

Army leaders across Indo-Pacific meet to discuss challenges, opportunities

By Sean Kimmons, U.S. Army Garrison Japan Public Affairs 09 May 2022



Gen. Charles A. Flynn, left center, commander of Army Pacific, and Maj. Gen. JB Vowell, left, commander of Army Japan, hold a bilateral engagement with Lt. Gen. Toshikazu Yamane, right center, VCS for the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force.

HONOLULU — Senior leaders from the U.S. Army and more than 20 foreign armies held hundreds of bilateral talks during the largest land power conference in the Indo-Pacific region.

The meetings, part of the Land Forces Pacific Symposium, allowed leaders to privately discuss future exercises, challenges and other relevant topics within U.S. Army Pacific's area of operations, which spans about half the globe.

Gen. Charles A. Flynn, commander of USARPAC, led the effort and spoke with several of his counterparts, most of whom were the top leaders of their respective armies.

“Our relationships with allies and partners are a lynchpin enabling a free and open Indo-Pacific,” he said. “Through exercises and engagements, we improve our ability to work together and build our collective strength.”

On Wednesday, Maj. Gen. JB Vowell, commander of U.S. Army Japan, joined Flynn to converse with Lt. Gen. Toshikazu Yamane, vice chief of staff for the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force, or

JGSDF.

After the closed-door meeting, Vowell said he was able to speak with both leaders about a variety of topics including plans for his command-led exercises, such as Orient Shield and Yama Sakura, in which Japanese soldiers also participate.

“That’s great to talk to a counterpart at a senior level about that to make sure we have the right framework for the exercise design and for the training objectives,” Vowell said.

Yamane said the LANPAC symposium was part of his first overseas visit in his new assignment and welcomed the opportunity to engage with U.S. Army leaders in person.

“As well as knowing people, strengthening our cooperation is one of our goals,” Yamane said. “This visit will be helpful in that regard.”

Yamane believes to make the partnership stronger between the JGSDF and U.S. Army is to better understand and support each other.

He added that both organizations have improved their interoperability and aim to work more closely together in the future.



Vowell said Soldiers in his command cannot do what they do without their Japanese counterparts. He said the countries are inextricably linked for the defense of Japan if an attack were to occur and his command is connected with the JGSDF on a daily basis.

Vowell said the two organizations continually carry out three types of interoperability when together, which consist of human, technical and procedural activities.

“We need to understand how each other’s processes work, how our technology threads together and the human interaction,” he said. “The trust that you build in peacetime you cannot make up for in a crisis.”

A specific effort both have been collaborating on is the refinement of Japan’s Cross-Domain Operations concept, similar to the U.S. Army Multi-Domain Operations concept.

The pair of strategies place an emphasis on preparing for a new battlefield that could include information, space, cyber and electronic warfare.

“We’re a partner in their evolution,” Vowell said. “Because our capabilities commensurate to theirs, they can learn from our mistakes and what we do or don’t do in Multi-Domain Operations.

“That’s probably the best value we can give them,” he added. “Not that we’re better or that we’re superior. It’s more how do we help them evolve their capabilities, their posture into the expanded defense of Japan that is relevant in the 21st century.”

Vowell, who also met with Lt. Gen. Rick Burr, chief of the Australian Army, and a team from the Bangladesh Army, among other partners, said he found the face-to-face meetings more productive than previous virtual meetings.

As a result of the pandemic, this year’s symposium was the first time it was held in person for three years.

“The value is human connectivity, not just digital connectivity for a meeting,” Vowell said. “You cannot replace that.”

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