

The Japan Coast Guard (JCG) headquarters in Tokyo, last year announced a consensus to support a capacity building training program with existing international coast guard's around the world and in particular the Asean region and the Indian authorities to train and provide logistical support for maritime agencies operating in these regions.

The Japan Coast Guard is playing a major role in addressing the current escalating threats of piracy and armed robbery and terrorism internationally. The JCG has engaged in many capacity building programs in the Asean region as well as providing maritime coast guard trainings to several Asean countries. The JCG initiatives in assisting the littoral states of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia in the Straits of Malacca has been a major success in its capacity for cooperation and capacity building programs in regards to adhering to the sovereignty of the littoral states.

The JCG has been in existence for the last sixty years and is capable in providing the region, in particular the Straits of Malacca with its expertise in addressing the piracy and armed robbery as well as terrorism threats. Current joint patrols have now included the Philippines and Thailand joining the littoral states in cooperation and capacity building programs in securing the safety of the Straits.

The new "Maritime Training Program", initiated by the JCG last year has been introduced in April of 2009. The program will be launched in the third quarter of 2009 and the first thirty personnel will come from Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore. The three countries have been classified by the JCG as a "full Maritime Agency Organization" operating freely from any military command. The JCG support for such cooperation in the new program also dictates its adherence to Japan's constitution and the Asean non-interference charter of sovereignty issues.

The selection of personnel for the training program was done in April of 2009 and the Director for Training and Operations, Mr. Osamu Etani will be down in Malaysia to discuss final issues and preparations with the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), the Thai Coast Guard and the Philippines Coast Guard. Mr. Etani stressed that the program will benefit the three countries as the training will encompass many of the Japanese current training for its existing Coast Guards.

The JCG requires that participating countries be free from all military jurisdiction and run separately by an appropriate ministry not related to the military. This will be a long-term endeavor by the JCG. In line with the trainings conducted in Tokyo, the JCG hopes that in the near future, officers trained by the JCG can return home to train new personnel in their home bases.

The training program is entrusted under the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for a period of three years and it will be closely monitored by the JCG. The trainings will be conducted by JCG staff at their training facility in Kure city. After the initial three years, more countries will be included into the program. The training program will run for six months and the first batch will commence training in August of 2009. The program is wholly sponsored and supported by the JCG.

The JCG over its capacity building programs has also provided government based technical cooperation and international disaster relief system such as, group training course in maritime search and rescue and disaster prevention as well as marine pollution surveillance and control since 1983. Others include group training course in oceanography and data processing from 1971 and country focused training course in maritime law enforcement seminar since 2001.

In addition to this, the JCG has also dispatched long-term experts since 2006. This includes Indonesia from 2003 for the Ministry of Communication to strengthen its maritime safety systems and the Philippines in 2000 for the maritime search and rescue system. Technical long-term experts based on cooperation projects, were sent to the Philippines Coast Guard in 2002, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) from 2005 and Indonesia's Coast Guard "Bakorkamla" for its maritime security coordination board and maritime search and rescue system since 2008.

With regards to the above capacity building programs and cooperation, the JCG's training vessel Kogima has been engaged in joint patrol trainings with the Philippines and India since last year. The Kogima leaves on a three month voyage for its capacity building cooperation visits around the world every year since the program was introduced. The littoral states can take

the initiatives to request the Kogima from the JCG's office of education and training department for courtesy calls and cooperation in its capacity building efforts to their home ports.

Andrin Raj (andrin.raj@staratad.net) is Director/Security and Terrorism Analyst for Stratad Asia Pacific Strategic Centre (SAPSC). and Director for Chapter-SEA for the International Association for Counterterrorism and Security Professionals. He is a Visiting Fellow of the Japan Institute for International Affairs. Further enquiries on the Kogima visit request can be directed to him. The views expressed are of his own and does not reflect those of SAPSC, IACSP, JIIA and JCG.