

Japan holds firm to U.S. alliance

by Linda de Hoyos

The United States and Japan are signing an agreement for Japanese private-sector participation in the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, Japan announced July 5. The agreement brings into the SDI program the full weight of Japan's technological capabilities, which are regarded as crucial to the SDI's realization.

Japan's decision to participate in the program has come despite numerous attempts to sow confusion and misinformation on both sides of the Pacific. Japan's primary concern was that the technology spin-offs derived from SDI be fully available to the participating Japanese firms. This agreement stipulates that Japanese firms will fully benefit from the technology of the SDI, but with licensing rights reserved for the United States.

Japan's adherence to the SDI, although economic considerations play an important part, is not merely a technical or economic matter. Despite the increasing perception in Japan that the United States is not a reliable ally and is weakening fast economically thanks to its financial follies, Japan has shown no inclination to shift away from its postwar strategic alliance with the United States.

The SDI agreement was clinched in discussions with Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who arrived in Tokyo at the end of June. Weinberger, who met with Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, noted that if he reviews the array of U.S. allies, he considers the U.S. relation with Japan to be the most important. On the agenda during the visit was the Japanese desire to produce its own jet-fighter plane, rather than relying upon U.S. exports. Although the furor over the Toshiba company's sale of U.S. technology to the Soviet Union dominated the headlines in the United States, Weinberger told the Japanese that the administration would not support any congressional sanctions or retaliation against Japan. Particular emphasis in Weinberger's talks was joint work to combat Soviet submarine capability.

Under circumstances in which the United States is reduced to a second- or third-rate power, Japan is faced with two options: It can either come to terms with the U.S.S.R., its primary strategic enemy, and attempt to reap the benefits

from investments in Siberian development, or it can begin the process of building up its own independent military and political strength, to match its economic might, and become a global power in its own right. The latter would appear to be Japan's long-range plan. When a Soviet economic delegation arrived in Tokyo to discuss possible Japanese investment in Siberian development, the Japanese informed the Muscovites that no economic pact was possible until "political relations have improved." This refers to Japan's non-negotiable demand that Moscow return the four Kurile Islands it seized from Japan at the tail-end of World War II. Japan is not interested in the types of economic deals eyed by Western Europe.

Despite trade war measures coming from Washington, Japan is hoping that the collapse of effective U.S. economic and strategic policy is temporary, and is holding on to its strategic alliance with the United States. There is no equivocation on this point. Soon after Weinberger's visit, Nakasone called on senior officers of the Self-Defense Forces to maintain close contacts with the American military for more efficient operation of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.

Although Japan publicly is for nuclear disarmament of both superpowers, it is not convinced that the zero-option proposals now on the table between Moscow and Washington will benefit world peace. Former NATO Commander Gen. Bernard Rogers's harsh attacks during the month of June on the zero option were featured front page in the Japanese press. Nakasone has also called for the deployment of 100 intermediate-range nuclear force warheads in Alaska in a move to counter the Soviet Union's SS-20s in eastern Siberia.

During the meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers in June, Japan's foreign minister, Kuranari, went on record in opposition to the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Southeast Asia, as being promulgated by Indonesia, Malaysia, and Moscow. Indonesian Foreign Minister Mochtar claimed that the nuclear-free zone was the poor man's path to disarmament, while the SDI was the deterrent of the advanced sector. Kuranari countered this assertion by stating that the idea of a nuclear-free zone, given the strategic realities of the region and the Soviet presence at Cam Ranh Bay and Danang in Vietnam, was "wishful sentiment." Given Kuranari's background as a native of Nagasaki, his words had a weighty effect on the ASEAN summit.

The same concern for a strong allied strategic presence in the region was amplified in a speech in Bangkok delivered by Japan's ambassador to Thailand Akikane Kiuchi. He declared that ASEAN cannot defend itself unless the Philippines regains economic and political stability, a problem that the ASEAN nations are in the best position to help solve. The major question, he said, is the continued presence of the U.S. bases at Clark Field and Subic Bay in the Philippines, which must be maintained as a front line of defense against the U.S.S.R., which sits just on the other side of the South China Sea.