

Japanese Engagement in Maritime Security and Safety in the Asia Pacific Region -History and Perspective-

May 13th, 2009

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Introduction

In this paper I will discuss following items as maritime security and safety issues: navigational safety, search and rescue, piracy, maritime terrorism, disaster relief, counter-proliferation such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and general security issues. Environment and fishery problems are not discussed here.

Japanese engagement in maritime security and safety in the Asia Pacific region should be learned in two periods.

In the latter half of the 20th century the main players were the private sector and the Japan Coast Guard (JCG). The objectives included navigational safety, search and rescue and disaster relief.

Since the beginning of the 21st century the JCG has become a major player particularly for combating against piracy while the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) has emerged as another player. The private sector still continues to play important roles. Piracy, maritime terrorism, large scale disasters and counter-proliferation have become main issues to be dealt with.

In this paper I will trace Japanese initiatives for and engagement in maritime security and safety in the Asia Pacific region. Japanese engagement through international frameworks will be discussed in the final part of this paper.

I . In the half latter of the 20th century

A. Securing the safety of the Malacca-Singapore Straits

In this period securing the safety of the Malacca-Singapore Straits was the main maritime security/safety issue for Japan. The straits were an indispensable lifeline for Japan's economy, and securing safe navigation was a vital national interest of Japan.

Initiatives for navigational safety were, however, taken first by the private sector. In 1969 the Malacca Strait Council, a private body strongly supported by the Nippon Foundation, started projects for navigational safety, such as wreck removals, dredging, installation and maintenance of aids to navigation, hydrographic survey and chart compiling, and donation of buoy tenders. The Council has donated a total of US\$ 130million for 40 years since then.¹

The JCG began hydrographic survey and chart compiling in 1969. In 1990s, the JCG began a new hydrographic survey after a collision of large tankers in the Andaman Sea with a spill of 300,000 kiloliters of clued oil. It was an official development aid (ODA) program led by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and conducted from 1995 to 1998. As a result, an electric navigation chart which had been strongly requested to be compiled was introduced in 1999.²

In 1997 the JCG dispatched experts to the IMO Maritime Safety Council to actively discuss the Traffic Separation Scheme for the Malacca-Singapore Straits. The system came into effective in 1998.

B. General activities of the JCG for maritime security and safety

The JCG was established just after the end of the World War II with support from the U.S. Coast Guard. It has developed as one of the main law enforcement organizations for maritime safety and order. The Imperial Army and Navy were dissolved by the Allied Occupation. It took nine years since then to reorganize the military forces in Japan, as the Self Defense Force.

General activities conducted by the JCG related to maritime security and safety in the Asia Pacific region include inviting trainees, dispatching experts for technical cooperation and conducting navigational safety development survey. All these activities started in 1960's as JICA-led aid programs which contributed to strengthening maritime safety authorities in the region. In 1999, for example, 31 trainees from the region joined training courses in Japanese Coast Guard Academy and also 31 experts were dispatched to countries in the region.³

¹ White Paper on Ocean Policy 2005, *KAIYO HAKUSYO* 2005, Ship and Ocean Foundation, p.100

² 1999 Annual Report on Maritime Safety, 1999 *KAIJOHOAN HAKUSYO*, p.195-197

³ 2000 Annual Report on Maritime Safety, 2000 *KAIJOHOAN HAKUSYO*, p.183-184

With regard to saving lives the JCG has a major responsibility for search and rescue based on the International Convention regarding Search and Rescue at Sea of 1979 (SAR). Japan promoted international cooperation by introducing bilateral SAR agreements. Japan concluded SAR agreements with the United States in 1986 and with South Korea in 1990. Russia and Japan reached an agreement to introduce a guideline for search and rescue in 1994.⁴

Japan took initiative to hold a search and rescue experts meeting among Russia, South Korea and Japan in 1995. China joined it in 1996. In 2005 the four countries executed a joint exercise for search and rescue in the water area off Maizuru in the middle west of Japanese mainland, entitled “RESCUE SPIRIT MAIZURU 2005”.⁵

C. JMSDF activities in the period

The Japan Defense Agency (JDA: now Defense Ministry) had exchange programs for defense officers, students and researchers in the period. They were not, however, clearly aimed at Japanese engagement in maritime security and safety in the Asia Pacific region. They were just ordinary exchange programs which are conducted by other countries.

I want to point out an initiative taken by the JDA in 1990s. In 1996 the JDA launched a multilateral security meeting entitled now “the Forum for Defense Authorities in the Asia-Pacific Region (Tokyo Defense Forum)”. It was aimed at contributing to the stability of the region by deepening mutual understanding of defense policies among member countries. Around 20 countries in the region participate in the forum every year and they regard the forum as very meaningful. I have to say, however, that it does not necessarily focus on maritime security issues.⁶

The renewal of the National Defense Program Outline in 1995⁷ should be taken into account as it stated that contribution to the creation of a more stable security environment was necessary. That intended to increase participation in international peace cooperation such as the United Nations Peace Keeping Operation (PKOs), but maritime security in the Asia Pacific region was less envisioned in 1990's.

⁴ 1997 Annual Report on Maritime Safety, *1997 KAIJOHOAN HAKUSYO*, p.159-161

⁵ 2006 Annual Report on Maritime Safety, *2006 KAIJOHOAN REPORT*, p.23

⁶ Defense of Japan 2008, Ministry of Defense, p.308

⁷ National Defense Program Outline in and after FY 1996, adopted by the Security Council and by the Cabinet on November 28, 1995

II. In the beginning of the 21st century

A. JCG's responses to piracy and terrorism

On October 1999 a Japanese shipping company owned commercial ship MV *Alondra Rainbow* was hijacked by pirates in the Malacca-Singapore Straits. The JCG contacted authorities of related countries while dispatching patrol ships and exchanging information. The hijacked ship was found in the Indian Ocean three weeks after. The pirates changed the name of the ship to MV *Megarama*, but were apprehended by the Indian Navy and Coast Guard after a hot pursuit.⁸ The incident had a large influence, among Japanese public and Japanese people became concerned about piracy in the region.⁹

Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi announced at an ASEAN meeting held at the end of 1999 the establishment of a special international consultative body to tackle the piracy problem. On April 2000 Japanese government hosted the first meeting of the Regional Conference on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships. Fifteen countries participated in the meeting and “Asia Challenge against Piracy in 2000” was adopted.¹⁰ The JCG dispatched ships and aircraft to the area for patrol on the high seas, conducted combined exercises and hold related seminars and meetings.¹¹

As necessity of taking strong initiatives over terrorism has been often discussed since the September 11th the JCG launched a “Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting” in 2004. The meeting adopted a guideline “2004 Asia Maritime Security Initiative” aimed at information exchange and collaboration in initiatives for maritime terrorism.¹² The Nippon Foundation financially supported the meeting.

At the same time the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the JCG collaborated to establish a piracy related information sharing system in the region. The Regional Cooperation

⁸ John De Silva, “Piracy, Terrorism, Disaster, Illegal Activities and Transnational Ocean Crimes”, Japan-India Dialogue on Ocean Security, Ship and Ocean Foundation, March 2004

⁹ A Japan flagged ship IDATEN was attacked by piracy in the Malacca-Singapore Straits on May, 2005 which brought also a big impact to Japanese politics.

¹⁰ 2006 Annual Report on Maritime Safety, *2006 KAIJOHOAN REPORT*, p.20

¹¹ Reference for the first Tokyo Seminar on Common Security Challenges: Future Cooperation among Defense Authorities in the Region, organized by the Ministry of Defense Japan, March 18, 2009

¹² See note 11.

Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) was agreed in 2004 and came into effect in 2006. Fourteen countries are now its members. The Information Sharing Center was established in Singapore and started its operations in 2006.¹³

B. Other JCG's international cooperation activities

The JCG established a special head of coast guard meeting in the North Pacific area in 2000. The North Pacific Coast Guard Forum started under initiative taken by Japan in which the United States, Russia, South Korea, Canada, China and Japan participated. The forum is aimed at enhancing cooperation and mutual understanding among those coast guards with experts meetings covering six issues including piracy and maritime terrorism.¹⁴ When it was held in Japan the Nippon Foundation financially supported it through the Ocean Policy Research Foundation.

Japan has actively participated in the PSI which was advocated by U.S. president George W. Bush in 2003. Japan considers the PSI as relevant to peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region taking consideration of North Korean nuclear and missile programs. JCG patrol ships have participated in the PSI maritime interdiction exercises. Japan hosted such exercises twice: Team Samurai 04 and Pacific Shield 2007.¹⁵

What is worthy of note with regard to JCG's activities in this period was aids to establishment of coast guard in countries in the region.

The Philippine Coast Guard became independent from the Navy in 1998. As they suffered from shortage of human resources and lacked knowledge and experience as a coast guard Japan dispatched many experts for capacity building.

With regard to Malaysia a new organization, Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, was established in 2005. The JCG dispatched experts responding to the Malaysian government's strong request.

As too many ministries and agencies are engaged in maritime security and safety in Indonesia, it has been long discussed that a coordinating mechanism is necessary as the

¹³ ReCAAP: Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, Homepage for Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/kaiyo/kaizoku_gai.html

¹⁴ See note 10.

¹⁵ The PSI Maritime Interdiction Exercises in the sea off Sagami Bay in October 2004 and in Izu-Oshima Eastern Sea in October 2007

first step. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono directed the introduction of a coordination agency, BAKORKAMLA, in 2005 and the agency started its operations the same year.¹⁶ The process is understood as a step toward the establishment of a coast guard and Japan gave advice for it..

Donation of vessels

The Japanese government provided three patrol vessels to Indonesian Sea Police for strengthening her law enforcement capability in 2007.¹⁷ The Nippon foundation has provided maintenance vessels to Indonesia and Malaysia for keeping the safety of the Malacca-Singapore Straits. The Foundation also provided a training ship to Malaysia in 2006.¹⁸

C. Activities conducted by the JMSDF

Given the September 11th attacks on the United States Japan introduced an Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law and dispatched naval ships to the Indian Ocean to provide a refueling and other logistic support to the U.S. ships and other coalition ships engaged in maritime interdiction. This was the first time that the JMSDF contributed to maritime safety outside the Asia Pacific region since the JMSDF conducted minesweeping in the Persian Gulf in 1991.

In 2009 Japan dispatched two destroyers to the waters off Somalia to escort Japanese related commercial ships in the Gulf of Aden from piracy attacks on the high seas. When an antipiracy measure bill now under examination at the Diet, is passed the JMSDF ships will be able to escort all kinds of foreign ships as well.

As far as the PSI exercise is concerned the Japanese government was reluctant to participation of JMSDF ship at first. The policy changed when Japan hosted the joint exercise in Japan: first Team Samurai 04 in 2004 and second Pacific Shield 2007 in 2007. JMSDF ships join PSI exercises together with other countries' vessels after that.

¹⁶ 2006 Annual Report on Maritime Safety, *2006 KAIJOHOAN REPORT*, p.29
Special Report: Japanese International Aids on Marine Affairs, Tokusyu: Umi ni kansuru Nihon no Kokusai Shien, Marine and Safety2006SpringNo.528, Umi no Anzen2006HaruNo.528, p.25

¹⁷ Home page of the Ministry of External Affairs Japan,
<http://www.mofa.go.jp/index.html>

¹⁸ Home page of Nippon Foundation
<http://www.nippon-foundation.or.jp/>

In this period the JMSDF hosted a multilateral maritime security exercise for the first time, Pacific Reach 2002, for submarine rescue drills. The JMSDF also had another multilateral exercise for search and rescue the same year. Then the MSDF began the participating in joint exercises with foreign countries which were not envisioned in the 1990's. The JMSDF participated in a multilateral joint exercise hosted by Singapore and that of MALABAR hosted by India both in 2007.¹⁹

With regard to a multilateral conference the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) should be paid attention from the view point of maritime security and safety in the Asia Pacific region. Navy chiefs of staff of the region gather every other year. The symposium has been held under initiatives by the U.S.. Japan has been involved in the symposium since 1990, but the activities became much important in the beginning of the 21st century. Japan hosted it in 2002.²⁰

III. Perspectives

With regard to the perspective of Japanese engagement in maritime security and safety in the Asia Pacific region I would like to show four points as follows.

First there is a possibility that the JSDF deepens the engagement given the change of security environment in the region. The current defense policy guidelines, the National Defense Program Guidelines, show that cooperation with the international community is vital to the security of Japan and that stability in the region spreading from the Middle East to East Asia is critical to Japan. ²¹

Taking into account that Japanese initiatives in this region are based on the Japan-U.S. alliance, the Joint Statement adopted at the February 2005 U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee should be paid attention although it did not necessarily focus on maritime security issues. It included common strategic objectives in the region.

This trend depends on whether the anti-piracy measures bill is passed and whether a comprehensive bill for international cooperation activities by the JSDF is introduced in near future.

Anyway the JMSDF-led exchange programs and international symposiums will be

¹⁹ Defense of Japan 2008, the Ministry of Defense, p.308

²⁰ Defense of Japan 2004, the Ministry of Defense, p.308

²¹ National Defense Program Guidelines FY2005-, approved by the Security Council and the Cabinet on December 10, 2004

strengthened and implemented more often.

Secondly we will see much more international cooperation conducted by the JCG in particular anti-piracy and anti-terrorism activities. Holding seminars and forums, hosting and participating in joint exercises by sending ships, bilateral talks on maritime security and safety will increase and become important. Particularly the JCG-led aids to establishment of capable coast guard organizations in the region and capacity building programs are also important engagement. The engagement in the safety of the Malacca-Singapore Straits will continue to be conducted in cooperation with the private sector in Japan.

Thirdly diplomatic initiatives through multilateral frameworks will become important both for Japan and the region. There are many multilateral frameworks including ARF, ASEAN, APEC other than what I referred to in this paper. Also each forum has many sub meetings, guidelines and arrangements including ISM, ADMM, ADMM-plus, ACDM, AADMER, SOP, ACCT etc. The important thing is that countries in the region participate in these meetings to promote international cooperation to address regional security and safety agenda. It will become important for Japan to participate actively and constructively in them and lead the collaboration policies.

Finally private sector's roles should be recognized. The Nippon Foundation and its group foundations remain engaged in the safety of the Malacca-Singapore Straits. The Nippon Foundation has an intention of making user industries involved in the process, which is called as the Cooperative Mechanism.²² The Nippon Foundation announced that it would cover one third of the new fund. A burden-sharing among littoral states, user states and user industries are expected. It is being set up based on the UNCLOS article 43 for the first time. User industries join this plan in a voluntary basis on the concept of cooperate social responsibility.²³

The Nippon foundation shows that it has a coordination power and concept to make the private sector involved in the system. They will provide various forums in this field.

²² White Paper on Ocean Policy 2009, Ocean Policy Research Foundation, p.68

²³ United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, article 43