military intelligence collection and analysis in a contingency. In particular, the expansion of intelligence capabilities in the cyber, space, and cognitive domains is an urgent issue. The collection, analysis, distribution, etc. of intelligence for the purpose of supporting such military operations must be expedited and must also respond to the operational speed of the U.S.
- ④ The U.S. and Japan need to promote further sharing of intelligence, including on China's intentions and capabilities. Japan and the U.S. should consider conducting annual intelligence and trend analysis in extended deterrence consultations. There should also be coordination between Japan and the U.S. on the release of information as appropriate for deterrence purposes.

[Recommendation 12] Explanation of Japan's nuclear related policies to the public.

- ① The Japanese government needs to develop a Japan-U.S. common extended deterrence strategy (de-classified version) for Japan and the United States and explain it to the public.
- ② The contents of the above strategy includes: 1) Japan, as the only country in the world which had been bombed with nuclear weapons, should continue to uphold the ideal of nuclear abolition; 2) as a non-nuclear weapon state under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, Japan continues the peaceful use of nuclear energy under the strict inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); 3) Japan, surrounded by nuclear weapon states under the totalitarian regime of China, North Korea, and Russia, and at risk from contingency in Taiwan, needs to make clear its position that it will take all necessary measures for extended deterrence under the Japan-US alliance until the abolition of nuclear weapons is achieved on a global scale.
- ③ The government must explain to the public how nuclear intimidation and the use of nuclear weapons by foreign nations can be deterred and must secure public assurance. In particular, the government shall strive to gain the public's understanding of the above-mentioned modification of three non-nuclear principles.

(4) International Risk Reduction Efforts

【Recommendation 13】 Advocate for the initiation of arms control and disarmament negotiations among the U.S., China, and Russia.

- ① Considering the reality that China is rapidly increasing the number of nuclear warheads, it is necessary for Japan to consider how nuclear arms control and disarmament should be after the realization of nuclear parity between the U.S. and China.
- ② In consultation with the U.S., Japan should advocate a U.S.-China framework (including the possibility of trilateral arms control negotiations among China, Russia, and the U.S.) with full transparency and minimum level of mutual trust, modeled after the U.S.-Russia nuclear arms control regime.
- ③ Japan and the U.S. should send a firm message to China and Russia that the use or the intimidation of use of nuclear weapon is an unforgivable crime and will never be tolerated by the international community, and that “the use of nuclear weapons is the use of nuclear weapons,” even if they are not strategic nuclear weapons but low-yield nuclear weapons.

【Recommendation 14】 Establish nuclear strategic consultations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

- ① The geographical scope to which NATO's Article 5 “collective defense obligation” of the treaty applies is defined as the continent of Europe and North America, and does not include Hawaii and Guam. On the other hand, the application of the geographical scope to nuclear deterrence and the outer space domain is unclear, and NATO's nuclear deterrence against China's nuclear weapons is not yet established. In addition, if China's nuclear weapons have enough range to reach the U.S. mainland, NATO's nuclear deterrence against China needs to function, and the Chinese nuclear threat to Japan can be mitigated by positioning the nuclear deterrence of the Japan-U.S. alliance as an extension of that. Strategic consultations from this perspective should be initiated with NATO.

【Recommendation 15】 Advocating abolition of theater-range missiles in Northeast Asia

- ① As a long-term issue, Government of Japan should advocate a six-party framework in Northeast Asia, similar to the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty that Prime Minister Nakasone once advised the U.S. President Reagan to realize, in which Japan, the U.S., China, Russia, South Korea, and North Korea would join.
- ② At the same time, unless such a framework is established, Japan needs to clarify its policy that improving extended deterrence capability is necessary and it will proceed with the development and deployment of theater-range missiles, as mentioned in **【Recommendation 7】**.

After word

The decision on the use of nuclear weapons is the most important and most difficult strategic decision which requires a presidential decision for the United States, the only nation which had used nuclear weapons. This is also a very sensitive issue for Japan as the only country to have suffered atomic bombings. At the same time, we must not forget that strengthening the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence is an urgent issue for Japan that affects the survival of the nation and its citizens. In responding to the use of nuclear weapons (including the intimidation of it) against Japan, it is necessary to ensure and make clear in advance that under any circumstances, all response measures, including the use of nuclear weapons by the United States, will be taken.

(End)

3

SPF Japan-U.S. Alliance Extended Deterrence Workshop 2025

Summary of the Statements and Discussions, March 7-8, 2025, Honolulu

*This meeting was conducted under the Chatham House Rule, and this record is a summary of the statements and discussions of the participants.

[Session 1]

● Scenario of nuclear intimidation/use of nuclear weapons by China

- There are 2 primary scenarios that we have to focus on the China's intimidation or use of nuclear weapons.
- Nuclear threats with the aim of preventing Japan and the U.S. from intervening in the Taiwan Strait contingency, which also has an element of cognitive warfare (the threat that if Japan intervenes in the Taiwan Strait contingency, China will not apply the no first-use policy of nuclear weapons to Japan).
- Nuclear use if China is defeated by conventional forces, including a U.S.-Japan strike on its amphibious operations capability to land Taiwan.
- When the CCP government uses force on the Taiwan issue, it will be a battle that cannot be lost. If it fails, the question of the survival of CCP rule will arise. At that time, the probability of using nuclear weapons increases for the sake of national prestige and the survival of the CCP.
- On the other hand, as in the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979, China may accept defeat in a face-saving way, saying that it has punished Taiwan, even if it loses in a conventional war.
- Regarding the declaration of no first-use of nuclear weapons. China may change its declaration quickly depending on the reality of the conflict. On the other hand, the thinkings of PLA officers comfortable with Western deterrence theory and that of China's Supreme Leader may be different (for the latter, a quick change of declaration may be less likely).
- With the expansion of China's nuclear arsenal, it can be said that the nuclear balance between the U.S. and China has been upset around the Ryukyu Islands, which may be a sign that even if China says it will not employ the first-use of nuclear weapons, it will use them in the contingency.
- Since China's goal is to dislodge the U.S. influence in the Western Pacific theater, it may not gamble on a nuclear war with the U.S., which means that China would not use nuclear weapons in a Taiwan Strait contingency.
- Since China's conventional forces in the Indo-Pacific theater have been strengthened, the pressure to employ the first-use of nuclear weapons may not be strong.

- It should be noted that while the use of nuclear weapons should be considered as a last resort in general, it is not the only way of thinking. Some opponents including China might choose the first or early use of nuclear weapons.
- Given the limited damage associated with the use of low-yield nuclear weapons, the threshold for nuclear use by China might be low. Still, the focus will be on whether the U.S. and Japan can say, “Nuclear use is nuclear use.”

● Scenario of nuclear use by the U.S.

- How would the U.S. respond to China’s use of nuclear weapons? If Japan is attacked, the U.S. will consult with Japan. But if an attack on Japan were to coincide with an attack on the U.S. mainland, the time for consultation may be extremely limited. If there is time to deliberate, the president has many questions to be answered.
- If China launches a low-yield nuclear attack on Okinawa, the Japanese people’s response will be “to fight back against China by using a nuclear weapon.” Japan’s prime minister would probably take public opinion into account and ask the U.S. to use nuclear weapons, but would the U.S. be willing to do so? At the same time, the U.S. declaratory policy makes no difference between the deterrence on the U.S. and its allies. The nuclear attack on Okinawa would also kill many Americans as well.
- STRATCOM’s analysis of over 400 scenarios found no case of nuclear first-use by the U.S. The U.S. will unlikely execute the nuclear first-use to change the course of initial conventional success by China in invading Taiwan, instead opting for conventional escalation, both in intensity and time, as well as other subsequent measures.
- In what way can Japan participate in the decision to use nuclear weapons?
 - That would be a sovereign decision of the U.S. Allied input is important, but the decision itself will be the U.S. president’s. To support the President’s decision-making, there is a formal process that would be participated by the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Security Adviser, Director of National Intelligence, Commander of Strategic Command, Commander of other Combatant Commands, etc.
- STRATCOM is responsible for planning tactical nuclear operations. INDOPACOM prepares for war with conventional forces, and coordinates with STRATCOM on the employment of nuclear weapons.
- Nuclear consultations in peacetime between the U.S. and Japan should be established as a formal structure.
 - It would be good to expand the pre-existing Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) and 2+2.
 - Political participation is important in addition to military participation.
- Nuclear consultations in wartime also require official process. The existing process is not tailored for this purpose.

- When Japan possesses a counter-strike capability, it will be important to coordinate the conventional strike on China, and to consider the nuclear implications of these attacks. The nuclear dimension must be discussed between Japan and the U.S., since the operation of conventional forces will affect the nuclear dimension.
- The SDF does not have sufficient knowledge or experience in nuclear operations and counter-strike operations. Education and training are necessary. The U.S. also faces the new challenge from China's expansion of nuclear arsenal. Thus, it is a good opportunity to improve Japan and U.S.'s nuclear IQ jointly.

[Session 2]

● History of forward-deployed U.S. nuclear weapons

The U.S. nuclear weapons had been deployed to allied territories since 1954; many forward-deployed during the Cold War. Tactical nuclear weapons withdrawn from overseas except for a small number of European nuclear weapons by PNI in 1991; 97% withdrawn. TLAM/N stored on mainland, to be redeployed only in times of crisis/war; retired in 2010.

● U.S. declaratory policy

"The U.S. would consider employing nuclear weapons only in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the U.S. and its allies and partners." There is an element of calculated ambiguity. With respect to ROK and both Japan and ROK, there are specific additional statements related to DPRK.

● The 2025 Mix of U.S. capabilities for extended deterrence

It is 1991 force level minus TLAM-N. Future introduction of SLCM-N. Options for enhanced extended deterrence include three elements: "declaratory policy," "operations," and "capabilities." Regarding capability, it includes the deployment of dual-capable theater missiles.

● Other issues

- Japan's three non-nuclear principles can be changed at the discretion of the current administration in accordance with Foreign Minister Okada's 2010 answer in the Diet, which also enables nuclear submarines equipped with SLCM-N to make port calls.
- SLCM-N deployment will be probably realized in about 10 years. But, with the appropriate authority and budget, it could be accomplished in less than 5 years.
- It might be possible to put nuclear warheads on (land-based) LRHW and (sea-based) CPS, which are theater-range hypersonic missiles. It is technically feasible to develop a nuclear warhead to be mounted on a hypersonic missile.
- What exercises are conducted in the U.S. related to the use of nuclear weapons?

- At the level of the Joint Forces, led by STRATCOM, numerous exercises are conducted at the operational level, but the participation of high-level decision makers is limited.
- Conventional hypersonic missiles are now being placed on surface ships (Zumwalt-class destroyer). The U.S. has plans to deploy the theater-range missiles with conventional warheads in the first island chain or the remote islands. INDOPACOM is interested in whether Japan and the Philippines are prepared to accept such conventional missiles. The U.S. has no plans to deploy missiles with nuclear warheads, while there would be a technical option to do so.

【Session 3】

● Intelligence sharing

- Strengthening Japan's intelligence capabilities is recommended. It includes elements such as promoting intelligence sharing regarding China's capabilities, doctrine, etc., and expanding the current 5 EYES intelligence cooperation framework (including the U.S., U.K., Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) to 6 EYES with the addition of Japan.
- Increased intelligence sharing depends on continuing improvement of Japan's information security system.
- How can the U.S. provide Japan with information that China is considering a nuclear strike on Japan?
- Both Japan and the U.S. have intelligence about Chinese motives and capabilities, and it benefits from the improved sharing.
- Japan's intelligence system is weak. Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office (CIRO) is run by the police. There is no military section. Military specialists are needed. There should be a collective intelligence organization within the Ministry of Defense. Japan has no tradition of using intelligence in decision-making. There is nothing about early warning intelligence.
- It may be necessary to coordinate and publicize intelligence between Japan and the U.S. to deter China.
- There is a large gap between Japan and the U.S. technical capabilities in intelligence. Japan must increase its ability of rapid intelligence that contributes to military operations, and it must match the tempo of the U.S.
- It is important to develop an annual intelligence analysis product or trend analysis in the Japan-U.S. extended deterrence dialogue.
- The role of the Defense Intelligence Headquarters (DIH) of MOD is to support J-2 activities of JJOC. In the STRATCOM, STRATCOM J-2 compiles intelligence. There are existing STRATCOM information analyses that could be considered to share with Japan.

[Session 4]

● Operational and targeting concepts for the use of nuclear weapons in a Taiwan Strait contingency

- Stakeholders need to share ideas about crises and conflicts during peacetime. What does China value most in a Taiwan Strait contingency? If the survival of the CCP government depends on the annexation of Taiwan once a conflict has started, China cannot be deterred by peripheral threats, in which case the only way to deter China is through denial, not punishment (or cost-imposition). These discussions need to take place before the crisis.
- The U.S. uses the nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes, not for war-fighting.
- Employment of nuclear weapons at sea is fundamentally different from employment on land. The threshold for nuclear use at sea might be lower than for the use on land, due to the scarcity of radioactive fallout over densely populated areas and other factors. The use of weapons at sea is typically associated to war-fighting purposes, not deterrence.
- Regarding the communication on deterrence between the U.S. and China: There has been a communications framework between the U.S. and Russia since the Cold War, based on many years of strategic arms limitations negotiations. There have been no similar extended discussions between the U.S. and China. The U.S. may overestimate its ability to control escalation. With China and Russia, any escalation is possible. The U.S. must be humble on the issue of escalation control.
- According to their respective doctrines, unlike Russia, the use of nuclear weapons would be a last resort for China. The hurdle for China to use nuclear weapons for the purpose of escalation control seems high.
 - Russia's idea of "escalate to de-escalate" does not seem to exist in China.
- To deter Russia's limited use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine, the U.S. told it that the use of nuclear weapons is an unforgivable crime, and the international community will not tolerate it. The same approach could be used against China.
- China has emphasized the concept of "War Control" , which is slightly different from escalation control. It has a strong political control component.
- When China uses nuclear weapons, it will take the expected U.S. response as a result into account. So, based on such Chinese thinking, the U.S. needs to prepare a response that will make China reconsider its actions and become more restrained.
- In response to Chinese nuclear attack on Okinawa, the U.S. would consider the counterstrikes to deny China its most important interest in the conflict - the ability to invade Taiwan successfully.
- China may use nuclear weapons as a demonstration or test.
 - The U.S. has considered nuclear demonstrations and sees no advantage in conducting a demonstration during crisis or conflict.

- It is very difficult to determine how much cost should be levied on China to restore deterrence.
- Is Japan interested in making the Japanese F-35A a DCA?
 - There is a balancing between increasing deterrence and the risk of preventive strike from the opponent. But it is technically possible.
- Options for Japan-U.S. operational nuclear cooperation include escorting the U.S. B-52s with JASDF fighter jets and making aerial refueling.
- Based on Japan's capabilities, it would be possible to have its own nuclear weapons, but it would be expensive and time consuming. U.S. support would be essential. In reality, an independent nuclearization would require Japan to withdraw from the NPT, a development that would cut off nuclear fuel supplies and shut down nuclear power plants, so it is desirable to strengthen extended nuclear deterrence rather than to pursue the independent nuclear weapons state.
- It will contribute to strengthen extended deterrence to build a nuclear warhead storage facility in Misawa for the F-35A DCA, then to accept the deployment of the SLCM-N (by nuclear submarine port call), and to accept the deployment of a ground-launched intermediate-range nuclear missiles.
- Deployment of ground-launched intermediate-range nuclear missiles in the Ryukyu Islands could strike inland China, and the double-zero option seen at the time of the INF Treaty could also be pursued. However, deployment in Okinawa would be politically costly.
- There could be a Japan-U.S. joint development of hypersonic missiles.
- When the U.S. installs SLCM-N on its submarines, Japan should modify its three non-nuclear principles and say it will accept port calls from submarines that can launch these missiles. However, introduction to Japan requires security of nuclear weapons and a robust C2. Such issues need to be resolved.
- The operation of Japan's counter-strike capability needs to be done in conjunction with the operation of U.S. forces. Japanese operations need to be coordinated with the U.S.
- Will the introduction of AI undermine the stability of deterrence?
 - It may facilitate understanding of the situation pertaining to nuclear weapons by assisting in monitoring the situation.
 - But Human judgment is still important.
 - Reliance on AI may make assured destruction less assured, which may create incentives for pre-emptive strikes.
 - Even if AI is introduced, the "hide/find" competition will continue.
- Can we have this type of discussion today with Taiwan as well as the U.S. and Japan? How about the Philippines?
 - From STRATCOM's perspective, dialogue with the Taiwanese would be very different from dialogue with our ally Japan.

- Even if there is no reference to Taiwan or other allies/partners in the declaratory policy, that is a calculated ambiguity.

[Session 5]

● Backup

- When we go to war with China, we need to deter the expansion of opportunistic aggression in the outside of theater, which is where NATO comes in.
- The Trump administration is unlikely to conduct the usual year-long Nuclear Posture Review. Instead, it will likely rely on an Executive Order, which may well already exist in the draft. Thus, the time is now for Japan to express its views about the value of extended deterrence and about the steps that the U.S. and Japan can take separately and together to strengthen nuclear deterrence.
- How high is the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons for U.S. politicians?
 - The threshold for the use of nuclear weapons is extremely high in the U.S. It is only when “vital interests” are at stake. There is a strong incentive to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterrence, which is a bipartisan phenomenon.
- The Trump administration put a renewed emphasis on the Missile Defense, including the initiative of “Iron Dome” (renamed and now called the “Golden Dome for America” initiative). There will likely be increased American investment in global missile defense, including which in the regional deterrence architecture.
- Is drone operation possible in Taiwan defense? It requires a longer range than land operations.

(End)

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National Security and Japan-U.S. Program

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-To make the “nuclear umbrella” be real-**

Published: June 2025

Publisher: Sasakawa Peace Foundation

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