

Security Consultative Committee Document
Cooperation in Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake

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by

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On March 11, 2011, Japan was struck by the largest earthquake it has ever experienced. The severe earthquake caused a tremendous tsunami that led to a serious emergency at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant. This kind of unprecedented multi-dimensional disaster has important lessons for the international community. In light of Japan's experience, it is incumbent on all countries to be better prepared to respond to complex emergencies and to assist one another in such circumstances. Of particular importance is the development of emergency plans for disasters affecting nuclear power plants.

The Ministers concurred that the close and effective cooperation between Japan and the United States in response to the disasters demonstrated the special bond enjoyed by our two countries and has contributed to the deepening of the Alliance. The Ministers in particular highlighted the following areas of collaboration:

- The Japan Self Defense Forces (SDF) are engaging in the largest disaster relief operations in their history. To support this effort, the United States conducted humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and other activities under Operation TOMODACHI. The success of this large-scale joint response has validated years of bilateral training, exercises, and planning.
- The SDF and U.S. forces established bilateral coordination centers in

Ichigaya, Yokota, and Sendai, which were manned by personnel from both countries and served as focal points for communication and operational coordination. This experience will serve as a model for future responses to contingencies of all kinds.

- The response to the nuclear power plant incident involved experts from the public and private sectors of both countries, and multiple agencies of the Japanese and U.S. Governments. The experience demonstrated the importance of bilateral and multilateral mechanisms to promote real-time information sharing, effective coordination, and comprehensive “whole-of-government” responses to complex emergencies.
- The bilateral response to the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant incident demonstrated the importance of strengthening the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Defense Working Group as a venue for policy coordination and cooperation in such areas as information sharing, protection, decontamination, and consequence management.
- The Ministers shared the view that the participation by U.S. forces in disaster drills conducted by local authorities contributes to stronger relations among the U.S. forces and base hosting communities.

The Ministers shared the determination to learn from this experience and to enhance the two countries’ abilities to respond to a wide variety of contingencies in the future.

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