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# Capacity Building for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific



Leaders and senior government representatives from the 18 members of the Pacific Islands Forum and Japan will hold the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting in Tokyo from July 16 to 18. Japan continues to advance the vision of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific. That includes engaging in cooperative initiatives with nations throughout the region. Here are two initiatives for contributing to capacity building in marine rescue operations and in medical care for participants in peacekeeping operations.

Four members of the Japan Coast Guard conducted training sessions in January for counterparts in two Pacific island coast guards: the Federated States of Micronesia's Maritime Wing and the Republic of the Marshall Islands' Sea Patrol. The Japanese were from the coast guard's Mobile Cooperation Team, which provides capacity-building assistance to counterparts throughout the Indo-Pacific. It provides assistance in the interest of ensuring safety for shipping on Indo-Pacific sea lanes and for fishery in Indo-Pacific waters. The training in January received financial support from the Nippon Foundation and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. Mihara Marina, an officer of the Mobile Cooperation Team, offered an overview of the team's activity.

"Our work in providing capacity-building assistance to other coast guards begins with evaluating their needs: whether they need help most in strengthening their rescue capabilities, for example, or their enforcement capabilities. And if the answer is enforcement capabilities, questions arise as to whether we are talking about strength-



Mihara Marina  
Officer, Mobile  
Cooperation Team,  
Japan Coast Guard

ening capabilities in processing materials, in identifying possible infractions, or in confronting suspect vessels at sea."

"We determined that we could best serve our counterparts in the Federated States of Micronesia [FSM] and the Republic of the Marshall Islands [RMI] with rescue training," explained Commander Nishimura Issei, the deputy director of the coast guard's International Strategy Division. Nishimura, another coast guard officer, and two Mobile Cooperation Team experts in rescue work conducted the training for a week each in the FSM and the RMI.

"Rescue work—saving lives—is fundamental to the coast guard mission," Nishimura continued. "The training covered how to lift a person who is adrift at sea safely aboard a rescue vessel. It included instruction in such basics as how to tie a rope around the victim. It also included instruction in how to use a simple mechanical apparatus for lifting the victim aboard a vessel. In addition, the training covered such related proce-



Commander  
Nishimura Issei  
Deputy Director,  
International Strategy  
Division, Japan Coast  
Guard

dures as using an automated external defibrillator to treat a person whose heart has stopped.

"Successful training hinges on earning people's confidence, and we therefore devote special effort to building relationships of trust. We are there to teach, but we need to teach in ways that honor the trainees' pride. That means eschewing a teacher-student stance and approaching the training from the stance of learning together.

"A lot of advance communication went into the preparations for the January training sessions, but nothing beats being on the ground and being in direct contact with people. This was our first experience working with the FSM's Maritime Wing and the RMI's Sea Patrol. We learned a lot about how we can serve them even better in future training sessions."

## Flexible responsiveness to local needs

Australian and US government representatives were on hand to observe the training sessions. The Japanese conferred with them about ways to coordinate with each other to fortify the training effectively. Nishimura voiced pride, however, in what he described as a "characteristically Japanese" sensitivity to counterparts' needs and expectations. He



Eric Jorban  
Deputy Commissioner, Police Department  
Republic of the Marshall Islands

"I hope that we will be able to collaborate with the Japan Coast Guard and the Mobile Cooperation Team to enhance capabilities and training initiatives and to foster a new era where we might come together in joint patrols and ship-rider programs."

stressed that the Japan Coast Guard is responsive to local circumstances in adapting its training curricula to needs in different nations. Mihara expressed,

The Japanese Ministry of Defense has conducted capacity building with 18 Asia-Pacific partner countries since 2012. It is presently implementing such programs with 13 partner countries through 24 projects. Five projects undertaken recently are with Pacific island partners: Fiji, military medicine; Papua New Guinea, military band; Solomon Islands, unexploded ordnance disposal; Tonga, outboard motor maintenance; and multiple Pacific Island nations, Ship Rider Cooperation Program.

Fiji expressed interest in capacity building on account of its proactive participation in UN peacekeeping operations. That participation dates from 1978, when Fijians served under the UN flag in Lebanon. Fijian personnel presently serve in eight UN missions in Africa and the Middle East.

Analysis of Fiji's needs highlighted military medicine as a capacity-building priority for Japanese assistance. Matsuzawa Tomoko, Director for Capacity Building of the Indo-Pacific Regional Policy Division in the Ministry of Defense described how the project unfolded.

"Fiji, partnering with Australia, developed the Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Camp in 2022 for personnel scheduled to participate in UN peacekeeping operations, and that facility included a medical clinic. After coordination meetings with Fiji, we agreed to support them with our expertise in clinic management and in mili-



Matsuzawa Tomoko  
Director for Capacity  
Building of Indo-Pacific  
Regional Policy Division,  
Bureau of Defense  
Policy, Japan Ministry of  
Defense

meanwhile, a receptiveness to learning from counterparts.

"We strive through our work to nurture lasting relationships with our coun-

terparts, as well as to contribute to capacity building. That includes being receptive to ways of thinking in different cultures and different nations."

tary medicine training.  
"We kicked things off by hosting eight medical personnel from the Fijian military in 2022. They spent a week in Tokyo observing hospital management procedures at Self-Defense Forces Hospital Yokosuka. We held discussions with them and gathered information throughout 2023 about needs and circumstances in Fiji. Based on our findings and coordination with Fiji, we dispatched four individuals this February to provide about two weeks of training in Fiji: a physician from the Self-Defense Forces Central Hospital, an emergency first-aid expert from the Ground Self-Defense Force Medical Service School, and two of us from the Bureau of Defense Policy's Indo-Pacific Regional Policy Division."

#### Buddy First Aid

All personnel that participate in UN peacekeeping operations need to take the Buddy First Aid course. The Japanese capacity building in Fiji equipped the participants to provide Buddy First Aid training to their comrades. Basically, the training centers on instruction in how to stop the bleeding when someone is wounded and get the person to a place of safety. It is a combination of classroom instruction and outdoor practical guidance and exercises.

Collaboration with partner countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, could be a part of Japan's capacity building with Indo-Pacific nations. "An Australian expert," said Matsuzawa, "delivered a lecture via an online connection for the Fijian medical personnel during the invitation program in Japan in 2022. We coordinate with each other to ensure that we neither leave any gaps in our support nor incur duplication in our respective activities."

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Watisoni Mulevoro  
Sergeant  
Fiji Infantry Regiment  
Republic of Fiji

"We had two Japanese instructors for six Fijian trainees, and the instruction and materials were excellent. This was the first round of military medicine training by Japan's Defense Ministry in Fiji, and we started with all-male trainees and training that took place only on our base. Next time, I hope that we can include some females among the trainees and do some training with blanks in the bush outside the base. We appreciate the gratitude that our instructors displayed when we took them to lunch and showed them sites like the marketplace."

#### Women, Peace and Security

The capacity-building project in Fiji included a lecture on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), which is given as a mandate for most UN peacekeeping operations. Adopted by the UN Security Council in 2000, the WPS agenda centers on (1) a call for protecting women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence and (2) reaffirmation of the importance of women's full and equal participation in peacekeeping and reconstruction. Since last year, the WPS agenda has been reflected in capacity building conducted by Japan's Ministry of Defense with partner nations for personnel bound for peacekeeping operations.

"We instill," emphasized Matsuzawa, "two aspects of WPS. One is the importance of protecting vulnerable individuals, especially women and girls, from violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. The other is the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations in regard to sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers. Japan has accelerated its initiatives and activities in connection with WPS, and we hope to enhance further our WPS cooperation with partner countries." ■

