



SOME IN ASEAN WANT CLOSER TIES: JAPAN MINISTER

March 14, 2013 SpaceDaily.com reported: "Some southeast Asian nations want one-time foe Japan to play an active role in regional security, Tokyo said Thursday, as countries seek a balance for China's growing clout.

Vice-minister level representatives from Japan and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ended a two-day gathering at a Tokyo hotel that comes as several participating nations are embroiled in sovereignty rows with Beijing.

"The two sides shared a recognition of the importance of further strengthening their partnership in security and defence," Japan's vice defence minister Hironori Kanazawa said following the meeting. Some ASEAN members voiced their expectation that "Japan would play a more active role" in the stabilisation of the security environment in the region, he said. He did not specify which countries he was talking about or how many.

Japan's often brutal march through Asia in the first half of the 20th century left a lingering distrust, even after Tokyo's total defeat in 1945. But decades of peaceful growth that often went hand-in-hand with liberal sprinklings of aid and investment in the region softened its image.

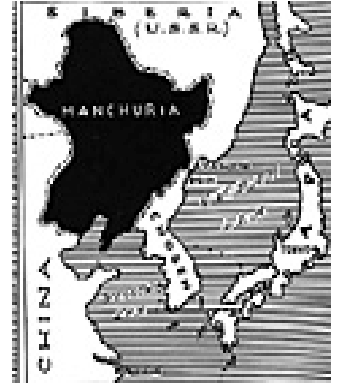
China's growing might and confidence in pressing its far-flung territorial claims, meanwhile, have seen Beijing rub up against a number of neighbours, with some -- particularly Vietnam and the Philippines -- openly expressing disquiet. That in turn has left some looking for Tokyo to play a more assertive role as a way to counterbalance China.

Akinori Eto, another vice defence minister, said Japan also had an interest in closer co-operation.

"At a time when the security circumstances in the region are continuing to change, ASEAN countries are playing a significant role for our country," he said.

"The region has common challenges such as maritime security and territorial disputes. In order to tackle these issues, defence authorities are urged to boost cooperation further."

Japan, along with several members of ASEAN have locked horns with China over separate territorial disputes."..."



JESUIT POPE A FIRST FOR 'GOD'S MARINES'

March 14, 2013 brisbanetimes.com.au reported: "They are sometimes referred to as "God's Marines" or the church's "storm troopers" - a band of priests and missionaries who live sparse lives and are willing to accept religious orders anywhere in the world, sometimes living in extreme conditions.

Now, in a world first, a Jesuit has been appointed Pope in a surprise election that Australian Jesuits say could lead the Catholic Church in a new direction. It's also sparked renewed interest in a small and highly committed order that hatched from military beginnings and has only 20,000 members worldwide, of whom about three quarters are priests.

Pope Francis, who until Wednesday was known as Jorge Mario Bergoglio, made a name for himself leading a spartan life in his native Argentina. Instead of taking up residence in a luxurious mansion that came with the job of the archbishop of Buenos Aires, he chose to live in a small apartment, prepared his own meals and eschewed a chauffeur-driven car in favour of travelling by public bus."...

That humility and social conscience is one of the founding principles of the Society of Jesus, the liberal Catholic religious order whose members are known as Jesuits and who are required to take vows of poverty, chastity, obedience to Christ and obedience to the Pope. They have been given the nicknames "God's Marines" or religious "storm troopers", in recognition of their 16th-century founder Ignatius of Loyola, who had a military background, as well as the Jesuits' willingness to travel throughout the world on missionary work.

Father Andrew Hamilton is a Melbourne-based Jesuit priest, one of about 140 Jesuits based in Australia. Of those, 20 were based overseas last year. Father Hamilton said while there were many Jesuits in the Vatican, he was delighted that Pope Francis had been elected the first Jesuit pope, and that his background would stand him in good stead.

"We take a vow of poverty and that's following Jesus in his lifestyle to some extent," Father Hamilton said."..."

Jesuits also are known for being the intellectuals among priests. They run top colleges and schools, including Xavier College in Melbourne and St Ignatius' College in Riverview in Sydney...

The Society of Jesus was founded by Saint Ignatius, the patron saint of soldiers, a Spanish knight who was set on a career as a professional soldier until he suffered a severe leg injury during battle in 1521. During his recovery he underwent a religious conversion and decided to become a soldier of Christ. The Jesuits' first focus was the conversion of Muslims, then halting the spread of Protestantism.

The goal of modern Jesuits is to spread the Catholic faith, now through missionary work and education, rather than military action. The order elects its own leader, known colloquially as the Black Pope because of the black vestments worn by the Jesuits, at a conclave in Rome, where members from around the world gather to make their choice. The current leader is Father Adolfo Nicolás, of Spain.

While most Jesuits avoid clashes with the Vatican hierarchy, previous popes, including John Paul II, have taken issue with the autonomy the order appears to enjoy.”...”



Ignatius of Loyola

INTELLIGENCE: NORTH KOREA ‘SERIOUS THREAT’ TO US, ASIAN ALLIES

March 13, 2013 Israel National News reported: “North Korean nuclear and military activities pose a ‘serious threat’ to the United States and its Asian allies, American intelligence agencies agree.

The assessment came during presentation Tuesday of an unclassified report on worldwide threat to the U.S. discussed in a session of the Senate Intelligence Committee. National Intelligence Director James Clapper testified to the lawmakers he is ‘very concerned’ about the actions of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and the ‘very belligerent’ rhetoric emanating from his regime.

‘The rhetoric, while it is laced with propaganda, is also an indicator of their attitude and perhaps their intent,’ Clapper said, according to Bloomberg News. ‘So for my part, I am very concerned about what they might do.’

Clapper added that he believes that North Korea is fully capable of launching ‘a provocative action against the south.’...”

SOUTH KOREA WARNS NORTH ON ARMISTICE THREAT

March 12, 2013 BBC News reports: “South Korea says North Korea cannot scrap the armistice that ended the Korean War and called on Pyongyang to tone down its rhetoric. A unilateral move to end the pact was not legally possible, it said. As well as the armistice threat North Korea has in recent days also cut off a hotline and vowed to end non-aggressions pacts with Seoul. It says it is responding to US-South Korea military drills and new sanctions imposed after its third nuclear test.

The two Koreas remain technically at war because the 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice, not a treaty. North Korea has declared that armistice ‘invalid’, but South Korea said a one-sided declaration was insufficient.

‘Unilateral abrogation or termination of the armistice agreement is not allowed under its regulations or according to international law,’ Foreign Ministry spokesman Cho Tai-Young said. Seoul would ‘absolutely keep the armistice agreement as well as strengthen consultation and cooperation with the United States and China, who are also concerned parties of the armistice’, he said....”

‘KILLING JEWS IS WORSHIP’ AD CAMPAIGN ROLLED OUT ON SF MUNI BUSES

March 11, 2013 SanFrancisco.CBSlocal.com reported: “A controversy has been re-ignited this week as ten new ads go up on San Francisco Muni buses containing quotes used by terrorists.

“Killing Jews is worship that draws us closer to Allah,” reads one of the ads, which has people debating the line between free speech and hate speech.

“The purpose of our campaign is to show the reality of Jihad, the root causes of terrorism. Using the exact quotes and text that they use,” said Pamela Geller of the American Freedom Defense Institute.

Several San Francisco city leaders, including District Attorney George Gascon, have condemned the campaign.

“San Francisco won’t tolerate Islamophobic bigotry,” said Gascon. “The only thing necessary for evil to prevail is for good people to look the other way and do nothing.”

Board of Supervisors President David Chiu said the American Freedom Defense Initiative is made of “well-known hate extremists” and said he is introducing a resolution at Tuesday’s board meeting to denounce the ads.

Geller said the ads were a response to another bus ad campaign earlier this year by the Council on American-Islamic Relations. That campaign sought to disassociate the word “jihad” with violence and reclaim its meaning as “the struggle,” which is a central tenant of Islam.”...

Geller, whose group also ran an ad campaign last year on Muni buses that referred to Muslims as “savages,” criticized the San Francisco city officials for holding today’s event against her campaign.

“I am merely using high-profile Muslims and their own words. How does that paint every Muslim with the same brush? I don’t understand that,” Geller said.”...”