



U.S-Japan alliance: transformation and realignment for the future

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5/10/2007 - **YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan** -- The United States and the Government of Japan have developed a mutual and dedicated military alliance for maintaining peace and stability throughout the Asia-Pacific Theater.

The Security Consultative Committee, which represents the partnership consisted of the U.S. Secretary of State, U.S. Secretary of Defense, Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Japanese Minister of State for Defense.

Secretary of State, the Honorable Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense at that time, the Honorable Donald Rumsfeld appeared on behalf of the United States when the SCC issued a bilateral statement Feb. 19, 2005, at the Pentagon in Washington, D. C. Representing Japan were Yoshinori Ohno, Minister of State for Defense of Japan, and Nobutaka Machimura, Minister of Foreign Affairs. The ministers said both nations shared a strategic vision. They also emphasized carrying on with research concerning mutual goals. Additionally, the SCC increased the level of discussion regarding U.S. forces realigning in Japan.

On Oct. 29, 2005, the SCC released the plan known as "U.S-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future." The allies focused on integration of forces from both nations and they also agreed to move toward consolidating U.S. Forces in Okinawa.

The consequences for 5th Air Force included the Japanese Air Defense Command and associate units repositioning from Fuchu Air Station. SCC arranged to collocate JADC with the headquarters of the 5th Air Force to Yokota Air Base. The Headquarters, U.S. Forces Japan will establish a bilateral and joint operations coordination center at Yokota. USFJ/HQ and 5th AF/HQ share the same building and commander. Thus, this was bold and visionary objective on the part of the SCC to merge key United States and Japanese military leadership at one site.

Moreover, the United States indicated a readiness to consider procedures to assist with the passage of civilian aircraft through Yokota air space. Additionally, the United States emphasized a possible inclination to employ shared-use of Kadena Air Base between the U.S. Air Force and the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force. This arrangement would only be for military purposes at Kadena Air Base. Therefore, the SCC expressed a concentration on effectiveness through efficiency and cooperation with this innovative proposal.

"The desired timeline is to achieve initial operational capability by the end of Japan fiscal year 2010 for the Air Defense Command facility," said Capt. Gary Moore, 5th Air Force A7 civil engineering directorate. "The bilateral Air Operations Coordination Center will be within the ADC facility and completed concurrently."

Mr. Michael Bishop of 5th Air Force Operations/Aviation Affairs provided some details on the civilian use of Yokota air space. "We have already implemented the first phase of the Yokota air space and they are now using the air space on a daily basis since Sept. 29 last year," Mr. Bishop said. "We are also in the negotiation stage for the permanent return of some Yokota air space but that will be contingent on how much progress is made on the CAG [Carrier Air Wing] to Iwakuni relocation."

Therefore, 5th AF is implementing the guidelines of the "U.S-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future," plans. Nonetheless, these are complex action items and both governments are still analyzing the best methods to complete these ambitious goals. However, both parties have agreed to focus on a bilateral approach to maintaining a robust and integrated defense strategy for the Asia-Pacific region.

The SCC met again May 1, and they affirmed their commitment to these objectives. The SCC press release about this session included a statement that summarized the intent of the U.S. and the GOJ concerning these efforts. It states, "The SCC members confirmed that advancing the alliance transformation agenda for security and defense cooperation will contribute to regional and global peace and security."