

**Remarks by His Excellency Ambassador SUZUKI Kazuhiro
on the occasion of the Japan Self-Defense Forces Day Reception
Tuesday 14 October 2025**

Before starting my remarks, I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet, and pay my respects to their elders past, present, and emerging.

Mr David Smith MP, newly elected Chair of the Australia-Japan Parliamentary Group – congratulations, Mr Smith on your new appointment.

Admiral David Johnston, Chief of the Defence Force, your Excellencies and Members of the Services and Attachés Group, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honoured and delighted to welcome you all to tonight's reception to commemorate the 71st anniversary of the establishment of the Japan Self-Defense Force.

On 1st July 1954, the Japan Self-Defense Force came into being at the very height of the Cold War.

In the decades since then, the world has changed in innumerable ways, but one thing that has remained consistent has been the need for like-minded nations to uphold a free and open international order, particularly when facing rampant uses of force in so many corners of the world.

Japan and Australia are two such nations, united through our 'Special Strategic Partnership' and our resolve to ensure the peace and stability of our region.

That point was reinforced during the recent Japan-Australia Defence and Foreign Ministers' 2+2 meeting held in Tokyo. I and a few others gathered here were present at those very productive talks, which took place at the height of a very hot and humid summer in Japan.

However, my colleagues in Japan and at the Australian Embassy in Tokyo had just the thing in mind to tackle the heat – a visit to an Izakaya pub in Yokohama to sample some

craft beer.

All in the cause of advancing the bilateral relationship, of course. And the feedback from the visit was, it was – bloody great!

What this year's 2+2 meeting reflected was the ever-expanding scope of our bilateral security relationship.

Over the past year, Japan and Australian defence forces have participated in a total of 39 exercises together of varying size and scope, bilaterally and multilaterally.

This means that on nearly one day out of every nine over the past year, our defence forces have been engaged in building mutual capability, inter-operability, and friendship somewhere across the world.

Together with mutual allies and partners, we have striven to create a dynamic defence relationship well suited to the challenges of the 21st century.

This year the JSDF sent 1,500 personnel, its largest ever contingent, to participate in Exercise Talisman Sabre, where it conducted its second overseas live-fire of a Type 12 surface-to-ship missile, and joined the AUKUS nations for the first time in conducting UUV exercises at Jervis Bay.

However, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the most significant development in Japan's nascent defence export industry in the modern era.

Australia has selected the Mogami-class for its General Purpose Frigate program.

It is a decision that promises to accelerate Japanese investment in domestic defence industries here, and build the foundation for the mutual growth of our defence industry and technology sectors.

Long story short – it's a big deal, and will benefit both countries for years to come.

To this end, the point that I'd like to emphasize tonight is something I've been pondering during my time in Australia.

Truly, our relationship owes an enormous debt of gratitude to the support shown by people from every level of our societies. You have all played a crucial role in bringing us together and building the modern Japan-Australia relationship.

What has sustained our relationship for so many years, and what has made developments like the Mogami decision and the JSDF's participation in Talisman Sabre possible, can be narrowed down to a single key element – trust.

The trust between the ADF and JSDF can be seen as the silver lining of a broader trust that exists between our two nations.

For proof of this, we can look to this year's Lowy Institute Poll, which showed that for the fifth year in a row, a record 90% of Aussies trust Japan to act responsibly in the world.

That's a level of trust that isn't just built overnight - it reflects decades of patient, respectful engagement, forging ties at the grassroots that underpin any robust bilateral relationship.

It is what contributed to the signing of our Basic Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation, the 50th anniversary of which we will celebrate next year.

It is even more important when we reflect on another anniversary this year – 80 years since the end of the Second World War, and the War in the Pacific.

For four years, Japan and Australia had been locked in ferocious combat across the Pacific and Asia.

The after-effects of that war would make the path to reconciliation a long and arduous one to tread.

But this task was helped enormously by the work done by local governments and community groups here, like the Cowra Shire Council and the Australian Japanese Association of the Northern Territory, or AJANT.

These two fine organizations will soon be awarded the Foreign Minister's

Commendation for their exemplary role in fostering Japan – Australia relations.

It is a reflection of the amount of gratitude felt by Japan towards thousands of Aussies, and many Australia-Japan societies, sister-city promoters, devotees of the tea ceremony and flower arranging, and all Japan-lovers who have done so much to build our ties of friendship and trust.

Trust which now allows Japan and Australia – once enemies – to achieve a level of partnership where we entrust each other with our lives. And that is no small thing.

I also want to take this opportunity to express my sincerest thanks to Mr Matt Anderson, Director of the Australian War Memorial, and to Major General Greg Melick, President of the National RSL.

Both have provided timely advice and assistance to the Embassy over the past years, and I wish to recognize their important contributions to our bilateral relationship and the course of reconciliation.

Thank you, Mr Anderson. Thank you, Major General Melick.

Before wrapping up, I would also like to thank all within the Embassy's defence team for their outstanding work over the past 12 months.

Not only have they crisscrossed this wide brown land, accompanying delegations and visiting contingents, they also helped bring home the big frigate contract for Japan.

Special thanks as well to the members of the Australian Army Band Kapooka, for coming all the way from Wagga to perform at tonight's event.

Hopefully we can make up for the long drive with what's on offer – within reason, of course!

So let's have a round of applause for the Australian Army Band Kapooka.

And I'd also like to thank Chef Takami and his wife Aiko-san as well as our Embassy staff, who have spent weeks preparing for the success of this reception.

Finally, as I do every year, 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 of the world.

Thank you.

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