

Promoting Active Participation of Women in Japan Ground Self Defense Force: Female Integration into Close Combat Units

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ABSTRACT

Japan is facing big changes of social structure, such as aging society, declining birth rate and advancement of higher education. It may cause serious influence for shortage of human resources in Japan Ground Self Defense Force (JGSDF).

In Japan, there becoming a stream that those who suffer from a variety of circumstances become to be utilized more flexibly in the society. It is because that the facilitation of women's active roles has been positioned as an important element of the "third arrow" of Abenomics in Japan's Revitalization Strategy. Based on the stream and the strategy JGSDF adjusts to the society to maintain its strength by increasing women's participation.

In SAS Panel, I would like to share our policy and challenges for women's participation in JGSDF.

We formulated the "Initiative to Promote Active engagement of Female Self Defense Force (SDF) Personnel - Aiming for Attractive SDF that Adapts to the Times and Environment -" in April 2017 to specify its conceptual policy for promoting the active participation of female SDF personnel.

In April 2017 JGSDF opened almost all position for both men and women. Now the number of female JGSDF personnel is about 10,185 as of the end of March 2018. It is equivalent to about 7% of the whole JGSDF personnel. As a result, the proportion of female SDF personnel is increasing largely.

SDF is now trying to increase much more female personnel so that the proportion of female SDF personnel among total SDF personnel reaches over 9% by FY2027. Now JGSDF is trying to encourage more female to be involved in close combat units.

In this panel, I'd like to share our challenges and explain our policy for women's participation in JGSDF with some pictures of women who are actively involved in close combat units.

1.0 BACKGROUND

The "power of women" has the greatest potential in Japanese society, which is not only yet fully mobilized. It is essential for a vibrant and growing society to create an environment where women under various situations can demonstrate their power to the fullest extent by realizing their own hope. The facilitation of women's active role has been positioned as an important element of the "third arrow" of Abenomics in Japan's Revitalization Strategy.

Based on the strategy, Ministry of Defense (MOD) announced the Ministry's action plan in October 2014. It

is called as a “Reform for promoting active participation of female SDF personnel”. In April 2017, MOD formulated the “Initiative to Promote Active Engagement of Female SDF personnel –Aiming for Attractive SDF that Adapts to the Times and Environment”. In this initiative, MOD makes clear the significance of promoting active engagement of female SDF personnel and the policy of personnel management. This initiative enables SDF to secure and maintain useful human resources, utilize diverse perspectives and reflecting shared values of the nation.

MOD decided to open up a path for female personnel with motivation, ability, and aptitude to have opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities in various fields, and aims to double the ratio of female SDF personnel. For employing and promoting female SDF personnel, MOD set out a personnel management policy and specific efforts to ensure equal opportunity for men and women and to assign the right person to the right place based on the person’s motivation and ability. For instance, GSDF expands the recruitment of female SDF personnel and eliminates of the usage classification by sex. Now GSDF opens all branches and almost all assignment for both men and women.

As the number of female SDF personnel increases, we came to recognize necessity for various support for both men and women. MOD developed various support programs. They are 1) Child Care 7, which includes 2days spouse maternity leave and 5days childcare leave for men, 2) Improve office facilities and ensure the capacity of the childcare facilities, 3) Temporary childcare support in the event of emergent duty in support of disaster operations and 4) Temporary employees and reemployment of ex-SDF personnel.

This paper explains the JGSDF way for women’s participation in close combat units and shares our experience and challenges.

2.0 PRESENTATION OUTLINE

2.1 GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

The “power of women” has the greatest potential in Japanese society, which is not only yet fully mobilized. It is essential for a vibrant and growing society to create an environment where women under various situations can demonstrate their power to the fullest extent by realizing their own hope. The facilitation of women’s active role has been positioned as an important element of the “third arrow” of Abenomics in Japan’s Revitalization Strategy in September 2013. Japan’s Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe is trying to create “a Society in which All Women Shine”. “A society in which All Women Shine” is one of the policy decided by Japanese Government in October 2014. “A Society in which All Women Shine” means the society sufficiently to demonstrate their character and ability while satisfying their aspirations at enough at home, civil society and office followed by our own hope. In this policy Japanese Government is trying to create an environment where women under the various situations can demonstrate their power to the fullest extent by realizing their own hope. Their own hope is, for example, to receive necessary support for living and working in a community, to solve uneasiness and isolation in child raising, to leverage the experiences of child-raising and housekeeping, to live a safe and peaceful life without any harm from crime, to choose a working style which fits their own lifestyle and life stage and easily to obtain information to support aspirations and circumstances and so on...

In 2017, at the cabinet meeting, the 2017 priority policies for accelerating the promotion of active participation of women were determined and discussion took place on the state of the enactment of the bill on promoting active participation of women. The next step was to create a positive cycle whereby autonomous initiatives advance throughout the country, to generate good results, and to encourage proactive approaches. In order to improve participation of women and facilitate its utilization in the labor and capital markets, Japanese government promotes the work style reform and encourage more men to take the

childcare leave. For further advanced reforms it is necessary for us to change working styles and men's awareness.

As I mentioned above, Japanese government has promoted the policy to increase the number of women in the workforce in line with its aim of realizing innovation and enhancing productivity through diversity. As a result, women's advancement in Japanese society—traditionally thought to be male-dominated—has progressed. According to statistics from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the labor force participation rate for Japanese women aged 25–64 has reached 71.1%, surpassing the figure of 69.9% for the United States. But the glass ceiling that hinders women from rising to executive positions continues to be an issue in Japan, just as in many other countries.

2.2 MOD ACTION PLAN and INITIATIVE

Follow on the Japanese government strategy and policy, MOD set an action plan for women's empowerment in October 2014. It is called as a reform for promoting active participation for female SDF personnel. This action plan includes the expansion of recruitment/promotion, a planned training and removal of assignment restrictions for women in combat branch. MOD set a recruitment goal as follows:

- 1) Increase the proportion of female SDF personnel among total SDF personnel to over 9% by FY2027 and more than 10% of total newly employed SDF personnel by FY2027.
- 2) To facilitate achievement of the recruitment goal, improve facilities for females.

Japan MOD also set a promotion goal as follows:

- 1) Increase the number of women ranked Major or above to over 3.1% (current figure).
- 2) For personnel anticipated to reach the rank of Major or above, emphasize assigning them to a Company Commander or Assistant Commander post at the rank of Captain, with the aim of allowing them to gain experience.

In April 2017 MOD formulated the “Initiative to Promote Active Engagement of Female SDF personnel – Aiming for Attractive SDF that Adapts to the Times and Environment” to specify its conceptual policy for promoting the active participation of female SDF personnel. In this initiative, MOD makes clear the significance of promoting active engagement of female SDF personnel and the policy of personnel management. This initiative enables SDF to secure and maintain useful human resources, utilize diverse perspectives and reflecting shared values of the nation.

SDF faces diversification and complication of the duty, the necessity of tough and strength, high preparedness and changes in operation forms and advancement of accessories. In order to solve these issues, MOD opens up a path for female personnel with motivation, ability, and aptitude to have opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities in various fields, and aims to double the ratio of female SDF personnel. For employing and promoting female SDF personnel, MOD set out a personnel management policy and specific efforts to ensure equal opportunity for men and women and to assign the right person to the right place based on the person's motivation and ability. For instance, GSDF expands the recruitment of female SDF personnel and eliminates of the usage classification by sex. Now GSDF opens all branch and almost all assignment for both men and women.

As a result, the trends in incumbent Female SDF Personnel increased. As of the end of March 2018, the total number of female SDF personnel was about 14,700 (approximately 6.5% of the total number of the current uniformed SDF personnel). Compared with ten years ago (at the end of March 2008, it was approximately

4.9% of total number of the uniformed SDF personnel), this is a rise of 1.6% point, indicating that the proportion of female SDF personnel has been on the rise in recent years.

Japan is now standing at the starting point because we have just opened all assignment for female SDF personnel. Almost 70 years have passed since SDF established in 1950. Until present we passed “Initial Stage”, “Expansion Stage” and “Enhancement Stage” in terms of the system change for female SDF personnel.

The initial purpose for the system is to open opportunity for direct participation in national defense to everybody, regardless of gender and to enhance female interest in the SDF by recruiting female uniform personnel. Based on the system change for female SDF personnel, we open branch for female step by step.

At first, Japan started recruitment nursing students in 1958 and next started public recruited officer who had specific skill and ability in 1967 and after that started recruitment for private in 1969 as an initial stage. During the initial stage our policy was to position female as replacement on women like position. It was the position related signal corps, logistics and finance.

During the expansion stage we open some branch for women in 1979. And first women admitted to National Defense Academy in 1992. In 1993 finally JGSDF opened all branches for women. But in this stage we had restriction for assignment of female.

In enhancement stage, the Equal Employment Opportunity Law for Men and Women was legislated in 1985 and the Childcare leave law was legislated in 1991. As the domestic law improved, JGSDF developed the childcare facilities and substitute personnel system for childrearing and nursing care. After the Great East earthquake in 2011, we improved emergent duty support system and the accompany leave system. The emergent duty system is useful especially for the family that both mother and father are a member of SDF. For the emergent duty requirement, we might need to go for operation at the same time and in the emergent situation nursery school and kindergarten might be closed. Our children need shelter until their grandparents or relative come to pick them up for support. For the event of emergent duty in support of disaster operations this support works well.

Another system, the accompany leave system is that SDF personnel who need to work abroad for official reason like as defense attaché and as liaison officer and so on, accompany with his/her spouse. The spouse might be also a member of SDF. In this case, according to the previous system she/he needs to retire to go abroad together. Now she/he doesn't need to retire and can take accompany leave to go abroad with family in condition with the maximum 3years.

Based on the change of the system for female SDF personnel, JGSDF policy for women participation was changed. JGSDF treat equal for men and women. The policy prior to 1993, Assignment to close combat units and work fields with physical burdens had not been removed. SDF recruited female personnel since its establishment in 1954 and JGSDF started recruitment of female personnel in the general areas in 1967. In 1993, all branches open for women, except for a part of position which had been still limited for female personnel. The limitation has been eliminated gradually. After opening of the position for fighter and reconnaissance plane of JASDF in November 2015 and opening of the position for Anti- Tank helicopter and a part of NBC unit of JGSDF and patrol guided missiles, minesweeper and Special Boarding Unit of JMSDF in March 2016, the all positions of JASDF and JMSDF were opened and all positions of aircraft operator of 3 services were opened. The rest of the JGSDF positions, such as infantry companies, tank companies and so on, were opened in April 2017, through the consideration of provision of the equal opportunities. JGSDF exactly have an assignment restriction for NBC Weapon Defense Unit and the JGSDF Tunnel Company of the Engineer Corps because of the domestic law restriction- the Labor Standards Law, for maternal care. JGSDF will continue to carry out the empowerment of female personnel through promoting the required

preparation including the establishment of a new standard and assigning talented female personnel to the new opened position after completion of establishment of living environment.

2.3 JGSDF FEMALE PERSONNEL in CLOSE COMBAT UNITS

Now JGSDF female personnel started serving in close combat units. In my presentation I share some pictures about first female AH pilot, first female Regiment Commander at 6th logistics support regiment and female JGSDF soldier training in close combat units.

Female personnel work not only at domestic operation but also serving in international society. I share some picture of a female staff officer (SO) in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) , female NCO in the Deployment Support Group for Counter Piracy Enforcement in the Republic of Djibouti, female JGSDF personnel in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation(UNPKO). Besides field mission areas, JGSDF send female personnel symposium, forum and other international meeting. Last May JGSDF send delegation for the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (NCGP) as one of the NATO partner nations.

2.4 SUPPORT for ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT of FEMALE SDF PERSONNEL

As the number of female SDF personnel increased, we recognized necessity for various support for both men and women. MOD has developed various support systems. In my presentation I introduce 4 kinds of system as follows:

- 1) Child Care 7 including 2days spouse maternity leave and 5days childcare leave for men.
- 2) To improve office facilities and ensure the capacity of childcare facilities.
- 3) Temporary Childcare Support in the event of emergent duty in support of disaster operations.
- 4) Temporary employees and reemployment of ex-SDF personnel.

The Child Care7 is the system for encouraging male members to take childcare leave to promote men's participation in family life. The word "Childcare7" means spouse maternity leave as 2days plus childcare leave as 5days. It means that men can take 7days leave when his spouse gives a birth. According to current statistics the male usage rate of the spouse maternity leave is 72.8% and the male usage rate of childcare leave is 47%'. MOD set objective for the male usage rate up to 100% by FY2020.

The second one is to improve office facilities and ensure the capacity of childcare facilities. The number of female staff is increasing and JGSDF need to expand for installations (quarters, classrooms and other infrastructure) for education. JGSDF also ensure the capacity of childcare facilities and it counts 8 facilities in MOD now. First childcare facility in MOD was built in 2007 and it located in and around camps and military residences. For military officers we need to change assignments every 2-3 years and it is difficult to enter kindergarten and nursery school timely because in Japan the capacity of the childcare facility is limited especially in city area. MOD childcare facility gives priority basis for SDF personnel.

The third one is temporary childcare support in the event of emergent duty in support of disaster operations. In Japan, natural disaster like typhoon and earthquake hit frequently. For the event of emergent duty it is difficult to leave children at nursery school because kindergarten and nursery school might be closed in the emergent situation. It will influence SDF personnel resources during the operation. To improve our capacity, we started giving temporary childcare support within camp for the emergency case on 16 March 2012. The target children's age for this system is from 1year old to 12 years old and the period giving support is basically about 5 days. It is because this support is only for the purpose for temporary use until their relatives arrive to pick up their children.

The last one is the system about the temporary employees and reemployment of ex-SDF personnel. Temporary employees are a substitution for SDF personnel who are in childcare leave and spouse accompany leave. JGSDF can employ ex-SDF personnel as a substitution with designated period. This system enables SDF personnel to take childcare leave easily. And also enable them to take the spouse accompany leave without worrying about his/her absence. Reemployment ex-SDF personnel system is to employ ex-SDF personnel again. The target ex-SDF personnel are mainly female ex-SDF personnel who retired SDF because of their life event, for example, marriage, maternity, childcare and other necessary reason. Even if she retired SDF, focused on their housekeeping work and taking care of children, they still have ability to work again as SDF members after children's grow up. JGSDF try to utilize potential power as much as possible as our active combat power.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This paper explains the JGSDF way for women's participation in close combat units and shares our experience and challenges. Behind JGSDF way, there is the government powerful leadership shown as the policy for creation "a Society in which All Women Shine". It might be called as top-down approach in my word. The word "top-down approach" might be used for the unfavorable situation rather than the word "bottom-up approach". On the other hand the "top-down approach" may bring quick impact exactly. In fact Japan announced National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2015 for the first time. That was right after announcing the strategy for the facilitation of women's active role.

JGSDF takes positive actions for the promotion of both active participation by women and 'Work-Life Balance' in order to prepare for the future aging society. It is essential to ensure a warm working environment for women in order to encourage and empower female SDF personnel. This will enable the SDF to gain and maintain human resources, utilize diverse perspectives, and reflect the values of the nation. Especially considering the future aging society, the JGSDF devotes serious attention to improving systems, facilities, and environments. For time-restrained SDF personnel, including those involved in childcare or nursing care, this enables the full demonstration of service members' capabilities and enables operational unit employment.

3.0 REFERENCES

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