

As delivered

**Speech at the Japan Self-Defence Forces Day Reception
by Ambassador Koji Tsuruoka
at the Embassy of Japan
on Wednesday 29 June 2016**

My Lords, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, thank you very much for coming and joining us at this reception this evening celebrating the 62nd anniversary of the self-defence forces of Japan.

I am new as all you have noticed, three weeks. I've lived in London for the last three weeks together with my wife Yoko and we have enjoyed it tremendously, because London has no shortage of surprises. And once more these surprises lead to making my life a bit more difficult than I had expected when I was assigned to serve in this great capital. But since we in Japan thrive on long working hours and hard work, I think this has been prepared just for me so that I don't lose the habit I have acquired in the 15 years of continuing work in Tokyo but continue to do that in London. But I am sure that is not going to last for very long.

The world is now calmer than it was last week, or even the beginning of the week, so this will settle down, and of course, not that everything will go back to normal because there's been some historic important decisions but we will continue of course to live, in peace and in harmony and among friends. That is exactly what the Self-Defence Forces continue to ensure together with the colleagues around the world that do have the capacity of flexing the muscle but, they only show them without using them, so that they will have better idea than using them. That is exactly what the Self-Defence Forces day is intended to celebrate - we are celebrating peace.

Now, we have a long history between Japan and the UK on many many areas of cooperation and defence is one of them.

On May 31st before I arrived, our then Chargés d'Affaires Mr Kato, who is with us tonight, and Captain Kitagawa, who will be leaving us shortly, were invited to attend a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Jutland at St. Mangus Cathedral, Kirkwall, Orkney and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Lyness Naval Cemetery, Hoy. The Japanese Navy sent four observers to the battle and Commander Tadasuke Shimomura, Naval Attaché, was killed in action on board HMS Queen Mary. This illustrates the longstanding nature of our ties. The UK had played a major role in Japan's modernisation process in the latter half of the 19th century, and at the time of Jutland, our friendship, enshrined in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, was flourishing. Our two countries were allies during the First World War, as was amply demonstrated when Japan's first and only Mediterranean squadron fought alongside allied warships in the most critical period in 1917 and 1918. Seventy-two Japanese seamen perished when their vessel was torpedoed by a U-boat and their well-maintained graves can be found now in Kalkara Military Cemetery in Malta.

And I thank the Ambassador of Malta for joining us this evening.

Long speeches tend to lose the attention of the audience. Although many more paragraphs have been prepared by my staff, I will cut them short to allow you to enjoy the good food and drink. Today we are celebrating peace and we are celebrating friendship. It is so appropriate that these celebrations are conducted in London and between Japan and the UK in the presence of all our friends from around the world represented here in London. This is precisely so because the two countries, Japan and the UK, respect democracy and the rule of law, and we also respect the prosperity of the individuals that live within our territory and also those that live abroad. Some in very difficult circumstances, where our Self-Defence Forces people will not hesitate to go and help. Our Self-Defence Forces personnel have been deployed to tackle a number of natural disasters that have hit Japan over the last few years. And I personally would like to thank them, on this occasion, for the hard work that they've done for the Japanese people, and I would also like to thank all of you for encouraging us such times of difficulty. We are now hopefully over with natural disasters and we should avoid man-made disasters. So with that, may I propose a toast, and of course this is not our

national day so I will confine my toast to the amicable ties between Japan and the UK and the health and further prosperity of all of us here, and the countries represented in this reception.

Thank you. Kanpai!

(End)