

Panel urges Japan to strengthen military ties with US

Japan should strengthen its alliance with the United States and allow weapons exports to its ally in light of fresh threats to world security, a panel of experts advised Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

Recommendations made in a report by the panel on Japan's security and defense will probably be considered when the government updates its National Defense Program Outline later this year.

As a fundamental policy against threats and terrorism, the report asked the Japanese government to make the Self-Defense Forces a "flexible force" capable of multi-purpose tasks to protect the country and counter subversive acts.

It also said the Japan-U.S. alliance is increasingly serving as a deterrence to threats in the international community, suggesting the alliance is the pillar of the nation's security programs.

It recommended that Japan's defense officials should talk with their U.S. counterparts to define Tokyo's role in security affairs more clearly.

The experts also touched on a sensitive area involving Japan's ban on weapons exports.

In light of the future joint development of a missile defense system with the United States, they said that regulations should be eased to allow weapons exports to America.

In 1967, Prime Minister Eisaku Sato announced that Japan would not allow weapons exports to communist countries, those to which the United Nations bans exports of weapons and countries that are involved in international conflicts.

The government also pledged in 1976 that Japan would not export weapons to any country. (Mainichi Shimbun, Japan, Oct. 5, 2005)