

Remarks by the Consul General on the occasion of the Japan US Military Program (JUMP) event at Pensacola on October 20, 2016

Admiral Walsh, Ambassador Orr, Captain Truluck, President Kelley, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor to say a few words today.

As you know, Japan and the United States share common values such as democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law, and strategic interests. The two nations are bound by an alliance and strong friendship. At a time when we are confronted by serious challenges in Asia such as North Korea's development of nuclear bomb/ ballistic missiles, and unilateral actions in the seas that threaten freedom of navigation and overflight, the Japan-US alliance continues to contribute to the peace and stability of the region. Together we address challenges not only in Asia but also those affecting the broader international community such as terrorism, cyber security and space.

The effectiveness of this important alliance relies on the hard work and the very close cooperation of our two forces. In July, the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Training Squadron docked at the US Naval Station in Mayport. Throughout the visit there was a strong sense of camaraderie between our two forces. I was also touched by the warm welcome of the local community, especially when over 800 people attended the joint concert of the Self-Defense Force and the US Navy band in Jacksonville.

The US service members and civilians stationed in Japan play a crucial role in the alliance. We are so lucky to have many such people who come back to the US and continue to promote our friendship. Let me take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to all those who have been stationed in Japan.

The Japanese people are grateful to the Government and the people of the United States for supporting Japan after the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011. While the earthquake was a horrible experience, the tremendous outpouring of goodwill brought our two peoples even closer together. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the US Armed Forces played a key role in providing transport and other precious support in the affected areas despite the danger of nuclear radiation. Their heroic actions will always be remembered by the Japanese people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Japan has been making efforts to contribute even more actively to the peace and stability of Asia Pacific and the world. Japan is now in the process of operationalizing legislation to enable Japan to participate in collective self-defense, making possible wider collaboration with the US forces. Japan provides coast guard ships and training to help Southeast Asian countries enforce order in their seas. As a current member of the UN Security Council, Japan works closely with the US to address threats such as North Korea. Japan provides significant assistance to Syria, Iraq and the neighboring countries, not only for humanitarian needs but also for economic development, to address the root causes of instability and terrorism in the region.

These are just a few examples of how Japan and the US share the common purpose of a stable international environment and work closely together. There is a reason why our bilateral relations are in such an excellent condition. It is because our two economies are so closely intertwined that a “strong US” and a “strong Japan” are the two sides of the same coin.

Japan’s foreign direct investment to the US has increased by nearly 5 times after the financial crisis much more than other countries and is now the second largest source of FDI in the US at cumulative amount of US\$ 411 billion. Japanese companies

contribute to about 80,000 high-paying jobs in the US.

As for Japanese companies in Florida, they are the largest investor in terms of property, plant and equipment and account for nearly 26,000 jobs. In Pensacola, Hitachi Cable has a factory which makes wire harness for automobiles.

When I went to the Daytona International Speedway, I was pleased to see Toyota cars racing along with Ford and Chrysler cars. I was less pleased when the Toyota Camry came in second. But I mention this to share a not so well known fact that Toyota Camry has a local content made in North America of 75%, a figure matched by only Ford F-Series and Ford Fusion among the American cars.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite Florida being the farthest State in the US from Japan, the link between Japan and Florida is very strong. As this reception shows, Florida is home to many current and former US service members who have served in Japan.

You may be surprised by how the Panhandle has strong links with Japan. The co-organizer of this event, the Japan-America Society of Northwest Florida is one of the most active Japanese societies in the State. The University of West Florida has the Japan Center which offers a Japanese program and cultural events. The Bon Fest, a Japanese festival, is organized every year in Pensacola. Pensacola has a sister city relationship with Gero City since 1998 and it receives high school students from Japan every year.

It is my sincere hope that the link with Japan will continue to strengthen. Promoting two-way exchanges between Japan and Florida is a very important part of my job. Last time I visited Pensacola in April, I met with many aerospace industry people in

this area. After having visited the Space Coast and other areas with aerospace industries, I took the initiative to organize the first Japan-Florida aerospace workshop in Tokyo in September. The workshop helped educate the 80 Japanese companies about the vibrant and significant aerospace industry in Florida. I will work to promote more collaboration in aerospace and other sectors in the months to come.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Whenever I meet someone, I make a point of asking whether the person has visited Japan. Unfortunately, most would reply no but it was high on their to-do list. If you are interested in making the first journey to Japan, I recommend talking to the US service members who were in Japan during today's event. And of course, after that I sincerely wish you will start planning the trip to Japan.

Let me conclude by expressing my heartfelt appreciation to the co-organizers, Naval Air Station Pensacola, National Naval Aviation Museum, Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA, Santa Rosa Economic Development, the National Association of Japan America Society, the Japan-America Society of Northwest Florida.

Since I arrived in Florida in November last year, people have extended such a warm welcome and have helped me at every turn. May I express my sincere thanks to all of you for coming to this event. The Japanese Consulate is open to all who are interested in exchanges with Japan.