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# Japanese Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise

By

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For three consecutive years the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force (JGSDF) has held a Combined Arms Live Fire Exercise (CALFEX) at the U.S. Army's Yakima Training Center (YTC) in Yakima, Washington. Because of restrictive operating space in Japan, the Japanese have found it advantageous to use the firing ranges of Yakima to fire their weapon systems at their maximum effective range. This exercise also provides the opportunity for the Japanese to experience U.S. training methods which in turn helps them to gain a better understanding of the American way of doing things. Finally the U.S. Army benefits by gaining a better understanding of the capabilities of one of our key Pacific Rim allies.

The exercise is totally funded by the Japanese and paid for under the U.S. Army Foreign Military Sales training program and is administered by the Security Assistance Training Field Activity (SATFA), a directorate under the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command. Historically, a planning meeting is held each spring to coordinate the support functions of YTC, 1st Corps, and Ft. Lewis, Washington. During this meeting the costs for this exercise are calculated and provided to the SATFA representative who uses these figures to develop the Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA). A wide range of topics is covered at this meeting from radio frequencies of helos to the menu to be prepared for the Japanese soldiers. As soon as the meeting has concluded, the LOA is prepared by SATFA and the estimated final price provided to JGSDF. After the LOA is signed and the money deposited at the Defense Finance Accounting Service in Denver, SATFA clears the way for the advance party from Japan to come to Ft. Lewis and the preparations begin in earnest.

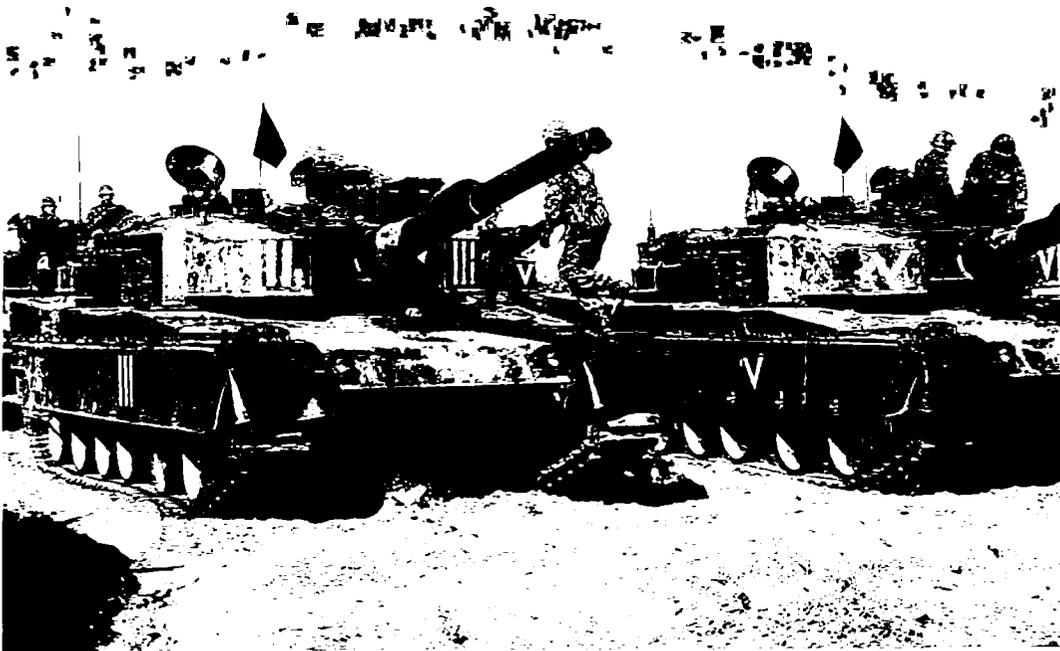


Japanese Crewman Rearming AH1 with Rockets and TOW Missiles.

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For this CALFEX, held from 11 to 25 September 1996, the JGSDF exercised a number of their weapons systems: AH-1 Cobra Attack Helicopters firing TOW missiles and anti-tank rockets; T-90 Tanks firing 120 MM armor piercing shells; and stationary heavy anti-tank missiles. All this equipment is of Japanese manufacture with the Cobras and part of the T-90 tank under licensing agreement with the U. S. which promotes compatibility. It was shipped to the U. S. via commercial contractor and offloaded at the Port of Tacoma. The tanks were then moved by commercial truck over the mountains to Yakima while the helos flew directly. An interesting side note was that the Japanese ammunition trucks and the Hummers were driven by volunteers from the Campfire Girl's organization. The main body of Japanese soldiers, approximately 200 strong, flew directly into SEATAC International Airport. From there they were transported by bus to the cantonment area at YTC where they were berthed and fed, and provided with all the necessary support equipment such as phones and offices. The next day everything was in full swing.

YTC's Multi-Purpose Range Complex (MPRC) which provides a computerized range, pop up and movable targets, and immediate scoring results is used for the helo attacks and the stationary systems. At another range the tanks exercise by firing at stationary tank hulls strategically placed in the impact area to test the Japanese tankers skills. After one week of practice and evaluation, the exercise culminates in a day of firing with all the weapon systems being brought to bear at one time in the impact area as a grand finale.



**A Platoon of Japanese T-90 Tanks Preparing to Deploy  
after Rearming at the Ammunition Resupply Point.**

But there is another side to this exercise as well. On the day after the final firing, many of the Japanese soldiers spend a day in the homes of the local Yakima residents who volunteer to participate in this event. During the day the soldiers learn about American customs and food, play with the children, and enjoy the opportunity to see how Americans live. The people of Yakima also have the opportunity to learn about the Japanese customs and enjoy the exchange of cultures. For many of the soldiers, it is their first visit to the U.S., so their experience is what they will take home to their families and friends. The following day many of the soldiers

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volunteer for a community project cleaning up the city walking path along the Yakima River. Later they will enjoy tours to the Yakima Indian Nation, the local wineries, and the malls for shopping. That evening the Japanese host a cocktail/buffet of Japanese foods to express appreciation to the residents of Yakima who hosted the Japanese soldiers in their homes, to the personnel of YTC and Ft. Lewis who assisted in the CALFEX, and to the dignitaries of the area who supported the overall effort. This final social event is the ideal ending to a highly successful operation.

The benefits from this exercise are many and involve all participants. The Japanese have the opportunity to exercise their weapon systems in an unrestricted, wide open area unavailable in Japan. They can observe U.S. training methods and evaluations first hand and take home those advantageous to their system. They experience the warmth and hospitality of the local residents of Yakima which can't help but lead to a better understanding of our different cultures. The Americans have the opportunity to learn about an important ally's capabilities and understand their strengths and weaknesses. Because the Japanese pay cash for this training under a reimbursable FMS case, the training aids the budget of YTC and keeps the range operating at capacity. There is also a great deal of incidental expenditures by the Japanese that works its way into the local communities and thus helps many within that area. Finally the U.S. personnel also enjoy the interchange of cultural differences and help cement the excellent working relationship which exists between our two countries.

The future bodes well for this exercise to continue. The Japanese hope to expand the scope of this operation by adding Multiple Launch Rocket Systems, including more tanks, and deploying the tanks on the MPRC to fire at moving targets. From the aspect of all involved, this is an event which will be anticipated with enthusiasm for years to come.



**Col. Kimizuka (Right) and Maj. Kobayashi (Left) of the Japanese Training Department, Heading Up Community Service Project of Policing the Yakima River Greenway.**