

Study Group on Home Guard in an Era of Declining Population

Subject The creation and stability of regional communities are becoming an urgent security issue. This study group surveys conditions across regions and considers the structure of horizontal organizations for disaster preparedness and response, the maintenance of public order, preservation of national territory, and national defense.

Overview In Japan, the birthrate is declining and the population aging rapidly. Maintaining an adequate labor force is becoming a problem. In regional parts of Japan in particular, the decline of local cities and increasing depopulated villages have led to a rapid decline in personnel for the defense of the national land. This birthrate decline and aging issue is becoming a complex problem from the standpoint of national security and defense, and specific policies to solve the problem need to be considered. From the perspective of national land defense and preservation, traditional security issues have included remote island defense and protection of national border regions and coastlines. Against the backdrop of the birthrate decline and aging, newly identified problems in the regions include a lack of firefighters in disaster situations, and this lack of personnel for responding to crises is becoming a serious problem. At the same time, support for disaster recovery has generally been provided through the deployment of Self-Defense Forces (SDF) personnel, but these deployments

Overview

have become prolonged and spread out over various regions, and this is starting to hinder execution of duties necessary for the maintenance of defense capability. In the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, around 100,000 troops were deployed, a scale unprecedented in history, and this was close to the limit for the SDF's main duty of maintaining national defense. In this age of depopulation, Japan needs to constantly plan for how to deal with large-scale disasters, and thought needs to be given to regional crisis response capacity from the viewpoint of hometown resilience alongside conventional disaster-response deployments by the Ministry of Defense and the SDF. Overseas, there are organizations involved in national security that are also deployed for disaster response, organizations like the National Guard in the United States and the Home Guard in Denmark; they are regionally rooted and have both national security and disaster response functions. In light of the fact that the creation and stability of regional communities are becoming an urgent issue for Japan's national security, the group surveys actual conditions across regions and considers how to best structure horizontal organizations (personnel pools) for disaster preparedness and response, the maintenance of public order, the preservation of national land, and national defense.

Period April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2025

Date held Scheduled to meet once a month