

Ambassador's message for the Japan Self-Defense Forces Day
Wednesday 13th October 2021

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Ambassador of Japan to Australia

- Hello everyone. I am YAMAGAMI Shingo, Japan's Ambassador to Australia.
- Every year, the Embassy of Japan holds the Self-Defense Forces Day Reception. This reception is one of the major events of our calendar year, and one that we take a lot of pride in. It's a big deal for us.
- However, COVID-19 and the Delta variant have done their best to stuff up our plans. We had the tents on order, the exhibitions were ready to be set up, and we had prepared a lot of the dishes for which the Embassy and our resident culinary star, Chef Ogata, is famous.
- After postponing once, and hoping that we would be able to go ahead, unfortunately the lockdown extension in the ACT meant this year's Reception couldn't be held in person.
- So, as you can see from this video, now we're coming to you virtually.
- While it might not be the same as drinking a good cup of sake amid the cherry blossoms of my Residence garden, let me use this medium to introduce to you the defence cooperation that Japan and Australia have undertaken together over the past year.
- The relationship between the Japan Self-Defense Forces and the Australian Defence Force is a strong one, and growing stronger.
- We share a special strategic partnership, with shared basic values and strategic interests. Over the past decade, we have been conducting exercises and joint training with one another on an ever expanding scale.

- Take, for example, the SDF's involvement in EXERCISE TALISMAN SABRE this year. I went to Queensland in July to participate in the opening ceremony, where I was with Defence Minister Peter Dutton and Chief of the Defence Force, General Angus Campbell.
- While the scale of this year's exercise was smaller than previous years, the SDF sent ships and troops to take part with participants from across the Indo-Pacific. And it was truly bonzer, as you Aussies might say.
- We've trained together with the ADF and US Marines in the red dust of central Australia as part of EXERCISE SOUTHERN JACKAROO, we've dived beneath the waves in EXERCISE NICHIGO TRIDENT, and we've roared through the air during EXERCISE BUSHIDO GUARDIAN.
- BUSHIDO GUARDIAN is the first time that RAAF fighter pilots have trained in Japan, and marks a major milestone. We've also concluded a memorandum to conduct air-to-air refueling with each other, one of the most difficult training exercises there is, and we've cooperated and learned from each other during peace-keeping activities.
- Japan never forgets its mates, and Australia was there for us when the Great East Japan Earthquake struck back in 2011. We'll never forget that 3 days after the earthquake struck, Australia sent RAAF aircraft and an urban search and rescue team to assist Japan.
- Almost two years ago, during the Black Summer bushfires in Australia, Japan came to our Aussie friends' aid, sending SDF aircraft to help transport people and goods, and to keep an eye on the spread of the fires.
- When you're in strife, that's when you find out who your friends are. We are, without doubt, the best of mates.

- The security environment in our neighbourhood, the Indo-Pacific, has grown more severe in recent years. But I believe that there are many more opportunities for us to cooperate with each other in the future.
- Japan's Prime Minister Kishida Fumio and Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu have unequivocally welcomed the formation of AUKUS.
- I myself believe that this shows decisive leadership by Australia, which will greatly strengthen deterrence in the region. Australian nuclear submarines will provide unprecedented opportunities to deepen defence cooperation between Japan and Australia.
- And the superior range and speed of those submarines will enable them to participate in activities in the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and even the Sea of Japan.
- Japan and Australia are also working towards the early signing of our Reciprocal Access Agreement. Make no mistake. This agreement will be a game-changer in our defence ties, leading to more visits and will bump up the quality and diversity of our joint training and exercises.
- Japan and Australia have relations that go beyond just defence and security. We also share interests with other countries in the region, most notably in the Quad.
- The Quad and AUKUS are mutually complementary initiatives. Both the Quad and AUKUS will make major contributions to the realization of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. We'll also be working with other like-minded nations such as ASEAN and the EU to ensure the peace and stability of this region.

- Japan is so lucky to have such a good mate in Australia. When the chips are down and things look a bit crook, we know that Australia will be there. So celebrate with us this great security relationship, for we are just getting started!
- As we start to come out of lockdown and life gets back to relatively normal, I look forward to welcoming you back to my Residence, where we'll have a real shindig to make up for lost time!
- In the meantime I send my best wishes to you all for your health and happiness.
- Thank you for watching.