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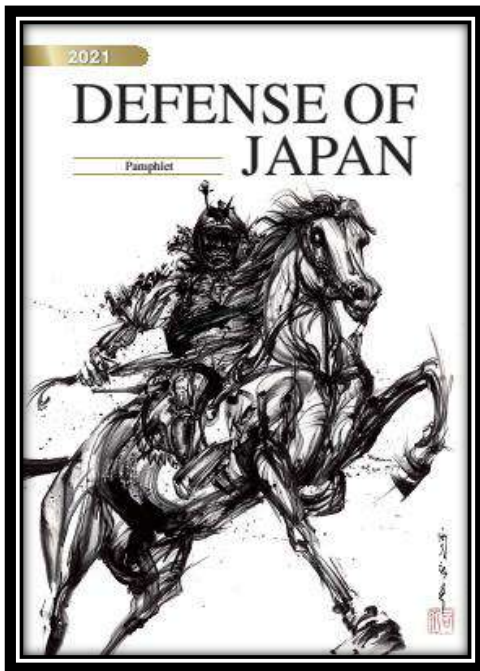
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Japan Defence White Paper 2021 - Key Highlights

Japan's annual defence white paper was released on 13 July. Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi, in his foreword, noted that international order based on universal values has been greatly tested in the past years and various security challenges and destabilizing factors became more tangible and acute. The Security situations around Japan's have been adversely impacted by the twin factors of China's continued unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas and the rapid pace of ballistic missile development of North Korea.



For the first time, the white paper has highlighted growing instability around Taiwan as a major security concern for Tokyo. "Stabilizing the situation surrounding Taiwan is important for Japan's security and the stability of the international community", the Defence Ministry said in its white paper. Therefore, it is necessary for Japan to "pay close attention to the situation with a sense of crisis more than ever before." The White paper also drew attention to the statement by former U.S. Indo-Pacific Command chief Adm. Philip Davidson about the timeline of a possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan in the next six years.

China's relentless attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by coercion in the sea area around the Senkaku Islands was underlined as a matter of grave concern for Tokyo. Last year, Chinese coast guard vessels were spotted near the islands for 111 consecutive days, the longest streak since Japan bought the islets from a private owner and put them under state control in 2012. The paper argued activities of Chinese vessels represent "a violation of international law."

The White paper also flagged that the China Coast Guard Law, which came to force in February, included problematic provisions in terms of their inconsistency with international law. Sources of inconsistency include, among others, ambiguity as to geographical areas the Coast Guard Law applies and how the rules governing the use of weapons are implemented. Japan considered the implementation of the China Coast Guard Law in the East China Sea unacceptable and also an infringement "on the legitimate interests of the relevant countries including Japan".

The white paper noted a trend of increasing activity by Russian armed forces in the vicinity of Japan. The report flagged the second long-distance joint flight of Russian Tu-95 bombers, along with Chinese H-6 bombers from the Sea of Japan to the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean in December 2020 following the first

joint flight in July 2019. These moves were seen “as signs of deepening China-Russia relations.” The report also noted President Putin’s remarks about the theoretical possibility of “the Chinese-Russian military alliance”.

The paper includes a new section focusing on U.S.-China relations, describing the world's two biggest economies as being in a "strategic race" and saying their rivalry will be even more apparent in various fields. As per the paper, competition in technological fields is likely to become even more intense. The technological rivalry poses a challenge for Japan because its economy relies as much on business ties with China as it does with the United States. The Japanese defence white paper also identified the South China Sea as another domain that is key in the US-China rivalry.

The report emphasised Japan’s continued focus on the promotion of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) vision towards achieving a free and open rules-based order “through active cooperation with countries that share Japan’s vision of the FOIP, including not only the United States as our ally, but also Australia, India, European countries including the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, as well as Canada and New Zealand.”

Rwanda Deploys Troops to Mozambique’s Restive Region

Rwanda started deploying a 1,000-strong force in Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique, from 09 July 2021, to assist Maputo in combatting an escalating Islamic State-linked insurgency that threatens its stability. "The Rwandan contingent will support efforts to restore Mozambican state authority by conducting combat and security operations, as well as stabilisation and security-sector reform," the Rwandan government said in a statement. The Rwandan contingent was made up of members of the police force and troops trained "to deal with terrorism and security-related issues in that northern province". The Rwandan contingent will work with the Mozambique Armed Defence Forces and those from SADC "in designated sectors of responsibility", said the statement from Kigali.



Last month, the 16-member Southern African Development Community (SADC) approved the deployment of a joint force to help Mozambique respond to the conflict that is concentrated in the northern Cabo Delgado province. The decision by SADC concluded months

of deliberation within the bloc about regional strategy to stop an insurgency that threatens to destabilise southern Africa. Even though SADC has provisioned a Standby Force mission with 3000 troops and a \$12 million budget, the SADC force has not yet been assembled. As per reports, The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) is concerned about a non-member country's deploying soldiers in the region without its approval and ahead of the bloc's own troops.

Mozambique President Filipe Nyusi has for long resisted suggestions of foreign boots on the ground. In his view, Mozambique should handle certain aspects of the response alone for reasons of sovereignty, and resisted suggestions of foreign boots on the ground. Nyusi has become amenable to the ideas of foreign troops deployment in restive Cabo province due to the significant intensification of insurgency. Still, rather than being solely dependent on SADC, Mozambique has been reaching other countries for military support.

The deployment of Rwandan troops is based on the good bilateral relations between Rwanda and Mozambique following the signing of several agreements in 2018. While Portugal has already been providing training to Mozambique troops, The European Union, on July 12, formally established a military mission for Mozambique to help train its armed forces. "The aim of the mission is to train and support the Mozambican armed forces in protecting the civilian population and restoring safety and security in the Cabo Delgado province," an EU statement said, without giving details on the overall size of the deployment. Lisbon's military instructors on the ground are expected to make up some half of the new EU mission, which will be headed by a Portuguese commander.

The US Threatens Retaliation against Ransomware Groups operating from Russia

The US President Biden held an hour-long phone call with Russian President Putin, on July 09, conveying his impatience with cyber-attacks on key US sectors by ransomware groups operating from Russia. "I made it very clear to him that the United States expects, when a ransomware operation is coming from his soil even though it's not sponsored by the state, we expect them to act if we give them enough information to act on who that is," Biden told reporters. Biden told reporters there would be consequences to Russian inaction. The United States has not indicated how it plans to respond to the attacks emanating from Russia, but Biden hinted at digital retaliation if Russian cooperation was not forthcoming.

Ransomware is a breed of malicious software that hackers use to hold data hostage in exchange for payment. Cybercriminals have used it to paralyze thousands of American organisations and businesses around the world, setting off a series of increasingly high-profile crises. Many of the gangs carrying out the ransomware attacks are alleged by American officials and cybersecurity

researchers to be operating out of Russia with the awareness of Moscow, if not their approval.



On July 02, Hackers last week infiltrated a Florida-based information technology firm Kaseya and deployed a ransomware attack and seized troves of data. The hack of the Kaseya firm, which is already being called “the biggest ransomware attack on record”, has affected hundreds of

businesses globally, including supermarkets in Sweden and schools in New Zealand. Hackers claimed to be affiliates of the Russian hacker group REvil had demanded \$ 70 Million in payment for the restoration of data. In June, REvil had extorted \$ 11 million from JBS, one of the largest meat processing companies in the US, through a ransomware attack. In addition to the attacks by REvil on Kaseya and JBS in recent weeks, another Russia-linked group in May attacked the US fuel transporter Colonial Pipeline.

Internet crime has bedevilled US-Russian relations since the 1990s, but the disruptive power of ransomware has taken the issue to a new level. As attacks escalate, the Biden administration has discussed its domestic and international responses. The White House press secretary, Jen Psaki that senior US officials would meet their Russian counterparts next week to discuss the ransomware problem.

In a related development, Websites on the dark web associated with ransomware gang REvil disappeared on July 13, according to analysts. The reason behind the disappearance is not known but has sparked speculation that the group may have been targeted deliberately by authorities. It is currently not clear if the takedown is a result of American or Russian action. Officials have so far declined to comment. However, cyber experts say sudden disappearances of groups are not necessarily uncommon.