

Remarks by H.E Ambassador SUZUKI Kazuhiro on the occasion of the Japan

Self-Defense Forces Day Reception

Wednesday 27 November 2024

Before beginning my remarks, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, and pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

I also want to give a special thanks to the Honourable Dr David Gillespie, Co-Chair of the Australia-Japan Parliamentary Group, who gave his valedictory address to Parliament this week and who will join us later this evening.

We wholeheartedly appreciate his great love for Japan and his long years of contribution as a key member of the Australia-Japan Parliamentary Group.

Lieutenant General Natasha Fox, Chief of Personnel

Colleague Ambassadors, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is both an honour and a pleasure to welcome you all to this reception marking

the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Japan Self-Defense Force.

The Japan Self-Defense Force was formed on 1st July 1954, a time when the Cold War was at its peak.

It was a very different world then.

It would have been impossible for anyone at the time to peer into the future and predict the degree of closeness that characterizes the modern Japan and Australia security relationship.

Our security relationship has evolved dramatically as the global and regional security environment has grown more severe.

The rule of law has been challenged repeatedly in recent years, from North Korea's missile tests to Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

In such times, it becomes necessary for likeminded countries to act to uphold a free and open international order - an order based upon the rule of law.

Japan and Australia are two such countries, joining hands through our 'Special Strategic Partnership' to realize a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

The scope and scale of our defence and security cooperation reflects our dedication to Free and Open Indo-Pacific. To date, we have participated in 33 joint exercises together in an year– 7 of these are bilateral exercises between Japan and Australia, with the others a series of multilateral exercises with allies and likeminded partners.

Just 10 days ago, the Australia-Japan-U.S. Defence Ministers’ Meeting took place in Darwin.

There, the three ministers confirmed the “annual trilateral amphibious training among the ADF, the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force’s Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, and U.S. Marine Rotational Force – Darwin in northern Australia and the Indo-Pacific region, beginning with TALISMAN SABRE 2025”.

Transcending the tragedy of war between Japan and allied forces over Darwin more than 80 years ago, the significance of having the first-ever visit by a Japanese defence minister to that same place, and the decision to regulate future drills between Japan, Australia and the US are truly monumental.

And, all this owes a great debt of gratitude to the service people of both nations

who have dedicated themselves over so many years to make this partnership a success.

We have been joined at this year's 70th anniversary reception by 2 representatives of the Australia-Japan Association of the Northern Territory, who have travelled all the way from Darwin for this event.

We must never forget that it is thanks to the efforts of these locals and their community as a whole, and the dedication they have made to overcome the tragic past to build ties between Japan and Australia, that defence activities by the SDF in Darwin have been willingly accepted.

So thank you Janet and Lauren for making it here from so far away.

Tonight, I have the special honour of presenting the Order of the Rising Sun to retired Lieutenant General Rick Burr, former Chief of Army, the ceremony for which will take place shortly.

I also have the honour of sharing the news of the awarding of the Order of the Rising Sun on retired General Angus Campbell, former Chief of the Defence Force on 3 November. General Campbell received his award in Tokyo.

These awards are fitting recognition of the enormous contribution that these two Australian soldiers have made to furthering our defence relationship.

General Campbell has been a tireless advocate for strengthening the ties between the JSDF and ADF by initiating more frequent and closer consultations with General YOSHIDA Yoshihide, our Chief of Staff of Joint Staff.

They met a total of 6 times during the course of last year, which is a remarkable degree of contact.

Before closing, I would like to express my deep appreciation to all within the Embassy's Defence team.

Once again they have spent the year crossing Australia and hopping the Pacific Islands, hosting delegations, meeting counterparts, attending exercises and conferences.

Tonight also marks the final Self-Defense Forces Day Reception for our Defence and Naval Attaché, Tomo, or Captain AMANUMA and his family, before they return to Japan next year.

AMANUMA-san, please raise your hand. Let us all give him a round of applause.

I'm sure he will go on the bigger and better things, and I'm not just talking about his fishing skills with a lure!

Finally, I offer my prayers that the tireless activities of the JSDF and ADF will continue to contribute to the peace and stability of our region, and to the world.

Thank you.