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### **Reception held to commemorate Japanese SDF vessels port call**

A reception was held on Saturday 16 April 2016 to promote friendship between Japan and Australia on the occasion of the call of port in Sydney by Japan Maritime Self Defense Force's (JMSDF) *JS Asayuki*, *JS Umigiri*, and *JS Hakuryu* for the Japan-Australia Bilateral Exercise ("Nichi-Go Trident") at the official residence of the Consul General of Japan in Sydney, Masato Takaoka. This reception was co-hosted by him and Ambassador of Japan to Australia, Sumio Kusaka.

Japan and Australia are special strategic partners in the Asia-Pacific region, and share common values of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, open markets and free trade, and strategic interests. Increasing joint training and exercises was agreed by the ministers of defence and foreign affairs from both Japan and Australia with the aim of enhancing bilateral defence cooperation most recently at the ministerial 2+2 meeting held last November.

Ambassador Kusaka welcomed the visit of these JMSDF vessels as another example of the deepened bilateral cooperation in the field of security and defence. It was the first time for a Soryu-class submarine to pass the equator to come all the way to Australia..

"The Australia-Japan defence relationship is one of Australia's highest priorities for defence engagement", said Commodore Lee Goddard, Commander Surface Forces of the Royal Australian Navy. "It is a relationship Australia is committed to for the long-term".

"The objective of the Bilateral Exercise is to improve our tactical skills and deepen mutual understanding between JMSDF, RAN and RAAF as well as promote our friendly relationship", said Captain Kawakubo, Commander Escort Division 13 and Commander JMSDF dispatched force.

In attendance were members of parliament, academics, executives of the defence industry, Australian Defence Force personnel, Japanese business leaders in Australia as well as the crew of the visiting JMSDF vessels.