

## Statement by Colonel Hiroaki Uchikura

Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman. I am Colonel Uchikura. Today, I would like to talk about future US-Japan interoperability with a particular focus on airpower.

### **Why should we focus on “trans-Pacific interoperability”?**

The year 2010 is an important milestone for the US-Japan Alliance, marking 50 years since the current Security Treaty was ratified. The strategic environment surrounding the alliance is becoming more complex and, some would say, the nations of north-eastern Asia are increasingly faced with constraints on their access to global domains. The recently released 2010 QDR states, “The United States must increasingly work with key allies and partners if it is to sustain stability and peace.”

The Government of Japan is currently developing its 10-year strategic guidance. Given the concurrent themes that will likely be reflected in each document, the time is ripe for establishing closer relationships, and just as important greater interoperability, between the military forces of the US and Japan. The key question is not whether they “should” build greater interoperability, but whether they “can,” and, if so, “how”?

### **Definition of Interoperability**

First, I would like to discuss what “interoperability” means in military terms. Definitions are addressed in a series of DOD documents, but interoperability has been changing in conjunction with the changing nature of modern operations and advancing technologies.

Early concepts of interoperability were predicated largely on the need to own and employ the same assets. The military power served as a useful deterrent during the Cold War, but happily was never tested in the cauldron of the military conflict. However, Operation DESERT STORM (ODS) dramatically illustrated value of NATO in a coalition. This was particularly true in the operational use of airpower with coalition nations contributing to an orchestrated air campaign. Interoperability had moved from the practiced theories and rehearsals of the Cold War into operational reality.

### **Interoperability in the 21st Century “Network-Centric Age”**

The period since ODS has seen considerable advances in technology, and the 21st Century “Network-Centric Age” offers significant challenges to the information-sharing and connectivity that underpin interoperability. As the leading innovator in terms of network-centric operations, the US is unintentionally establishing an increasing gulf between its capabilities and those of its partners. It is unlikely that US allies will be able to address this shortfall in the foreseeable future, placing doubts on their ability to maintain the interoperability necessary to meet the QDR’s calls for greater cooperation with key allies.

Given such situations, real-time information-sharing and connectivity are the essential functions that must be pursued to provide the “bridge-gap” for interoperability.

And in this sense, one of the most important elements to maintaining interoperability is mutual respect and trust.

### **The Royal Air Force Model**

In discussions of interoperability, there is a crucial case study, I believe, that of the British Royal Air Force (RAF). Despite a number of capability gaps between RAF and US capabilities, the RAF has been able to maintain high levels of interoperability with the US.

Operation ALLIED FORCE (OAF), a notable air campaign mainly conducted over Kosovo, made painfully clear many of the overwhelming “capability gaps” between US military forces and their European allies. Shortly after OAF, Retired RAF Air Vice Marshal “Tony” Mason stated: “There are two kinds of airpower—the United States’ airpower and everybody else’s.” These capability gaps served to place increasing challenges on the ability of allied air forces to contribute effectively to missions planned and conducted during the campaign, and to be interoperable with US forces. However, in the later “Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF)”, and “Operation IRAQ FREEDOM (OIF)”, the RAF demonstrated convincingly that it had made significant efforts to reduce the identified capability gaps, and in turn re-establish its ability to maintain interoperability with the USAF.

So how did the RAF make such progress? Analysis suggests that the RAF took a three-pillared approach to rebuilding its interoperability credentials: doctrine; capabilities; and trust-building.

In the first pillar, the RAF refreshed its doctrinal documents to ensure coherence with US air power capability developments, embracing common language and terminology. Under the second pillar, the RAF identified that the so-called “sensor-to-shooter loop” had become a key element of 21st Century Air Campaigns, and that it needed to address a number of critical capability shortfalls in this area. Intensive efforts were made to fill such shortfalls with the introduction of new hardware, and the operational training. Importantly, the RAF achieved these increases in capability through indigenous development to enhance the UK’s industrial base. The argument regarding “Indigenous” or “Cutting-edge US assets” is, however, one of the crucial interoperability dilemmas.

And under the last pillar, the RAF leveraged the long and robust relationships it has enjoyed with the USAF, which had been further reinforced throughout the 12-year campaigns conducted in southwest Asia. The strong and fruitful relationships at the senior officer level proved extremely valuable during the planning and execution of complex and time sensitive missions in later operations.

This analysis highlights that successful interoperability is not simply a matter of having the right technology and hardware. Mutual understanding and trust and the ability to share information using common terminology are just as essential to operational effectiveness. Some in Japan might regard the US-UK – and in turn the USAF/RAF - relationship as a “special relationship” that can be maintained without significant effort. However, it is clear that both nations, and air forces, work extremely hard to maintain their close relationships.

### **Chronology/Reality/Unique Political Considerations of Japan**

In turning to the USAF-JASDF relationship, it is only right to recognize the significant support provided by the USAF when the JASDF stood up in 1954. The JASDF has seen the USAF as a role model since its establishment. US-designed equipment has continued to form a major proportion of its inventory. But defense cooperation extends beyond simple procurement, including in the training and exercise arena. However, JASDF forces have yet to conduct combat air operations with the USAF, either bilaterally or as part of a coalition. The contribution by the JASDF to enduring operations has been limited to a 5-year operation in Iraq utilizing its C-130s.

This lack of key coalition combat experience is due to the legal framework under which the JASDF operates. The GOJ interpreted that deployment of forces for overseas combat operations is prohibited by Japan’s Constitution. Furthermore, the GOJ has imposed a ban on exercising the right of collective self-defense; these legal restrictions are unlikely to be relaxed in the near future.

As a result, the JASDF is limited in its ability to mirror the approach taken by the RAF in developing improved interoperability with the USAF.

One key area that offers a positive way forward in this regard is the ongoing bilateral defense cooperation on ballistic missile defense. This arena has seen successful and prompt information-sharing with the US in a number of key areas.

### **A Possible “Japan Model”**

Under these circumstances, how can the JASDF improve its interoperability with the USAF? First, I would like to focus on a “plug-and-play” architecture. That is the model that enables bilateral or coalition partners, who is connectable to the key nodes, to share a real-time operational picture, despite different locations and the constraints of mutual command authority. It will also allow the JASDF to contribute to a variety of campaigns utilizing indigenous capabilities within the limits of Governmental authorization.

Second, I truly expect that ongoing US-Japan co-location effort will enhance bilateral relationship. It will serve to strengthen day-to-day interactions and enhance the bilateral relationship at all levels.

### **Recommendation (Tentative)**

Based on my analysis, I would like to make the following tentative recommendations in 3 key areas, if we hope to build greater interoperability to the benefit of both sides:

First, with regards to Bilateral Efforts:

Stand up a bilateral “interoperability study team”, with primary responsibility for:

- Developing a shared strategic vision, scenarios, roadmap for the region, including by staffing a JASDF officer on USAF strategic studies groups, akin to how there are RAF officers staffed in many Pentagon offices now.
- Identification of critical domains, mission areas, and functions where efforts may be prioritized to effectively enhance interoperability.
- Standardizing operational procedures, concepts, and so on. In terms of coalition operations, the NATO standards may provide a sound basis.

US Initiative Efforts

- Release interoperability-related technology to key allies in a timely manner.
- Allow allies’ participation in interoperability-related studies and projects both on-going and future.

Japan Initiative Efforts

- Accelerate fulfillment of network connectivity with key assets as considering industrial base.
- Commit to parallel interoperability-related studies and projects as much as possible.
- Secure information released by the USG.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, I firmly believe that the USAF and the JASDF must be able to work together to effectively deter and respond to any aggression, particularly in terms of anti-access activities in the Asian-Pacific commons, in the next 10-15 years. Policy can change quickly in response to crises, but it takes a long time to build new capabilities and develop trust, and doctrine. Therefore, we need to take both bilateral and unilateral action, and we need to do it right away.

Thank you very much for your attention.