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WELCOMING REMARKS
John J. Hamre,
President and CEO,
CSIS

SPEAKER
H.E. Taro Kono,
Minister of Defense,
Government of Japan

MODERATOR
Michael J. Green,
*Senior Vice President for Asia and Japan Chair, CSIS; Director of Asian Studies, Edmund A. Walsh
School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University*

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JOHN J. HAMRE:

Good morning, everybody. Welcome. My name is John Hamre. I'm the president here at CSIS. Congratulations. You made it through the heavy rain and you're here, and we're going to reward you with an excellent speech. And I look very much – look forward to listening to Minister Kono.

A word of just preparation. We're responsible for your safety while you're with us, and so if you hear a voice that says we need to evacuate I'll ask you to follow my directions. We'll go out through these doors behind me. I'm not worried about the defense minister; he's got guys over here that are going to take care of him, but. (Laughter.) So I'm going to take care of all of you and we'll go down to the – to street level, go over to National Geographic, and I'll pay for everybody's ticket. There's a very good show on right now and I'll take you there. Nothing's going to happen.

It's a real privilege to have Minister Kono with us. I just have to reflect. The first time I went to Japan when I was in government and visited the self-defense agency, and it was at a kind of a decrepit set of old buildings and we had a lot of difficulty trying to find somebody that was willing to take on the leadership role. Now things have changed and Japan has reached out to one of its premier political leaders in Minister Kono to lead the Defense Ministry at this crucial time. It shows how profoundly over the last 20 years attitudes have changed in Japan and here in the United States. We welcome this much, much stronger Japan on the security stage. It used to be that they were strong on foreign policy, and they always were, but they're now strong on defense, and it's a very welcome thing for us.

We're very fortunate that a man of this stature is leading the Defense Ministry at this time. This is the most complicated period that I can imagine, and we look to Japan for both intellectual and operational leadership in Asia. And we're very fortunate to have a man of this talent, this depth, this commitment to this alliance who is leading at this time.

So could I ask you with your very warm applause please welcome to this podium for his presentation Minister Kono-san. Please. (Applause.)

MINISTER TARO KONO:

Good morning. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you very much for the kind introduction.

It's good to be back in Washington, D.C. Last time I was here I was foreign minister. This time I came back as defense minister. Maybe next year as a prime minister. (Laughter.)

Well, originally I came to Washington one year after Patrick Ewing. I went to Georgetown. It was a golden age in Washington: Georgetown won a NCAA championship and the Redskins won the Super Bowl. I don't know what happened to Georgetown basketball this season. I don't see the name in top 25, and the Redskins, I don't see them – (laughter) – but now you get the Washington Nationals, and Washington Wizards with Rui Hachimura. So I think things change as time goes by.

Well, there was a Soviet threat during the Cold War. Now it's gone and now we are – we have to worry about Chinese military expansion.

So let me talk about the alliance. I prepared a very comprehensive speech, but it will probably go on for about three hours, so I will have to cut it very short. And Dr. Green could probably spend a semester talking about alliance at Georgetown.

Well, 60 years ago in January 19, 1960, Japan-U.S. Security Treaty was revised, which marked the beginning of this Japan-U.S. alliance as we know now. For more than half a century, this alliance has fulfilled strategic interests, both Japan and United States. It's also important to point out that this alliance is based on common values shared by two liberal democracies.

Allow me to highlight the tremendous progress we have made in advancing our security cooperation within the framework of alliance over the years. Security cooperation with United States really started when we formulated first guideline for Japan-U.S. defense cooperation in 1978. A few months after that, the Air Self-Defense Force and U.S. Air Force conducted their first-ever bilateral exercise. Two years later, in 1980, the Maritime Self-Defense Force joined the RIMPAC for the first time, and the following year, in 1981, the Ground Self-Defense Force conducted its first bilateral training and exercise with the U.S. Army.

We have come long ways since then. Over the years bilateral training and exercises have contributed in enhancing interoperability, sustainability, and combat readiness between the Self-Defense Forces and U.S. forces. They represent our two countries' determination and concerted efforts to strengthen the alliance. They also demonstrate the deterrence capabilities of the alliance to the region and to the world. Japan and the United States will continue to make efforts to improve bilateral training and exercises.

The first guideline was formulated during the Cold War, and its main focus was on the response against an armed attack on Japan. The end of the Cold War brought about a period of uncertainty.

The Persian Gulf War broke out in 1990 and the first North Korean nuclear crisis in 1993. These factors, along with tensions over Taiwan Strait, contributed to the revision of the guideline in 1997 that allowed for a possible and yet limited role by Self-Defense Force in situations in areas surrounding Japan.

The following years were met with even greater uncertainties: notably, 1998, North Korean ballistic missile launch over Japan; the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001; the war in Afghanistan; and the Iraqi War. Also, in September 2010, a Chinese fishing vessel, illegally operating in waters around the Senkaku Island, collided with two Japan Coast Guard ships. The arrest and detainment of the Chinese captain resulted in diplomatic standoff with Beijing. And on March 11, 2011, Japan was hit by an unprecedented disaster, the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Following this development, and to reflect the changing security environment of the 21st century, the government of Japan and the United States undertook a major revision of the guideline for Japan-U.S. defense cooperation in 2015.

The new guidelines account for seamless bilateral cooperation from peacetime to contingencies, and also expands the scope of the alliance to include the protection of both regional and global security. It also addresses cooperation in new strategic domains, such as cyber and space, which were not mentioned in 1997. Another new component is the establishment of alliance coordination mechanism that will improve bilateral coordination for responses to any future contingencies. New guidelines also incorporates enhancements in information sharing that includes defense equipment and military technology.

Implementing new guidelines will further strengthen the deterrence and response capability of the alliance. In addition to the release of the 2015 guidelines, a new set of laws called the legislation for peace and security was approved by the Japanese Parliament, September 2015. The legislation will enable Japan to respond seamlessly and with greater flexibility to a variety of contingencies. The legislation will also allow for the protection of U.S. forces and their military asset. It also includes enhancement in the provision of supplied services and logistical support to the U.S. forces under the ACSA.

With this development, the scope of our security cooperation with the United States has expanded more than ever before. It's been said that an alliance, that can help each other build a stronger bond. This is true. The deterrence capabilities of Japan-U.S. alliance is stronger than ever. As you can see, the alliance has evolved over the years and have adjusted to the challenges of changing security environment.

Japan and the United States have become closest allies in the world – I think I could say that. The alliance is now stronger than ever, and as a defense minister of Japan I can actually feel this every day.

So now, let us take a quick look at the current security environment. The overall view is that certain states are seeking to change the regional and international order in their favor and are expanding their sphere of influence. This is resulting in the rise of interstate competition in all fronts – politics, economy, and military. The world is becoming increasingly dependent on technologies that run through the cyber domain. Technological advancements are fundamentally changing how we fight. Contemporary warfare is fought in combined domains, not only on land, at sea, in the air, but also in space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic spectrum.

As we turn our eyes to geographical area around Japan, we see that it's an area with countries with advanced military capabilities in both quantity and quality. It's apparent that countries in this area are enhancing their military capabilities and are aggressively expanding their military activities. The Indo-Pacific region, which includes Japan, is a region rich with political, economic, and religious diversities. Countries in this region have differing views on security and threat awareness. Accordingly, a cooperative regional security framework, just like NATO, is yet to be institutionalized in this region.

As for the Korean Peninsula, the Korean people have been divided for more than half a century and the military forces of the ROK and DPRK continue to lock horns.

Also in this region exist issues concerning Taiwan, and the situation in the South China Sea remain(s) volatile. And we cannot overlook the violation of our territorial waters around Senkaku Island(s), three times a month on average, and the daily entrance by Chinese government vessels into our contiguous zone around Senkaku Island(s). We have strong concerns over China's continuous attempt to unilaterally change the status quo in the East China Sea, particularly around the Senkaku Island(s), by forceful means such as PLA Navy and Chinese coast guard, which is a paramilitary organization.

Meanwhile, in the South China Sea, China has been conducting military activities near the Scarborough Shoal with the use of long-range H-6K bomber, among others. China has expanded and increased their air and maritime activities in this area by conducting large-scale exercise and novel display, including the aircraft carrier Liaoning. China has pushed forward with the militarization of both Paracel and Spratly Islands by installing military facilities such as batteries and by constructing a 3,000-meter-long runway that could

land fighters and bombers. China has also constructed harbors and radar facility on these islands. China continue(s) to engage in unilateral coercive attempt to alter the status quo in South China Sea and to create a fait accompli.

Japan cannot and will not overlook such aggressive behaviors by China. China's action in both East China Sea and South China Sea are nothing less than assertive and coercive attempts to overturn the international order. If we overlook Chinese attempts to alter the international order and let China continue undermining international rules and norms, the negative impact on these action(s) will not only be limited to Indo-Pacific region but will stretch around the world.

China is also expanding and increasing military activities in the Pacific Ocean and in the Sea of Japan. For instance, in 2008 Chinese combat vessels were spotted operating in the Pacific Ocean and in the Sea of Japan for the first time. This number has multiplied each year since 2012. In addition to this, Chinese military aircrafts began flying over the Pacific Ocean in 2013 and over the Sea of Japan in 2016. Japan's Air Self-Defense Force have to scramble against Chinese aircrafts more than 600 times a year now. In July last year, Chinese and Russian bomber flew together from the Sea of Japan towards Tsushima Strait, which was something we had never seen before.

Asked about China's naval advancement into the Pacific Ocean in 2017, the Chinese defense press secretary stated Japan simply needs to get used to it. We believe that such action by China will continue onwards.

China's H-6K bomber can carry long-range cruise missiles, CJ-20, that put Guam well within its strike range. This and the aircraft carrier Liaoning, among others, advancing into the Pacific Ocean. This means China now possess the capability to break through the first island chain that runs from Okinawa to the Philippines.

China has warned the U.S. and its allies against deployment of U.S. intermediate-range missiles to the East Asia, sometimes with threatening rhetoric, pointed to the fact that China also has missiles. They always insist their missiles are purely defensive. Long- and middle-range missiles, such as CJ-20 and DF-21 ballistic missiles constitute the core of A2/AD capabilities. China has been increasing those types of missiles as much as they want because China is not a party of the INF Treaty, which was signed during the Cold War. Recently China announced that the country would not participate in the New START negotiation. We need to continue our diplomatic efforts, even with Russia, to get China engaged in a framework towards the armed reduction of new strategic weapons alongside United States and Russia in the post-INF period.

You may frown at me proposing to work with Russia, but by looking at Russia from the east side of the country, however, we can see that we potentially share mutual interests with Russia in not few areas in dealing with China. We need to pay attention to China's debt trap diplomacy as well. China's long lending practice under the Belt and Road Initiative has put a number of countries, such as Sri Lanka, Maldives, Pakistan, Djibouti, Vanuatu, and others into a so-called debt trap. Speaking from our own experience, we are fully aware that freedom and democracy cannot be built in a day, especially in Asian countries where they have long history and complicated social structures. Myanmar and Cambodia are in the process of advancing their democracy. At this stage, the problems in these countries are drawing attention. But if we hesitate to lend our hands to them, citing the problems, they may be dragged into debt trap by China. As a result, they would be back to authoritarianism.

We must increase our commitment to the Pacific Island countries that are a vital part of the Indo-Pacific region. As a part of this effort, I will host a multinational conference in April in Tokyo with defense ministers from Pacific Island countries which own military forces, as well as the partner countries connected to the region, namely the United States, Australia, New Zealand, France, and the United Kingdom. Just last December I visited Beijing and met with counterpart, Defense Minister General Fenghe. It was the first visit by Japanese defense minister in 10 years. At the meeting with my counterpart I directly conveyed our strong concern over the frequent activities by the PLA in East China Sea and urged China to take positive steps to improve the situation. This spring, we are planning to welcome President Xi Jinping as a state guest. We want to extend our heartfelt welcome to President Xi for his visit.

China needs to work harder to improve the situation that I just pointed out. Otherwise, we may find a difficult environment for the visit. International norms, such as freedom, democracy, and legal order, have been built up and maintained by the countries, including Japan, and the United States, and others, overcoming difficulties. If China makes light of the international norms, they have to pay the cost. We need to create the environment where the cost will be imposed on China in cooperation with international community.

In response to China's increasingly military actions, the Self-Defense Forces are strengthening capability to closely and consistently monitor the surrounding water and air space of Japan. For example, we plan to deploy ISR-focused small-sized patrol ships and to also introduce a new type of destroyers that can be operated with fewer personnel and can serve multiple purpose – such as minesweeping. We also plan to deploy F-35Bs and will make the necessary

refurbishment on Izumo-class destroyers for these aircrafts to operate from. By doing so, we will be able to defend our airspace with greater efficiency while securing the safety of our pilots as they operate in the vast waters of the Pacific Ocean, where few airfields are made available. We will defend our airspace with the procurement of 150 F-35s, that will include F-35Bs.

Fiscal constraints and decline in population due to low birthrate present limitations to our defense budget and human resources. We removed the restriction on what women can do in the Self-Defense Force. We are also working on improving work environment for them. In ground Self-Defense Force, the first-ever female anti-tank helicopter operator was assigned in 2017. In Air Self-Defense Force, the first female fighter pilot in 2018, and in Maritime Self-Defense Force first-ever Aegis destroyer commander was assigned in 2019. We also decided to pave the way for women to be assigned to submarine crews last year and are now preparing for onboarding them this year.

Japan and the United States share and support universal values, such as democracy, freedom, rule of law, and respect for human rights. Japan is determined to take action to promote these values. TPP, Trans-Pacific Partnership, was supposed to be the new rules for the Pacific region by the like-minded countries sharing the values – such as Japan, U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and so forth. We need to bring it back as TPP 12 in the near future, hopefully.

As I mentioned earlier, the security environment surrounding Japan is one of the toughest in the world. Situated in the geopolitically important location based upon shared common values, the Japan-U.S. alliance is one of the strongest in the world. The alliance also serves as a platform for U.S. military readiness in the Indo-Pacific region. Approximately 50,000 U.S. troops stationed in Japan. Kadena, Yokota, and Iwakuni are the largest U.S. Air Force bases located in the Far East. Yokosuka is only U.S. naval facility that can repair aircraft carriers outside of the continental United States. The only overseas U.S. Marine installations are situated in Japan and are located facing the East China Sea.

Japan will continue to ensure and support forward deployment of U.S. forces based on the Japan-U.S. security arrangement. The Self-Defense Forces will work together with the United States military in protecting Japan's national security, as well as securing peace and stability of the region. The Japan-U.S. alliance, now stronger than ever, is capable of deterring any threat, and is ready to meet all the future challenges. The alliance will serve to protect universal values and will spread them widely to the world.

Professor Madeleine Albright, former U.S. secretary of state, once said: All work that is worth anything is done in faith. As I did so in my former capacity as foreign minister, I will give everything that I have, and with faith, to my work as defense minister of Japan. Thank you very much for your attention. (Applause.)

MICHAEL J. GREEN:

Mike Green, senior vice president here on Asia, and a professor at Georgetown. When he was foreign minister last year, Kono-san spoke at Georgetown to a packed audience, completely at capacity room of students on Friday afternoon. It was really nice outside. And the first thing he said was: It's Friday afternoon. It's warm outside. Why are you all here? (Laughter.) But we know the answer, because Kono Taro gives us a deeply impressive but also very human understanding of where this alliance is going and where Japan's role in the world is going.

We have a few minutes before the minister begins his official set of meetings with the administration. I wanted to ask first, Minister, you know, in your role as defense minister you're in constant contact with the enemy, meaning the opposition party and the press. (Laughter.) And I'm – I've been doing this long enough to remember that there was a certain backbencher in the 1990s in the LDP who would ask very difficult questions about host-nation support and U.N. dies, and that backbencher was named Kono Taro.

MIN. KONO:

(Laughs.)

MR. GREEN:

And my favorite part was that the foreign minister at the time was your father. So you – (laughter) – you know very well some of the dynamics of alliance politics in the Diet. And I wanted to ask first, what worries you the most in terms of the domestic politics in Japan about our alliance? I mean, I agree with you and the polls show the alliance is by almost any measure stronger than ever, but it depends on democratic debate. So what do you focus on within Japan right now?

MIN. KONO:

Well, in order to keep the alliance strong it's very important to get support from the local community, especially where we have U.S. bases or bases for Self-Defense Force. So we need to talk to the local community, get them understand situation.

Back in 1990s there was no Chinese aggression, but situation is different. So it's easy to criticize U.S. forces in Japan for being too noisy or too, you know, troublesome, all those things, but it's important to have U.S. forces in Japan ready for – just in case. So we need to get their understand, but we also need to provide environment where they can train their soldiers and officers. So that's something I really need to convey to the local community.

MR. GREEN: And do you find that people understand what you're describing?

MIN. KONO: Well, I guess more and more local politician in Okinawa see the necessity of what I'm trying to convey. So I think yes, people see the situation has changed.

MR. GREEN: So, in the U.S., the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and other polls show almost unprecedented levels of support for U.S. forward deployment and bases in Japan, for a commitment to defend Japan if Japan is attacked. The poll numbers are quite good. And then the Congress' support for the alliance is quite robust.

But we are going to begin in the not-too-distant future a new negotiation on host-nation support, and there are voices – including at the top – in the U.S. who are questioning whether Japan is, you know, taking a fair burden, paying enough, taking on enough missions. For an American audience, you know, sort of in our political context, what are the messages that you think have to be understood in that context?

MIN. KONO: Well, I think we need to – we cannot stress enough the importance of forward-deployment capabilities of the United States in Japan. And, well, look at the aircraft carrier in Yokosuka. If we – if U.S. doesn't have Yokosuka, it has to go back all the way to San Diego. And how many days it need? So I think U.S. and Japan are working pair for Indo-Pacific. It's not – it's not like United States forces in Japan just there to protect Japan. It is a linchpin for the stability and peace in the Indo-Pacific region.

MR. GREEN: So families would have their sailors and Marines deployed four times as much. We'd be defending ourselves in San Diego instead of the first island chain. It's really a narrative about what it does for our interests.

One of the areas of tension or dissonance a little bit right now is the question of Japanese procurement of equipment. The foreign military sales – FMS – purchase of U.S. equipment has gone up much more than I think Japanese industry or the Diet expected, and so there's clear political pressure or expectation that there should be more, you know, Japanese-made equipment, more Japanese participation in industrial work. But at the same time, this stuff is more expensive. It's more logical to do it jointly to develop interoperability and share resources.

Your predecessors told me this was a big headache for them. How do you think about this question when you have big procurement decisions coming up in the future and a lot of money at stake?

MIN. KONO:

Well, we are buying a lot from the United States, but if you look at what we are buying is Aegis Ashore. We need it to protect Japan from North Korean missiles right now. And F-35s, that is state-of-the-art fighter jet to protect our airspace from aggressor nearby. So there's no alternative to that.

But in the future I think it is important for us to get defense industry going. When I was minister in charge of cutting the cost, cutting the government spending, I was going after the price of ammunition. The Self-Defense Force buy ammunition much higher price than our national police organization, and I was going after that. But I realized the certain part of defense industry in Japan is very vulnerable, only one small company making a certain part, and a lot of things depend on this small part made by father and mother and only son. And if they say they quit, we don't get that entire weapons system. So we need to pay more attention to the industry and we probably need to help them with something.

So it's important to get expensive weapons from the United States to protect Japan. But in the long run, I think we need to have some kind of defense industry strategy to help us.

MR. GREEN:

One of the – over the last day and a half the Japan Institute for International Affairs and CSIS have had a discussion, the 26th actual – 26th annual meeting on the U.S.-Japan alliance and stock-taking, and we had a lot of discussion about how to network the alliance. You mentioned it as well. How can we take a bilateral hub-and-spokes concept at a time when the balance of power is shifting to get more friends, more partners? And we had a kind of a pool where everyone voted which country is the best country we should start working with. Some people said India. Some people said Korea. Some people said Taiwan. In your role as a defense diplomat in building those relationships, where are some opportunities you see to strengthen partnerships on security with countries that are not, you know, obviously, in the U.S.-Japan alliance, but closely aligned?

MIN. KONO:

Well, obviously, there our first mate is South Korea, their location and their relationship with us. Well, it's kind of unfortunate we have a little political issues between Japan and South Korea. But my counterpart as the defense minister or my former counterpart, foreign minister, they see the situation very well and they understand. So it's natural that U.S., Japan, and South Korea work together as first line. And then we can have Australia, New Zealand, those democratic country – well, India is also a – well, India is the largest democracy. And so we can work with them.

MR. GREEN:

Do you spend a lot more time in developing those relationships than

– you certainly spend more time than defense ministers or defense agency director generals 10 or 20 years ago, but is it more than you expected? Is this a big part of the job?

MIN. KONO: Yes, I also tell my chiefs of staff to go abroad at least once a month to get connections stronger. I think we cannot do things alone. We need to create a web of defense cooperation. So it's important to not only the defense minister, but deputy ministers and chief of staff, and they all go and meet people and create cooperation. So it is important to have a joint exercise with, you know, many countries as possible.

MR. GREEN: So I have a really important question from my students at Georgetown.

MIN. KONO: Uh-huh?

MR. GREEN: Every year we do a simulation exercise, and students have to decide whether they want to be the defense minister or the foreign minister. So the question is which is more fun. (Laughter.)

MIN. KONO: Well, defense minister has much bigger budget, but it comes with bigger headache. (Laughter.) But when I was a foreign minister I said, I need a(n) airplane so I can, you know, go abroad easily. Now I get the helicopter to F-35 –

MR. GREEN: Yeah. (Laughter.)

MIN. KONO: – so, I don't know.

MR. GREEN: Yeah. (Laughter.) Well, I thought you were going to say prime minister is more fun.

MIN. KONO: Oh, yeah, definitely. (Laughter.)

MR. GREEN: But as Donald Trump likes to say, we'll see.

MIN. KONO: (Laughs.)

MR. GREEN: So please join me in thanking the defense minister for joining us.

MIN. KONO: Thank you. (Applause.)

(END)