



Rising Thunder '14

an enduring partnership



Issue 1

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U.S., Japanese forces come together

16 years and going strong; bilateral training begins



Photo by: Staff Sgt. Antwaun J. Parrish, 19th PAD

Lt. Col. Jeff Bryson (left), commander of 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Bde, 2nd Inf. Div. and Col. Takashi Goto, a JGSDF commander, raise a Daruma, a Buddhist talisman for good luck, Sept. 22.

By Sgt. Cody Quinn, 28th PAD

Operation Rising Thunder roared to a start with an opening ceremony Sept. 2 at Yakima Training Center, Wash.

Soldiers with 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., and their counterparts in the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force came together in a ceremony marking the beginning of a month of interoperability training.

"We're pleased to be a part of such an important event," said Lt. Col. Jeff Bryson, commander of 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. "Our mission is to facilitate this bilateral training to ensure the JGSDF have an increased ability to defend their homeland."

Operation Rising Thunder was designed to bring U.S. and Japanese forces together for training, and the opening ceremony marked the 16th anniversary of the operation.



Photo by: Sgt. Cody Quinn, 28th PAD

The U.S. and Japanese combine party arrives at the opening ceremony for Operation Rising Thunder, Sept. 2.

"The focus of this exercise is to train combined arms in conjunction with maneuver and firepower, to perform comprehensive combat power with combined arms units and train bilaterally between Japan and the U.S to enhance interoperability," said Col. Takashi Goto, a JGSDF commander.

Over 300 JGSDF personnel and 470 Army Soldiers are scheduled to perform urban assault, sniper and combined arms training, among other tasks, during September.

"Since the 2nd Infantry Division is aligned to the Pacific, opportunities to train together are of increasing importance in the global environment," said Bryson.

Bryson looked forward to having his soldiers interact with their Japanese counterparts, share experiences and build relationships, on a personal level, to strengthen trust between the two nations.

"Through comprehensive training we are confident that the Japanese and the U.S. will have a strengthened working relationship," said Bryson.

The focus of this year's training is interoperability, said Bryson.

"We will build a mutual trust between Japan and the U.S. to complete the mission," said Goto.

Japanese tanks, U.S. Strykers combine fire power

By Sgt. Ryan Hallock, 19th PAD

Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, and members of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force teamed up at Operation Rising Thunder for a combined arms live-fire exercise at Yakima Training Center, Wash., Sept. 15.

The two nations joined forces to conduct the annual, bilateral exercise and to continue strengthening the enduring partnership that began in 1952.

“At every echelon in my company, our elements have partnered with theirs,” said Capt. Corey Ritter, company commander, B Co, 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. “I think that strengthens our ability to work together.”

Ritter said that in the combined environment, the mission objective was simple and easily able to transcend the language barrier: destroy the enemy.

The mission began when a convoy of Japanese Type 10 Tanks rolled into their firing positions, each with a red flag raised signaling, “ready to fire.” The tanks waited – calm before the storm. The first tank fired, a fireball erupting out its barrel, followed shortly by the boom. The rest of the tanks followed suit.

Over the radio came the word that the JBLM infantry Soldiers needed to hear: the JGSDF have destroyed five tanks and suppressed the infantry battalion. The U.S. Soldiers moved into a hillside position and began suppressive fires, while the flanking Stryker elements pushed forward.

Pfc. Dylan Caudill, an infantryman and radioman for 3rd Platoon, B Co, gave support by fire from a trench outside of the objective and covered the Soldiers of 2nd Platoon as they cleared and secured the area.

Caudill said working with his Japanese counterparts has been



Photo by: Sgt. Ryan Hallock, 19th PAD
A member of the JGSDF readies his Japanese Type 10 Tank during a combined arms live-fire exercise, Sept. 15.

a positive experience. After spending time training and eating together, he said, a bond was formed.

“We’ve slowly gotten into each other’s personal lives,” said Caudill. “Where are you from? What kind of music do you listen to? It’s two different cultures bonding together.”

Ritter said training with the JGSDF has been an experience that has helped highlight the U.S. Army’s continued investment in the Pacific.

“At the Soldier level, we’ve talked to them about how we’re regionally

aligned with the Pacific and that we need to be ready to respond if anything happens,” he said.

Part of the exercise’s success stems from the working relationship the two nations have formed, Ritter added.

He’s seen friendships develop by trading unit patches, exchanging coins, checking out their counterpart’s weapons, and exchanging email addresses to stay in contact. Some of his Soldiers have even discussed visiting Japan after the exercise.



Photo by: Sgt. Ryan Hallock 19th PAD
Soldiers from 2nd Bde, 2nd Inf. Div. lay down suppressive fire from a hillside during a combined arms live-fire exercise Sept. 15.

Combined forces compete in annual half-marathon

By Staff Sgt. Antwaun Parrish,
19th PAD

Soldiers from the U.S. Army and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force joined community members to take part in an annual race that featured a half-marathon and a 5k run and walk Sept. 20 to benefit Cottage in the Meadow Memorial Hospice in Yakima, Wash. and the Wounded Warrior Project.

“This is a good cause [and] it’s always good to think about those wounded warriors who gave up so much,” said Sgt. Miles Logan, an indirect fire infantryman assigned to 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. Logan was the top finishing U.S. Soldier in the half marathon with a time of 1:34.

Soldiers with 2nd Brigade, 2nd In-

fantry Division, elements of the 7th Infantry Division, and their counterparts in the JGSDF have been training together at Rising Thunder in Yakima since Sept. 2.

This year Shouichi Watahabe, a mem-



Photo by: Staff Sgt. Antwaun Parrish, 19th PAD
Participants prepare to begin the Howard’s Medical Supply Army Base Half-Marathon, 5K run and walk, Sept. 20.

ber of the JGSDF, finished first of 543 participants with a time of 1:24, just nine minutes shy of his personal best.

“I’m glad that I was given the chance to run here,” said Watahabe. “It was nice

to be able to run with the American soldiers.”

Logan agrees that running alongside his foreign counterparts for his first half-marathon was a great experience.

“They train differently so it was interesting to see how good they were,” said Logan. “The Japanese are strong runners.”

Not only did Logan enjoy running alongside the Japanese Soldiers, he also feels that the exercise is a great way to build relationships.

“I’ve been able to train with the Japanese before and it’s always good to share tactics,” said Logan. “Plus, we get a chance to work with our allies.”

Watahabe said he looks forward to participating in the race again after next year’s Rising Thunder.

Forces take a break for a friendly sports competition

By Staff Sgt. Mark Miranda, 7th ID

Volleyball and softball games between Soldiers of Japan Ground Self-Defense Force and soldiers of 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division kicked off a day celebrating the partnership for this year’s Rising Thunder combined exercises at Yakima Training Center, Wash. Sept. 7.

“We’ve enjoyed our time here,” said JGSDF 1st Lt. Satoshi Hashiba, an OH-58 Kiowa helicopter pilot from Takasaki, Japan.

“It has been interesting to learn from working with U.S. Soldiers.”

The exercises have traditionally offered Soldiers of I Corps, and now 7th Infantry Division units, the opportunity to increase language skills, regional expertise and cultural understanding by working with the JGSDF.

A break in training that included field artillery, tank, aviation and small-arms ranges in the days prior allowed service members from both countries the



Photo by: Staff Sgt. Mark Miranda, 7th ID
JGSDF troops and Soldiers with 4th Bn., 23rd Inf. Reg. play volleyball, Sept. 7.

chance to relax and bond over their enjoyment of sports.

The games drew large crowds cheering for each of the teams. Japanese spectators kept the mood light, and cheered for both Americans and their own teams.

“They are good sportsmen, and we

had a lot of fun. It has been an unique experience coming here,” said JGSDF 1st Lt. Kunihiro Masu, a field artillery officer from Japan’s Tochigi prefecture.

During the week, Masu demonstrated the capabilities of his unit’s FH-70 howitzers, and had a good look at the U.S. Army M777 howitzers.

“The guns are different, but the spirits of the crews behind them are very similar,” said Masu.

At the end of all the final competitions, both JGSDF teams and teams fielded by 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment lined up to thank one another for memorable games. Japanese troops held closing ceremonies for the day with a demonstration of Taiko-style festival drumming and a crowd-participation game of rock-paper-scissors.

Enjoying friendly competition was another step forward in continuing the relationship the JGSDF has had with Soldiers from Joint Base Lewis-McChord through 16 years of annual Rising Thunder exercises.

Top pictures around Rising Thunder



Soldiers from 2nd Bde, 2nd Inf. Div., enter a building to clear and secure it during a combined arms live-fire exercise, Sept. 15. (Photo by: Sgt. Ryan Hallock 19th PAD)



Lt. Gen. Koichi Isobe, commanding general of the Eastern Army, JGSDF, and Maj. Gen. James Boozer, commanding general of the U.S. Army Japan, receive a briefing, Sept. 5. (Photo by: Sgt. Cody Quinn, 28th PAD)



JGSDF troops demonstrate Taiko festival drumming, Sept. 11. (Photo by: Staff Sgt. Mark Miranda, 7th ID)

U.S. Army Soldiers and members of the JGSDF participate in the Howard's Medical Supply Army Base Half-Marathon, 5k run and walk, Sept. 22. (Photo by: Staff Sgt. Antwaun Parrish, 19th PAD)



A JGSDF member guides a Cobra anti-tank helicopter onto a forward aircraft refueling point, Sept. 4. (Photo by: Sgt. Cody Quinn, 28th PAD)



Soldiers from 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division advance on their objective during a combined arms live-fire exercise, Sept. 15. (Photo by: Sgt. Ryan Hallock 19th PAD)



A JGSDF Type 96 multi-purpose missile system fires a TOW missile, Sept. 5. (Photo by Sgt. Cody Quinn, 28th PAD)

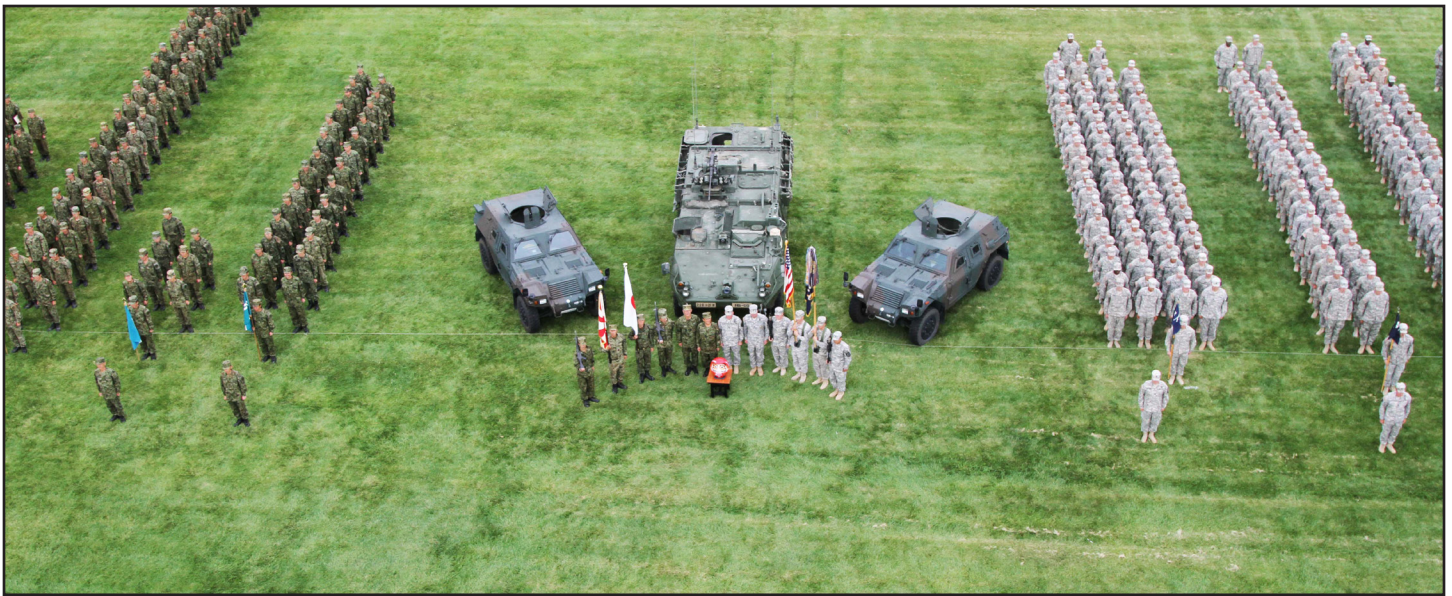


Photo by: Staff Sgt. Antwaun J. Parrish, 19th PAD

Exercise closes, leaves fond memories for all

By Staff Sgt. Antwaun Parrish,
19th PAD

Soldiers with 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, elements of the 7th Infantry Division and members of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force marked the end of Operation Rising Thunder with a closing ceremony Sept. 22 Yakima Training Center, Wash.

This year was the 16th time U.S. and Japanese Soldiers have trained together in the combined exercise. The goal of the exercise was to strengthen the partnership between the two countries through assault, sniper and combined arms training.

More than 300 JGSDF personnel and 470 U.S. Soldiers participated in the operation.

During the exercise, the two forces exchanged knowledge about their own tactics and battle drills in order to increase cohesion, understanding and trust while training together.

"The bonds forged during this last month will extend for years to come," said Lt. Col. Jeff Bryson, commander of 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. Bryson also said the training en-

hanced the readiness of U.S. and Japanese forces for future missions and set the stage for upcoming exercises.

Bryson expressed his gratitude and appreciation to Col. Takashi Goto, a JGSDF commander, as well as the performance and professionalism of the JGSDF Soldiers during the exercise.

Goto and Bryson completed the most

come of the training and the bonds that were formed during the exercise.

Goto said that one of his goals for his own forces had been to take advantage of YTC to accomplish realistic, focused training and to increase interoperability between the two nations.

"I am very proud of what we have accomplished," said Goto. "These three weeks of hard training has strengthened our partnership with the U.S."

Both commanders ended their remarks by discussing how Operation Rising Thunder will continue to be a fond memory for all involved.

"We will never forget your friendship and hard work," said Goto as he recounted the positive aspects of the exercise.

"This will be a month that the Tomahawks (4-23 Inf.) will remember for the rest of their lives," said Bryson.

The ceremony concluded with the presentation of awards as the senior commanders exchanged mementos.

The U.S. Army and the JGSDF will meet again when they take part in Yama Sakura, another bilateral exercise, this December in Tokyo.



Photo by: Staff Sgt. Antwaun J. Parrish, 19th PAD
Soldiers and members of the JGSDF run to their formations after being presented awards at the closing ceremony for Operation Rising Thunder, Sept. 22, 2014.

significant portion of the ceremony and the last joint action of the exercise when they finished painting the eyes on a Daruma, a Buddhist talisman of good luck, to symbolize the successful completion of Rising Thunder.

The sentiment that the two militaries had strengthened their partnership was echoed during Goto's speech, as he expressed how pleased he was by the out-

