

Japan exports Patriot missiles to assist US-led war on Russia

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Japan announced last Friday that it would supply the US with Patriot missiles following the revision of export rules. The missiles will replenish Washington's stockpiles that have been depleted by the funnelling of arms into Ukraine for the US-led war against Russia. Tokyo's decision also exposes as false the claims that its longstanding plans for remilitarization are only about "self-defense."

The government's decision allows the US to continue its predatory imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine. Tokyo claims that any arms exports can only be sent to a third country with its approval and will not be sent to countries at war. There is no reason to take this as good coin. US ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, stated in regards to Tokyo's announcement that a "side benefit is it obviously gives us some flexibility with our worldwide inventory and obligations."

Under previous export rules, Tokyo claimed it only exported components of weaponry to countries that held the licence on a product. The rule change allows Japan to export finished products as well. Japan's foreign ministry declared that this would "further strengthen the Japan-US alliance."

Tokyo will now ship dozens of Patriot missiles to the US, specifically the PAC-2 and PAC-3 variants. These are manufactured by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries under licence from US companies Lockheed Martin and RTX, formerly Raytheon. Patriot missiles are some of the most advanced and deadly weapons Washington has provided to Ukraine.

The *Financial Times* also reported that Japan is considering exporting 155mm shells manufactured in Japan to the United Kingdom as the British BAE Systems holds a licence on that munition. Japan's moves to export weaponry comes after the *Washington Post* revealed earlier in December that South Korea had

become one of the largest suppliers of 155mm shells to Ukraine.

Washington has been pushing for allies like Japan to play a larger role in the Ukraine war. Despite US efforts and its arming of the far-right government in Kiev, the much-vaunted summer offensive this past year failed. Instead of pulling back, the US is making clear that there will be no end to the slaughter. President Joe Biden raised the issue of sending weapons to Ukraine with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the war planning summit at Camp David in August that also included South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol.

Tokyo's decision last Friday was widely welcomed in Washington. "Japan [is] really making some profound changes... to demonstrate its unwavering commitment to the international order and international security environment," a senior Biden administration official told the *Washington Post*. "It's doing that in lockstep with the United States as the closest of [its] alliance partners. What the Kishida government has been able to do is truly a break with the past."

This "break with the past" means running roughshod over Japanese legal and constitutional constraints on the military. Article 9 of Japan's constitution, known as the pacifist clause, explicitly bars the country from maintaining a military or waging war overseas. As such, both Tokyo and Washington have attempted to paint the missile transfer as a defensive measure, with the US Defense Department claiming in a brief statement that this will "contribute to US stockpiles of these critical air and missile defense articles, which will enhance stability in the Indo-Pacific region."

The statement is farcical. The missiles have nothing to do with the "stability" of the Indo-Pacific. Tokyo is exploiting the Ukraine war to further its own

imperialist interests, which includes remilitarization, while the US is increasingly reliant on the open assistance of allies like Japan to continue the slaughter in pursuit of its geopolitical aims, namely the carving up of Russia. In Asia, Washington and Tokyo have also whipped up tensions with China over Taiwan, claiming that Russia was encouraging Beijing's "aggression" against the island.

Furthermore, the US has deployed forces to the Middle East, which includes Patriot batteries, as part of its full backing for Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and to threaten Iran, demonstrating that these missiles are part of ongoing US war plans in the region. Japan is therefore becoming a direct participant in all of these conflicts.

Tokyo is simply ignoring its constitution, chipping away at Article 9 while setting new precedents that will become the basis for further remilitarization as well as the tearing up of democratic rights going forward. That the government pays any lip service at all to the constitution is due to widespread popular anti-war sentiment, particularly in the working class.

Making clear that other militarist changes are being planned, Noriyuki Shikata, Japan's cabinet secretary for public affairs, stated that the new export rules were just a "first step" in tearing up the remaining export restraints. This process has in fact been ongoing for years. Japan eased export rules on weaponry in 2014, though these restrictions had been violated in the past.

Now, as part of its National Security Strategy (NSS) released last December, Tokyo intends to use military exports to deepen collaboration not only with the US, but with other countries in the Indo-Pacific, such as Australia and the Philippines. These countries are key components of Washington's web of alliances in the region, meant to surround and menace China while raising tensions over Taiwan. The NSS also includes a de facto doubling of military spending to two percent of GDP by 2027.

This also shines further light on similar programs that Japan has developed, including the Official Security Assistance (OSA) program, another component of the NSS. Countries like the Philippines and Malaysia are slated to receive military equipment from Japan that Tokyo claims would not be used in a conflict. This is simply untrue. Whether it is the arming of Ukraine or countries in the Indo-Pacific, the goal is to wage war in

the interests of US and Japanese imperialism.

The Kishida government's changing of export rules has taken place without any debate in the National Diet. None of the so-called opposition parties, including the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan or the Stalinist Japanese Communist Party is waging any sort of campaign against the export changes, accepting the remilitarization of Japan as an accomplished fact. Any words of protest will only be for the sake of appearances.

The decision to deepen Japan's involvement in war overseas therefore has been taken behind the backs of the working class and young people with the backing of the entire political establishment.



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