Japan's Military Power

Japan's Military Power:

The True Ability of the Self-Defense Forces

By

Hideki Nakamura

Translated by

Robert D. Eldridge
and Graham B. Leonard

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Translators' Preface vii

Preface to the English Edition xxi

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 13
Restraints on the Self-Defense Forces (Prior to Mobilization)

Chapter 2 59
Restraints on the Self-Defense Forces (Post-Mobilization)

Chapter 3 111
A Plan for Reorganizing the Self-Defense Forces

Chapter 4 143
Issues of National Strategy: Comparing Two Defense White Papers

Chapter 5 175
The Mindset and Status of SDF Personnel

Conclusion 205

Endnotes 207

Index 211

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

This book, written by a former Japanese ace submariner, will surprise those who slightly know the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF, or simply SDF), and shock those who think they know it, and offend those who try to protect it uncritically. In fact, *Japan's Military Power: The True Ability of the Self-Defense Forces*, presents an unprecedented inside view of the internal and external challenges Japan's postwar military faces. In particular, the legal, political, and technical restrictions, as outlined in detail in this book, on the SDF's capacity to fight should be of great concern to Japan's only ally—the United States—and its friends, such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and others in the Indo-Pacific region.

Although this book is about Japan and its postwar military, its origins began in Taiwan. Technically speaking, the beginning of the discussion of the translation into English of this book began in Taiwan, and more precisely, the nation's capital city of Taipei. Its author, Nakamura Hideki, a retired ace submarine commander with the postwar Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, and I (hereafter, "I" refers to Eldridge) were in town attending the inauguration of Tsai Ing-wen as President of the Republic of China. Commander Nakamura and I had met briefly the month before in April 2016 in Fukuoka Prefecture, when I gave a series of lectures in Kyushu, an island comprised of seven prefectures (although the name means "nine states"), which traditionally is known for its martial spirit and

has produced a disproportionate number of men (and now young women) joining the postwar military. It was the same week, coincidentally, that the area experienced the Kumamoto Earthquake, and I spoke to the couple hundred concerned citizens gathered about my work as the political adviser to U.S. Forces deployed in Sendai during Operation Tomodachi, five years before, following the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in March 2011.[1]

While I do not think it was coincidental, in Taiwan we ended up being assigned as roommates in the same hotel as part of a larger delegation in which we had numerous mutual friends. It was then that I learned more about his career, and he shared with me a copy of an earlier version of this book (entitled *Jieitai Sekai Ichi Yowai 38 no Riyū: Moto Eesu Sensuikanchō no Kokuhatsu*, or "38 Reasons Why the SDF is the Weakest in the World: The Confessions of a Former Ace Submariner)," published by Bungei Shunjūsha in Tokyo), and another, about a fictional—but likely—war over the Senkaku Islands (*Senkaku Shotōki Kaisen: Jieitai ha Chūgokugun to Kono Yōni Tatakau*, or "Sea Battle in the Waters Off the Senkaku Islands: The SDF Would Fight the Chinese Military in This Way," published by Kōjinsha in Tokyo), both of which he wrote after his retirement in August 2005.

During our conversations, I suggested I translate this book (which was updated over the course of the following year and re-issued in July 2017). As someone who has been close to the Self-Defense Forces—the name used since 1954 for the postwar Japanese military—for more than two decades, including serving as an "Opinion Leader" affiliated with the Ground Self-Defense Force's Middle Army Headquarters near Osaka and as a member

of *Tanōkai*, a senior group of former opinion leaders from prefectures within the Middle Army's area of responsibility in support of the commanding general, a Special Guest Lecturer at the GSDF's Kodaira and Fuji Schools, and at the Joint Staff College, as well as the political advisor to the U.S. Marine Corps in Hawaii and in Japan, I have always wished the best for the SDF while being acutely aware of its shortcomings.

As a foreign scholar (without a military background) in Japan, my analyses and recommendations have always been more policy-driven but academic in nature, although based on practical experience, empirical evidence, and extensive interviews. As a former officer, however, Nakamura's critiques, while also intellectually driven, have been learned through decades-long firsthand knowledge and inside insights. Importantly, he has said, however, that the book was written not as a criticism for criticism's sake but as constructive criticism to improve his beloved Self-Defense Forces and to put taxpayer monies to better use.

For him, the SDF has become a bureaucracy rather than a fighting force, and its soldiers, sailors, and airmen salaried workers rather than warriors. I saw a little of this too when I worked in the USMC from 2004-2005 and 2009-2015, but it was infinitely greater in the SDF.

The Japanese version of this book included a hypothetical situation where warriors were necessary, but the lethargic thinking of bureaucrats and the uninformed opinions of politicians prevailed. In this scenario, China had seized the Senkaku Islands, which it has begun claiming suddenly in recent decades. The situation plays out in different phases, but in all of them the political, legal, and institutional deficiencies of the JSDF and Japan were clearly identified. As someone who has spent a decade working on the

Senkakus issue in my research (see Robert D. Eldridge, *The Origins of U.S. Policy in the East China Sea Islands Disputes: Okinawa's Reversion and the Senkaku Islands* [London: Routledge, 2014], published in Japanese by Nagoya University Press, 2015) and policy recommendations (see, for example, my "A U.S.-Japan-Taiwan Grand Bargain for Senkakus," *Japan Times*, June 10, 2016, etc.), I can completely understand Nakamura's concerns and agree with the way he describes the situation might play out. It is frighteningly accurate, much like an accident or collision waiting to happen that one might see in slow motion or a dream. Unfortunately, it is in fact a nightmare.

Commander Nakamura, following his "Preface to the English Version" written especially for this book and an introductory chapter that traces his highly interesting career and the background to the book, begins the first chapter with a description of the worrisome situation he envisions: a conflict involving the Senkaku Islands and the paralysis that affects the central government, which prevents the SDF from executing its mission. It is entitled "Restraints on the Self-Defense Forces (Prior to Mobilization)." Chapter 2 examines pre-mobilization issues facing the SDF in a variety of scenarios. Chapter 3 presents a reform plan to reorganize the SDF, with each of the services—the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF), Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF), and Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) each examined. Chapter 4 looks at issues from a national strategy perspective, comparing the 2007 and 2016 Defense White Papers (known as *Bōei Hakusho*). The next chapter looks at the internal culture of the SDF and its status in society. The short concluding chapter calls on the public to be better informed, which the Japanese version of book is seeking to do. It goes

without saying, for those with an interest—intellectual, cultural, familial, or military—in Japan, this book is a must read, although it is alarming.

I especially appreciated the comments by one anonymous referee, who understood the seriousness of the situation and thus the importance of the book: "[It] provides an unvarnished and refreshingly critical take on the Japan Self-Defense Forces…Most English-language literature on the MSDF specifically and the SDF broadly is exclusively laudatory, making this critical and informed take a welcome break from the norm."[2]

Readers may wonder why Commander Nakamura would be willing to discuss the problems with his beloved JSDF in the way he did. He addressed this question in both the introduction as well as in the Preface to the English version: he believes that the organization can only improve through public scrutiny, and he is right.

When I pressed him further about the wisdom of giving "secrets" away to potential enemies abroad by having the book published in English, however, he again stressed that it was important to have the ideas discussed in the book introduced as a way to improve the SDF through "gaiatsu," or foreign pressure. "Besides," he commented to this translator, "our enemies have the language ability to read the book in the original Japanese anyway and have likely done so," implying that it is not so much a question of what an enemy can do to one's country and rather what one's own country does to itself by not making itself better and thus stronger. Indeed, I sometimes felt that the USMC was often its own worst enemy by the decisions and actions it took. In this, there are quite a few similarities between the two militaries.

About the Author, Commander Nakamura

Nakamura Hideki was born in Nogata City, in between the cities of Kitakyushu and Fukuoka on the island of Kyushu, the westernmost of the four main islands comprising the country of Japan. He was born on August 6, 1950, five years to the day that an atomic bomb leveled the city of Hiroshima, a mere 240 km by car from Nogata.

Nogata was once a prosperous coal-mining community, but with the closure of the mine, the town like others that met the same fate, has been suffering. It boasts the oldest known meteorite, which fell to earth in 861 AD and is preserved at the Suga Shrine in the southern part of the city. "Most people in the town," Nakamura told me, "are unaware of this, despite it being registered in the Guinness Book of World Records."

After graduating from the local Kurate High School, a Fukuoka Prefectural public school, in March 1969, Nakamura spent a year preparing to enter the National Defense Academy. He had originally intended to enlist in the SDF after middle school but was opposed by his parents.

He succeeded in entering the NDA in April 1970 and graduated in March 1974 as a member of the 18th Class (*Dai 18 Kisei*), a numbering system by which alumni count and know their respective graduating years, and hence their relationship to one another in the hierarchy.

By this point he had chosen the Maritime Self-Defense Force as his desired branch. As a child he knew he wanted to join the SDF, and he chose the MSDF because he was a fan of the Imperial Japanese Navy after having read books about its accomplishments. In particular, he was strongly influenced by Shishi Bunroku's *Kaigun* (Navy), a story about one of nine war heroes who died in the attack on Pearl Harbor. The book was originally

published in 1942, and won the "Asahi Bunka Shō" (Asahi Cultural Award), and led to the publishing of many other writings about the Imperial Japanese Navy. (As a result of this book, Shishi, who was born in 1893 and was both a writer as well as a director of the Bungakuza Theater in Tokyo, was identified as a pro-war writer by Occupation authorities in the postwar and subjected to the Purge. His ban from public life, however, was lifted after just one and a half months.)

After graduating from the NDA, Nakamura attended the MSDF Officer's Candidate School (*Kaijō Jieitai Kanbu Kōhosei Gakkō*) at Eta Jima in Hiroshima Prefecture for one year, six months longer than the program for the Ground Self-Defense Force. In either case, the program is necessary, Nakamura observes, "because there is not enough real military-type education at the NDA, and there are some candidates who come from universities other than the NDA who wish to become officers in the JSDF. Nakamura successfully completed the course and was commissioned an Ensign in the Maritime Self-Defense Force the following year in March.

He then was assigned to the training squadron in Kure, near Hiroshima, and in November 1975, became the Assistant Engine Officer of the JS *Kitakami* (DE213) after passing the required tests.

In July 1977, he was promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade, and in August, became the Antisubmarine Warfare Officer on the JS *Kitakami*. Five months later in January 1978, he entered the Submarine Training Center.

In June 1978, he went on the JS *Ōshio* (SS 561) for further training, and became the Engine Officer on the same submarine in January 1979.[3] A year later, he became the Assistant Operations Officer.

In April 1980, he transferred to the JS *Yaeshio* (SS 572) to serve as the

Weapons Officer, and in July, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant.

A year later in August 1981, Nakamura became the Communications Officer for the Commander Submarine Flotilla 2 (COMSUBFLOT 2), a position he continued until January 1984, when he became the Operations Officer for JS *Mochishio* (SS 574). He described this latter assignment as the most difficult of his career—working all day from early in the morning until late in the night. "I never felt that I was caught up in my work," he told me later.

In January 1985, he was transferred to the Operation Division of the Office of the Commander in Chief, Self-Defense Fleet (CINCSDFLT), and while there in July 1986, he was promoted to rank of Lieutenant Commander.

In March 1987, he became a student again, this time at the Maritime Command and Staff College in Tokyo, and a year later became the Executive Officer of JS *Takashio* (SS 571). Of all his assignments, this was the one he enjoyed the most. "I worked harder than the Commanding Officer. It was very rewarding," he told me.

He grew in his respective roles. He likely would have been quickly promoted again, but in the late 1980s, personnel matters were put on hold and Nakamura remained in his position as XO of the *Takashio* for another year. The issue that caused this was unrelated to him. An unfortunate accident in July 1988 between another submarine (JS *Nadashio*, SS-577) and a sports fishing boat, the *Fuji Maru*, in which some thirty people died, occurred, leading to a subsequent investigation of that submarine and procedures in general. In any case, the *Takashio*'s commander was underqualified and ended up having to rely on Nakamura as XO for just

about everything.

In March 1990, Nakamura moved to the Technology Division of the Maritime Staff Office, and in January 1991 as the Gulf War was kicking off, was promoted to the rank of Commander.

The following year in March, he became the Operations Officer for the Commander, Escort Fleet (COMCORTFLT), and in December 1993, he served as the Commanding Officer of JS *Arashio* (SS 586). This was the vessel he liked the most of all he served aboard. As the reader will see, he writes the most about his time on this submarine.

Beginning in December 1994, he became the Executive Officer of the Yokosuka Tactical Training Center, and then moved to Defense Intelligence Headquarters in February 1997 as an analyst. In December 1998, he became a professor at the Maritime Self-Defense Command and Staff College, and in March 2002, he joined the War History Division of the National Institute for Defense Studies.

He retired in August 2005 with the rank of Commander. His lack of advancement in the last decade of his career was, as he explains in the introductory chapter, due to an infraction that his rules-bound rivals took advantage of, perhaps for their own purposes. In a sense, that experience was a metaphor for the subject of this book. That the SDF, despite its great ability and potential, is caught between rules that do very little good (and sometimes much harm) or have very little meaning.

Nakamura does not go into detail in the Introduction about the infraction, but it concerns his having given permission to some subordinates to drink alcohol while onboard, which is technically against the rules. It is generally not a serious problem, as "everyone does it," the fact that he permitted it

was used against him by a subordinate who had also made another charge, that one being proved false. He insists it was an organizational effort to remove him. His criticism of the SDF found in this book may have increased as a result of its handling of the incident but it did not start there. As such, he was certainly a thorn in the side of superiors he did not respect and to those he felt were just drawing a paycheck and not truly committed to the mission of protecting Japan. It was these aspects of him that I very much appreciated. It also probably marked him as hostile to the *status quo* squad.

Upon retirement, he began writing, and basically did not stop. Indeed, as he discusses in the Introduction, his final years were spent researching topics he was interested in and had a manuscript prepared prior to his retirement. His first book, *Hontō no Sensuikan no Tatakaikata* (The True Combat Style of Submarines) was published in May 2006, less than a year after he retired. He had planned to stop with one book, but offers kept on coming in.

Requests for magazine articles and interviews also poured in. One of the reasons for this was that he examined the problems facing the MSDF in the fifth chapter of his first book, and many people expressed a strong interest in it.

He produced in the interim nearly a dozen books in the twelve years since he began his second career. This Japanese version of this book is the tenth in that list.[4] My co-translator and I have decided, after consulting Commander Nakamura, to render the Japanese title of the book, *Nihon no Gunjiryoku: Jieitai no Hontō no Jitsuryoku*, as "Japan's Military Power: The True Ability of the Self-Defense Forces." This version of the book, which is a revised and updated version of the 2009 "38 Reasons Why the

SDF is the Weakest in the World," was published in July 2017 by KK Bestseller's Publishing as a classic edition of their series.

Throughout his writings, he is particularly critical of the complicated and nonsensical aspects of the SDF Law (*Jieitaihō*), first promulgated in 1954 and amended 160 times in the interim. (For more on the SDF Law, see Robert D. Eldridge and Musashi Katsuhiro, *The Japanese Self-Defense Forces Law: Translation, History, and Analysis* [London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019].) He believes the 51-page, 126-article law could be condensed into one sentence: "In principle, everything that contributes to the defense of Japan is to be permitted that is not forbidden by international law." In essence, this is what is called a "negative list." In other words, what is not explicitly forbidden is permitted. This view, importantly, has long been widely supported by defense experts and conservative opinion leaders. Nakamura is not alone, in other words.

Parallel to his writings, Nakamura was a regular commentator and public speaker, and in June 2013, formed his own consulting company called Task Force. Whether in his writings or speaking, his message was consistent and clear, and it might be worthwhile here to introduce what that is, taken from the 2009 version of this book.

> The main premise [of this book] is that the Japan Self-Defense Force is unable to fight or win in war. Said another way, the main question of this book, therefore, is "why can't the SDF win?" I have no intention of insulting the SDF, or criticize it unfairly without facts. I am simply worried that a national institution, in which the precious treasure of taxpayers is being applied, is not able to truly live up to its mission. I had always wanted to become a member of the SDF since my youth and subsequently devoted most of my adult life to contributing to the national defense. In this sense, I have no regrets. However, after joining the SDF, I became aware of the true situation the SDF was in and found that it was far from expectations. If the

> SDF, for which a huge sum of money has been spent over the past six-decades to establish, maintain, and equip, is not actually a national military, or *kokubōgun*, in the real sense of the name, then who is to blame? There may be readers who might insist that, in the end, the SDF will be able to hold its own, and that its personnel and equipment are world level. Indeed, there are many books about the SDF's capability, strength, and skills. However, these works do not tell the actual state of the Self-Defense Forces. It is not that those authors are lying, but rather it is because it is difficult to accurately evaluate the military capability of the SDF [which has yet to experience actual combat] and especially to do so in isolation from the surrounding political, legal, and cultural environment surrounding it.

This, in essence, is Nakamura's message, and I am privileged to be able to help share it although I wish on many scores it was not so.

There is another thing I wish were not so. Nakamura learned he had cancer in 2018 and worked with me in his final weeks (he passed away on December 10 that year) to ensure the book was completed. I visited him in an apartment he kept in Fukuoka City, shortly after he had one of his many treatments. I brought with me a former graduate of the university I taught at, the School of International Public Policy, Osaka University, who is seeking to become a national politician specializing in defense policy. Nakamura gave Arisawa Yuma (27, the daughter of former politicians herself, she was successfully elected to a city assembly in the April 2019 round of local elections[5]) a powerful lecture during the course of the evening, alluding to points in this book that she was in the process of reading. As this private lecture was taking place, I looked at the walls of his apartment. One wall was entirely covered in memorabilia from his career, including plaques, photographs signed by Japanese and American officers and crews, and a large vessel flag from the *Arashio*. We took a photo together in front of it. This was the last time I saw him.

I would like to thank my former student, Dr. Graham B. Leonard, for his translation assistance in this project, and we both would like to thank the late Commander Nakamura for the confidence he had to entrust his manuscript to us. We would also like to express our appreciation to our families for their constant support of our respective research and projects. In addition, I would like to thank Yonetsu Hitoshi, a former Japanese Parliamentarian and advisor to the MSDF, for many insights into that military culture as well as Japanese politics and policymaking. Finally, I would like to thank Inoue Masanori of Fukuoka who brought Nakamura and me together in the first place, and dedicate the English version of this book to him not only for this deed, but for everything he does on behalf of his fellow citizens, city, country, and international community to bring Japanese history alive to all he meets.

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[1] For more, see Takashima Tetsuo and Robert D. Eldridge, *Megaquake: How Japan and the World Should Respond* (Dulles, VA: Potomac, 2015), particularly the Epilogue.
[2] "Confidential Manuscript Reading Report," undated, U.S. Naval Institute Press, p. 1.
[3] Readers will note that Japanese submarines have "shio" in their name, which means wave or tide. Submarines can also be named after sea creatures. This is a tradition dating from the Imperial Japanese Navy. Other traditions include naming large warships after historic regions of Japan, cruisers and frigates after mountains and rivers, common military vessels, such as destroyers, are named after weather and sea conditions, and minesweepers after islands.
[4] For a list of his books, see http://taskforce.top/books/ (accessed November 2018).
[5] See Robert D. Eldridge, "Is a New Era Dawning for Women in Politics," *The Japan Times*, April 25, 2019.

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

Japan is seen as a unique country. From a Westerner's perspective, Japan appears to be governed by inexplicable and mysterious rules. In particular, it would almost seem that Japan has departed from international norms in the area of security, but it nevertheless earnestly desires to play its role as a good international citizen.

As such, understanding its uniqueness may help Japan to make further contributions internationally. The Japanese version of this book was originally written in 2009 during the unfortunate period of the Democratic Party of Japan (*Nihon Minshutō*)'s mismanaged administration. It discusses the problems of Japanese security. Covering these problems had meaning then, and even more significance in 2017, when this revised version came out. In other words, despite the passage of new legislation (collective self-defense laws) in 2015, the Japan Self-Defense Forces (*Jieitai*, or JSDF, or simply SDF) have many problems that remain unresolved and may have gotten worse due to more political compromises to permit certain equally restrictive legislation to be passed.

While constitutional restrictions and the limitations of contingency legislation are widely known, the serious defects that reside within the SDF as a military organization and the inability to consider SDF personnel as real soldiers have not been really identified before.

More than the militaries of most other countries, the SDF has long been at the mercy of domestic politics, with the SDF being used as a tool for partisan affairs rather than national defense. Because of this, problems facing the SDF have not been resolved, and the SDF has used its being at the mercy of domestic politics to not pursue reform itself.

The theological debate over whether the SDF is constitutional or not has led to the actual functions of it as a military force to protect the nation being ignored. Since the establishment of the SDF, no review has been done about whether the organization and its equipment fit the times and environment. Only the hardware keeps getting modernized.

Because the SDF has been strongly influenced by the U.S. military, the SDF appears to have the latest equipment and training, and the level of its exercises is certainly world class. However, it is safe to say that Japan is not realistically organized, equipped, or prepared to deal with a contingency.

As explained in the book, the Self-Defense Forces are overly bureaucratic. This is true not only of the Internal Bureau (*Naikyoku*), which seeks to limit the SDF, but is found among the uniformed personnel themselves as well. The organization tasked with national defense has become one completely dominated by those that seek to avoid problems at all costs. Protecting oneself and promoting one's own career has become their *modus operandi*. Crisis management is a distant third.

Japan easily gives into foreign pressure. Bureaucrats react to outside criticism. In this sense, I hope this book helps to fix Japan's security problems.

Nakamura Hideki

Nogata City, Fukuoka Prefecture

INTRODUCTION

I am a member of the postwar baby boomer generation. I completed the National Defense Academy (*Bōei Daigakkō*) in 1974 as a member of the 18th Graduating Class and served in the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF, or *Kaijō Jieitai*) for 31 years until I retired in 2005.

I changed positions within the MSDF more than thirty times and moved twenty times. I have also experienced career setbacks some five times. I had some thirty direct superiors over the years, but only five of them were worth their weight. Of those, there were three I actually respected. That I only fought with five of them out of more than thirty suggests I was probably pretty patient.

The Maritime Self-Defense Force is known for doing a horrible job in personnel matters, assigning the wrong people to the wrong places. Although I very much desired to serve on submarines, I was often quite used in other positions, and only served on subs half as much as my classmates.

I served as the commander of a submarine for just one year, but was blessed with the opportunity to train with the U.S. Navy during that time. In some twenty practice engagements between nuclear-powered submarines, I won eighteen of those contests, with one loss and one tie. I "sunk" one American aircraft carrier and a supply ship, along with many other successes. Of course, it was during training and I was not allowed to actually launch the torpedoes, but we finished the exercises with a certain satisfaction about our ability to strike.

Sinking an aircraft carrier is actually not that difficult. During the Cold War, when I was the Executive Officer of a submarine and serving in place of the acting commanding officer who was on vacation, I was able to

stealthily approach the U.S.S. *Midway*, even though it was guarded by several dozen destroyers and frigates.

It is not that I am particularly qualified. Rather it is based on the fact that submarines are in a completely dominant position vis-à-vis the carriers.

Readers are probably familiar with the image of submarines shown in movies or depicted in novels, in which they are chased around by frigates and sunk using depth charges in the deep, dark sea. This is totally mistaken.

Until World War II, most submarines cruised on the surface, and only submerged for a brief time during combat. The functionality of submarines decreases underwater, and because they had to rely on batteries, their speed was slow. What's more, they could not remain submerged for long.

Today, it is different. Nuclear-powered submarines are the fastest among naval vessels, and they can stay submerged basically indefinitely. Even the conventional submarines run on electricity operate underwater most of the time, although they are slower. It can use a snorkel like device to recharge batteries and ventilate itself.

It is nearly impossible to detect a submerged submarine from a surface ship or airplane. In contrast, a submarine, by having a small antennae or periscope protrude through the top of the surface, can look for naval and other surface ships and airplanes. Moreover, surface vessels are noise and can be heard from far away. If the surface ships employs active sonar, which makes the annoying sound readers are familiar with in movies, that is even better—we in the submarines can detect them from hundreds of kilometers away.

I think it is easy, therefore, to understand the superiority of submarines in light of these features. The Maritime Self-Defense Forces' primary mission is anti-submarine warfare. In this, it is also necessary to practice against other submarines. But this is one of the most difficult types of training. U.S. nuclear-powered submarines are the best of the best.

I was blessed with ample opportunities to be able to train with them (against them) about once a year. That in and of itself was good fortune, but what was especially good was that I won 90% of the contests against the U.S. Navy. It was as much luck as it was skill, I need to say.

The MSDF's *Arashio* and a U.S. nuclear submarine would look for each other and attack. We did this unlimited training about twenty times in the northern Pacific Ocean off of Hawaii, in a designated area. The results were 18-1-1, as previously introduced.

One contest ended in a draw because we could not, as "enemies" of each other, find one another. In the one loss, it was completely my fault. Even though I found the U.S. submarine first, I went in front of it by mistake and was detected. In my heart, however, I did not feel defeated as a result of this mistake because I had found him first.

The enemy submarine was, at the time, the latest of the Los Angeles-class submarines. The *Arashio* was also new, but because it was electric-powered, we were at a disadvantage. As such, the approach used by the MSDF was that it was destined to lose and should not miss any opportunity to take out the enemy.

What we did, therefore, was to turn off the internal air conditioning system in our submarine and wait, desperately, many hours in a stress-filled environment for our chance. We were told to shoot from the hip if need be; when there was a sound of some sort, we would confirm if it was the enemy and fire away. We were encouraged to take this tack. We went along with the pose that we should just try to do our best anyway even if we could not win. We lost in the end, but I felt that it was just an excuse to accept it believing we had done everything we could. When I served as the operations officer, which is the busiest positions aboard a submarine, I experienced this type of difficult situation. Stopping the air conditioning for 24 hours, carrying a heavy wireless phone around in very humid conditions was tough. Through this, I got to know firsthand the physical limits of us human beings.

I have a somewhat warped personality. I ignore what people say especially when it comes to rules or theory. I believe in trying something out for myself, and that is how I would approach things, especially in submarine warfare.

I decided to have some of the crew on duty (which we call “listening watch”) for six hours, and guaranteed complete rest for the remaining two thirds of crew. I had the air condition on as well. A short-sighted commander might think it would be bad to have only one third of his crew on duty as the decrease would affect its overall ability to just one-third, but in fact, there was little difference with having everyone on duty at the same time.

The method a submarine uses to detect an enemy submarine is by sound. Both seek to remain quiet while finding the other’s sounds. Thus, a good submarine is a quiet submarine. The most important part of the submarine is its sonar capability. I had the lead sonarman in charge of three others, who each served as shift supervisors. Under them were other sonarmen. Because there is a difference in skills, it is a myopic approach to have everyone on duty at the same time.

However, the men are professionals. If they sense that the proficiency of the younger ones on duty is low, they will help out without having to be asked to. Yet, they also need their down time, and thus I made an effort to ensure they had time to rest.

The engine room also contributed to the operation. When dueling it out with an enemy submarine, you cannot have the engine on. I borrowed one person on duty from the engine room and had him assist in the control area, which was busy with operational details. No one gets hurt in this situation, and no one gets too tired. (The only person who loses out is the commander who might get scolded afterwards.)

When I tried this approach, we were completely victorious. Moreover, even after we detected the enemy submarine, we did not immediately attack but instead carefully observed its movements. From its blind spot

behind the enemy submarine, we gathered sound measurements and other information for a long time, giving the younger sonarmen needed experience, and then released a mock electric shock.

We could not fire a real torpedo, so through an underwater telephonic system, announced that a torpedo had been fired to simulate a strike. It does not matter if the enemy is far away or near, in front or behind. They can hear the message through this system. They are surprised, then disappointed, that they lost.

The U.S. Navy was stunned that it lost the engagement, and accused me of cheating. In order to find out, or perhaps to check our methods, they sent a lieutenant commander to our submarine. He gradually came to accept our victory. He was the executive officer on his submarine. By the time he left our submarine, he asked, perhaps with some flattery, if he could become my XO.

As an instructor, in both the ranks of Commander and Captain, I continued to go on submarines, but surprised people with my seeming corner-cutting (this was in part an affected pose of mine). One of those was a senior captain on the verge of retiring. He appeared to have been satisfied with his career and was looking forward to retirement. He asked me if there was something I still wished to do. I said that I wanted to command an American nuclear sub. He agreed that indeed would be interesting, but I could not help but think he was simply being polite and did not really feel that way.

While engagements with U.S. nuclear submarines during training exercises were said to be free play (without restrictions), there in fact was one limitation. We had to use our snorkel or our noise generator for a certain amount of time.

As explained earlier, the snorkel, which comes from the German word for an elephant's trunk, is a necessary feature for diesel engine submarines and has come to symbolize them. Conventional submarines make a lot of noise, making the snorkel its major weak point. With the snorkel or with

the noise generator, we still won.

A Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy vessel that had visited Pearl Harbor had since departed, but the U.S. Navy had lost track of it and assumed, correctly, it was still in the waters near Hawaii collecting intelligence. Concerned, the U.S. Navy's COMSUBPAC (Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet) issued an order to submarines in the area to locate the vessel. Fortunately, the *Arashio* was the first one to find it and report on its movements. "The JDS ARASHIO found it. Other submarines be on the lookout and continue to monitor," came the subsequent—and somewhat embarrassed—message. I was glad to uphold the honor of the Japanese Navy.

Hawaii is a strategic location for the U.S. Navy. As such, there are many outstanding devices and methods there to be able to detect submarines. Detecting Japan's submarines are their biggest challenge and goal. In the case of the *Arashio*, they tried to detect us apparently, but never were able to. One time, we were informed that the U.S. Navy had located us, but I had to laugh. The position they gave was wrong. It was where we were scheduled to be the next day.

I was quite successful in the exercise but when I returned to Japan I found myself in a tough predicament: a false charge had been made against me. This was quickly cleared up, but some individuals who were against me continued to go after me. I was eventually accused of something else, and found responsible, and forced to step down as the submarine commander.

Perhaps in order to protect himself, my superior who dismissed me said, "You may have tactical skills, and your reputation among the U.S. Navy is high. But that is not important. You must not disobey rules." At first I thought he was going to praise me, but it appears that his priority was on following the rules regardless of ability.

Thanks to this, I was shunted to the side for the next decade before I finally retired. I was able to relax during that time. Fortune is

unpredictable, goes the saying. I had a lot of free time, so I studied what I wished to study and made great use of my time being sidelined at the JMSDF Command and Staff College and National Institute of Defense Studies, which were both located in Meguro Ward, Tokyo, at the time, to use the documents in their valuable collections. In retrospect, I am grateful for the MSDF, which once bullied me, for giving me the chance to recharge my batteries for ten years and build the foundations for my intellectual growth.

While some of my accomplishments may be seen as extraordinary, the MSDF as a whole, as well as the Air Self-Defense Force and Ground Self-Defense Force all equally are of the highest international standards. For example, the ASDF trains with its anti-air missile units in the United States, live-firing its Patriot missiles (formerly Nike missiles). In this training, they are evaluated by their U.S. counterparts. Several decades ago, the ASDF earned an unbelievably high score during the live-firing training. I have heard that the tradition continues today.

The GSDF's sniper team recently won an international competition, too. When thinking about the fact that the history of the sniper field within the GSDF is quite short, it is nothing short of a miracle that they were able to advance so far so quickly. The late popular writer Shiba Ryōtarō has noted in one of his novels that Japan is good at artillery, which requires the use of one's head, but is not good at the use of small arms, which requires a quick decision. However, the U.S. Marine Corps, in its combat lessons, has described the accuracy of Japan's army when shooting (not snipers but the average solider) as downright frightful.

In other words, whatever Japanese set their minds to, they are likely to become very good at it. This is especially true of the SDF, which achieves world standards. The purpose of this book is to demonstrate to the reader that it is not the ability of the SDF that prevents its playing a larger international role. It is the laws and socio-political restraints placed on the SDF.

Who is responsible for the situation in which the SDF, whose performance in training and international competitions is world class, is unable to perform its true mission of national defense? Japan was demilitarized and weakened by the Allied powers seventy-five years ago in the immediate postwar period, but it has been the Japanese people in the interim that has accepted this situation. This book explains what conditions have been in place that have limited the SDF from performing its inherent role and that may prevent it from truly being able to defend the country when the time comes.

In order to interest the reader, and in light of my special ability to discuss submarines, I introduced in this chapter my own experiences and alluded to the capability of the Maritime Self-Defense Force. I have written other books, albeit in Japanese, that go into more detail about that type of vessel. One was *Hontō no Sensuikan no Tatakaikata* (The True Combat Style of Submarines), published by Kōjinsha NF Bunko in 2006, and the other *Sensuikan Kanzen File* (A Complete File on Submarines), by Kasakura Publishing in 2015. Both publishers are based in Tokyo, as is the publisher (KK Besuto Seraazu) for the original Japanese version of this book.

Because submarines are in a class by themselves, they can attack not only an MSDF destroyer but also a U.S. aircraft carrier. Of course, a Chinese aircraft carrier, which is several ranks below, would not be difficult either. It does not matter how many ships are defending an aircraft carrier—they are no match for a combined effort by U.S. and Japanese submarines.

Submarines, when they have a target, can do as they wish. The only problem is an enemy submarine. However, China is several decades behind the United States and so such a conflict would not be too much of a challenge.

The real issue, therefore, is not the capability of Japan, but rather the will of the country. That is why I wrote this book.