
Japanese Army Security Assistance Training: Successful and Still Growing

By

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For many years the Japanese have had a very successful Security Assistance training program with the U.S. Army, and all indications are that it will continue to grow in years to come. Their training runs the complete gamut from Professional Military Education (PME) to Annual Service Practice (ASP). Between the Japan Ground Self Defense Force (JGSDF) and the Japan Air Self Defense Force (JASDF), more than 1600 Japanese military students come to the United States each year for training at U.S. Army facilities.

Because of limited space in their country, the Japanese fire their Hawk and Patriot missiles, indigenously produced in Japan under licenses, at McGregor range in Ft. Bliss, TX., and White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. The missile firings serve two purposes: technical tests and operational tactical exercises. Approximately 750 JASDF personnel fire Patriot missiles and 680 JGSDF personnel fire Hawk missiles every year. The Japanese Hawk program recently celebrated its thirtieth year of firing at Ft. Bliss, a testimony to the continuing success of that program.

As an outgrowth of ASP, we have developed a Combined Arms Live Firing Exercise (CALFEX) at Yakima Training Center (YTC) in Ft. Lewis, WA. For two years, a company sized 365 DF task force has fired TOW missiles, Hydra 70 missiles, and 76mm rockets at moving and stationary targets from ground emplaced anti-tank gun crews and from U.S. acquired Cobra attack helicopters. The JGSDF Chief of Staff has visited the exercise and supports the gradual increase of the scope of the exercise. In 1996 JGSDF will deploy their own T-90 tanks to participate in CALFEX. At ENDEX, the Japanese soldiers have been warmly welcomed into the home of the people of Yakima, and they in turn sponsor a Thank You reception, an event greatly anticipated and enjoyed by all.

In addition to the small unit training mentioned above, the Japanese also have a very extensive PME program. Each year, the JGSDF accepts CSA invitations to the Army War College, the Command and General Staff College, and the Sergeants Major Academy, courses for which there is stiff competition to attend among the Japanese military. Since Operation Desert Storm, the Japanese have taken on a limited United Nations peacekeeping mission. Their first experience was in Cambodia and they now have personnel in the Golan Heights. In an effort to be better prepared for these missions, the Japanese schoolhouse training program is being oriented to helicopter rescue and repair, tropical medicine, logistics management, and a new intensified focus on improving English language capability. Additionally many advanced officers courses round out the program. The JASDF concentrates on building operational and maintenance capabilities on Patriot. Students also attend Acquisition Management at Ft. Belvoir and Logistics Management at Ft. Lee, followed by on the job training using these newly learned skills. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs sends five students to DLI Monterey to study Russian as well. Both the U.S. and Japanese Armies benefit from this training from increased awareness of each others capabilities as well as a closer comradeship from shared accomplishments. Additionally the U.S. balance of trade benefits as Japan is an FMS cash paying customer.

During a recent trip to Japan, Bob Osmon, the Country Program Manager from SATFA, Ft. Monroe, VA, paid a visit to MGEN Takao Sakamaki, Director, Education and Training Department, Ground Support Office, Japan Self Defense Force. The purpose was to discuss successes of FMS training in the U.S. and to discuss plans for the future. MGEN Sakamaki indicated he is truly pleased with the training his officers and men have received and has every intention of continuing the program to the extent that funds allow. Mr. Osmon presented the general with a SATFA memento and pledged to keep up the same level of support in the future. MGEN Sakamaki was happy to receive the SATFA gift and said he would display it in an honored position.



Major General Tako Sakamaki, Director, Education and Training Department, Ground Support Office, Japan Self-Defense Force, at a recent meeting with the author at Ft. Monroe, VA.