

Japanese defense minister again floats acquiring nuclear weapons

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In an interview aired last Monday, Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi once again called for the Japanese ruling class to publicly debate the acquisition of nuclear weapons and nuclear-powered submarines. This echoed remarks Koizumi previously made in July as part of the vast expansion of remilitarization being pursued by the far-right coalition government led by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi.

Koizumi declared that the discussion in Japan, the only country to be attacked with atomic bombs, should take place “without taboos.” Referring to China, Russia, and North Korea, Koizumi declared, “Japan must possess the capabilities to firmly counter threats directed at us.” He justified this by claiming, “The idea that we aren’t even allowed to have a discussion on this matter is a bit at odds with my sense of crisis.”

Koizumi referenced other countries that are taking similar measures. This includes France, which is expanding its nuclear arsenal, and Finland, which has amended its laws to allow the stationing and transporting of nuclear weapons on its territory. “The world is now shifting toward this kind of phase, and within that context, decisions are being made without any taboos,” Koizumi stated.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has written in recent days, the US and European governments are pushing the globe towards nuclear war by escalating the conflict against Russia, preparing a potential blockade of Kaliningrad and supplying Ukraine with drones and other weaponry to expand attacks into Russia. Moscow has stated it is ready to use nuclear weapons if Kaliningrad is blockaded, which NATO has simply brushed aside as a bluff.

In this regard, Koizumi’s remarks are chilling. The government is preparing for active involvement in what is a growing third world war and its spread into the

Asia-Pacific. Nuclear war has been accepted as a real possibility in ruling circles and rather than seek negotiations or attempt to ease tensions with Beijing or Moscow, Tokyo is actively planning to join the conflict.

For Tokyo, this means first revising the “three non-nuclear principles,” which state Japan will not possess, produce, or allow nuclear weapons on its territory. While not legally binding, the principles were first outlined in 1967 and are widely supported throughout the country.

Japan has violated these principles in the past to aid the US military as it carried out wars of aggression in the region against Korea and Indochina while threatening the Soviet Union and China with nuclear annihilation. These violations were kept secret from the working class.

In 2024, Professor Emeritus Takashi Shinobu of Nihon University revealed documents showing that during negotiations between 1958 and 1960 to revise the US-Japan security treaty, Tokyo agreed to secretly allow US warships carrying nuclear weapons to dock at Japanese ports without consulting the Japanese government.

A 1969 memorandum declassified by the US in 2017 also showed that Tokyo agreed to allow Washington to bring nuclear weapons into Okinawa on a so-called “emergency basis” as a condition for the return of the province to Japan in 1972.

Tokyo is discussing acquiring nuclear-powered submarines. Possessing these submarines does not in and of itself mean Japan would have nuclear weapons. However, the technology and capabilities required to produce the nuclear material to power the submarines could also be used to produce material for weapons.

Koizumi’s latest remarks have contributed to the

growing tensions between Tokyo and Beijing, which escalated sharply last November when Prime Minister Takaichi stated Japan would go to war over Taiwan.

China's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Guo Jiakun criticized Koizumi's comments, stating, "The reckless remarks by the incumbent head of Japan's defense sector calling to 'discuss nuclear weapons and nuclear-powered submarines without taboos' constitute a serious provocation and blatant violation of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty and the post-World War II international order."

Tokyo has simply brushed Beijing's concerns aside as the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its junior partner Nippon Ishin no Kai rapidly accelerate Japan's remilitarization. Nippon Ishin in particular has based its support for the LDP on the government carrying out this militarist program.

In Japan's latest draft military budget, the Defense Ministry has requested 8.9 trillion yen (\$US56.4 billion) for fiscal 2027, another record-high amount that will almost certainly rise. For this year, the ministry requested 8.8 trillion yen (\$US55.7 billion), but Koizumi stated in April that military spending, including related expenditures, would in fact reach 10.6 trillion yen (\$US67.1 billion).

In fact, the budget request for next year is already expected to grow before being passed at the end of the year. A senior official from the LDP's security research commission has stated, "It is certain that the amount will exceed 10 trillion yen in the initial budget proposal."

In 2025, shortly after coming to power, the Takaichi government pushed through a supplementary budget to raise military spending to 11 trillion yen (\$US70 billion), reaching the planned target of spending two percent of GDP on the military two years earlier than planned.

Japan is investing heavily in missiles, such as hypersonic missiles launched by submarine, and both aerial and underwater drones. Tokyo has developed long-range strike capabilities, deploying both domestically produced missiles and Tomahawk missiles purchased from the US.

Drawing on the experiences of the war by the US and NATO in Ukraine as well as the illegal US war against Iran, the Defense Ministry also stated last month that the government intends to back companies developing

unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), or attack drones. Beginning this month, the ministry will solicit applications from companies while providing financial support for the companies as needed.

The Defense Ministry will be closely involved in the process, examining the development of the weapons as they are designed and produced. "We must be able to respond efficiently to threats from the air by making use of relatively low-cost interception capabilities," Koizumi stated in September.

In addition, a new five-year military spending plan is expected at the end of this year as Tokyo revises its three main national security documents: the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy and the Defense Buildup Program. The plan is expected to push spending even higher, particularly as Tokyo faces pressure from allies, namely the US, to spend more.

The Trump administration is pressuring Tokyo to spend 3.5 percent of GDP in preparation for war with China. Within the region, South Korea has pledged to reach this benchmark by 2035. Japan has pushed back on these demands, but not because Tokyo is opposed to higher spending.

Defense Ministry Press Secretary Kimihito Aguin stated last month, "Japan's defense buildup is something we undertake based on our own independent judgment, under the fundamental principle that we must defend our own country ourselves."

Other countries in the region like Australia, serving as Washington's attack dog, have also placed pressure on Japan. The government-funded Australian Strategic Policy Institute has criticized Tokyo's spending figures, stating that they are based on GDP in 2022 when the policy was first announced, not current economic figures.

Tokyo's spending this year equals 1.9 percent of 2022 figures and 1.5 percent based on estimates for this year's GDP. A budget of 3.5 percent based on current figures would reach 24 trillion yen (\$US152 billion). All of this spending must be paid for through attacks on workers' living and economic conditions.



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