

## 5. The Organisation of the JMSDF: The High Command, Fleet Bases and Regional Districts

The Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) is commanded by the chief of the Maritime Staff, based at the Ministry of Defense (MoD) HQ at Ichigaya in Tokyo. From 1954 to 2006, he was supported by the powerful Maritime Staff Office (MSO), which was responsible for all aspects of supervision of the JMSDF, which includes the Self-Defense Fleet, five regional district commands (with HQs at Ominato, Yokosuka, Kure, Maizuru and Sasebo), the Air Training Squadron and various support units, such as hospitals and schools, and including operational command as well as administrative, personnel, training and capability acquisition matters (see Fig. 1). In March 2006, in a move to integrate the JMSDF's operational planning and command structures, a new joint staff office was established at the Japan Defense Agency (JDA) HQ at Ichigaya, to which the MSO's operational planning and command functions were transferred; the truncated MSO retained all its other 'force provider' functions.<sup>1</sup> The Basic Intelligence Center which had served the MSO at Ichigaya, correlating and analysing intelligence collected by all the JMSDF's assets, was also transferred to the Defense Intelligence Headquarters (DIH) at Ichigaya in March 2006.

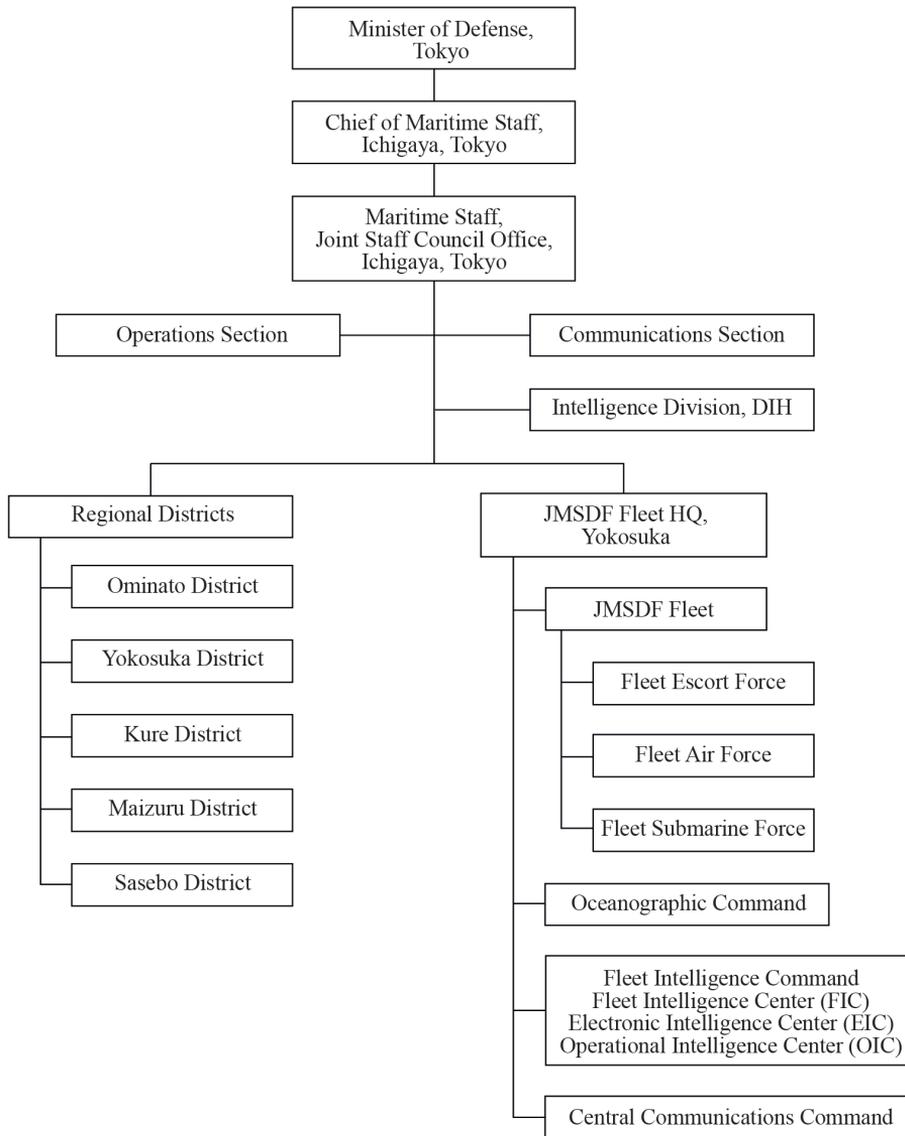
The JMSDF Fleet is headquartered at Yokosuka, on the Uraga Suido (Channel), just inside the entrance to Tokyo Bay, and is charged with defence of all waters around the Japanese archipelago. It commands four escort flotillas (two based in Yokosuka and one each in Sasebo and Maizuru), the JMSDF Fleet Air Force headquartered at Atsugi, two submarine flotillas based at Kure and Yokosuka, two minesweeping flotillas based at Kure and Yokosuka, and the Fleet Training Command at Yokosuka.

The Fleet HQ is supported by an Electronic Intelligence Center (EIC), which processes, correlates and analyses electronic intelligence collected by its EP-3 aircraft, electronic intelligence (ELINT) shore stations and ship-based systems; a Fleet Intelligence Center (FIC), which compiles and analyses intelligence from the various ocean surveillance systems; and an Operational Intelligence Center (OIC), which provides intelligence reports for the operational commanders. The OIC, which had a staff of more than 65 in 2000, also maintains the JMSDF OSIS Evolutionary Development (JOED) workstations.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2006* (Tokyo, 2006), pp. 148–53, at [www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/index.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/index.html)

2 'CV: Senior Systems Security Engineer', at [space-careers.com/agency/cvview\\_7971.html](http://space-careers.com/agency/cvview_7971.html)



**Figure 1. Organisation of the JMSDF**

Source: Author's compilation

Also located at the Fleet HQ are the HQs of the Fleet Intelligence Command, which manages and supervises intelligence personnel stationed at shore bases and afloat; the JMSDF Central Communications Command, which provides the communications facilities for the Fleet HQ; and the JMSDF Oceanographic Command, which has important ocean surveillance capabilities.

The Oceanographic Command has an Anti-submarine Intelligence Unit and a Weather Information Unit, and operates two ocean observation stations (at Higashidori and White Beach) with sound surveillance system (SOSUS) arrays, four ocean observation ships, two Surveillance Towed Array Sensor System (SURTASS) acoustic measurement ships, and a cable-laying ship.<sup>3</sup> There were reportedly 10 buildings and about 100 staff engaged in 'submarine detection operations' at the Oceanographic Command's facility at Yokosuka in the 1980s.<sup>4</sup>

## Ominato District

The Ominato Regional District is the northernmost of the JMSDF's five districts. The Ominato District Command is headquartered near the Ominato Port, a few kilometres south-west of Mutsu City, on the north-east side of Mutsu Bay, in the north-east corner of Honshu. Naturally protected inside Mutsu Bay, the Ominato base was originally established by the Japanese navy in 1899, during the Meiji era. It was closed after the end of the Second World War, and reopened as the Ominato Guard Corps base in September 1953.<sup>5</sup>

The Ominato District Command has a general responsibility for defence of the waters surrounding Hokkaido Island and the northern part of Aomori prefecture in northern Honshu, including the southern part of the Sea of Okhotsk, the northern part of the Sea of Japan, and the north-western Pacific, with direct responsibility for the Tsugaru Strait between Hokkaido and Honshu.

It commands four escort destroyers, an underwater disposal unit, three minesweepers, three missile patrol boats and an SH-60J helicopter squadron, used for both anti-submarine warfare (ASW) patrol and search and rescue missions. Subordinate bases are situated at Hakodate, where the minesweepers are based, in the south-west corner of Hokkaido, near the western entrance to

3 'Oceanographic Command, Yokosuka', at [www.soumu.go.jp/kanku/kanto/kanagawa/pdf/kanagawa18\\_01\\_07.pdf](http://www.soumu.go.jp/kanku/kanto/kanagawa/pdf/kanagawa18_01_07.pdf)

4 Jeffrey T. Richelson, *Foreign Intelligence Organizations* (Ballinger, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1988), p. 261.

5 「大湊地方隊」 ['Ominato District Command'], Wikipedia – Japanese, at [ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%A4%A7%E6%B9%8A%E5%9C%B0%E6%96%B9%E9%9A%8A](http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%A4%A7%E6%B9%8A%E5%9C%B0%E6%96%B9%E9%9A%8A)

the Tsugaru Strait; Yoichi, on the south-western side of Hokkaido, where the patrol boats are based; and Wakkanai, where a minesweeper and patrol boat are often deployed.<sup>6</sup>

The Hakodate base has administrative and logistical responsibility for the JMSDF's listening stations at Matsumae, Matsumae/Shirakami and Tappi Zaki, on the other side of the Tsugaru Strait. The district HQ at Ominato provides administrative and logistical support for the Shimokita-hanto Ocean Observation Station at Higashidori, on the eastern coast of the Shimokita Peninsula.

## Yokosuka District

The Yokosuka Regional District Command is headquartered in the large JMSDF Fleet base at Yokosuka, on the south-western side of the entrance to Tokyo Bay. It is responsible for the defence of the central part of the eastern coast of Honshu, from Iwate Prefecture down to Mie Prefecture, with Tokyo Bay in the middle. It was established as a Japan Coast Guard (JCG) maritime patrol station in April 1952, but became the Yokosuka District HQ of the Maritime Safety Force in August 1952. It commands three destroyers, three minesweepers, and an underwater disposal unit. It is also responsible for the management and supervision of the JMSDF's coastal defense station at Kannon Zaki, a few kilometres south of Yokosuka.<sup>7</sup>

## Kure District

The Kure Regional District Command is based at Kure, in Hiroshima Prefecture, on the Inland Sea. Really a suburb of Hiroshima City, Kure is one of Japan's largest shipbuilding centres. A navy base was established at Kure in 1886. By the end of the Second World War, it had grown to be one of the Imperial Japanese Navy's largest bases. It was closed in 1945 but reopened as a Maritime Safety Agency (MSA) base in May 1948. It became the JMSDF's Kure District HQ in July 1954, when special warning and surveillance units were also established for the direct defence of the Osaka urban-industrial area.<sup>8</sup>

The Kure District Command is responsible for the defence of the south-western coast of Honshu, from Yamaguchi and Hiroshima on the Setonaikai (Inland Sea)

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6 *ibid.*

7 「横須賀地方隊」, ['Yokosuka District Command'], Wikipedia – Japanese, at [ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%A8%AA%E9%A0%88%E8%B3%80%E5%9C%B0%E6%96%B9%E9%9A%8A](https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E6%A8%AA%E9%A0%88%E8%B3%80%E5%9C%B0%E6%96%B9%E9%9A%8A)

8 「呉地方隊」, ['Kure District Command'], Wikipedia – Japanese, at [ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%91%89%E5%9C%B0%E6%96%B9%E9%9A%8A](https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%91%89%E5%9C%B0%E6%96%B9%E9%9A%8A)

east to Mie Prefecture, and including Shikoku Island and the south-eastern side of Kyushu. Its principal bases are at Kure, where its three destroyers are homeported, and at Hanshin, in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, just west of Osaka, where three minesweepers are based.

The Hanshin base is responsible for surveillance of the Harima Nada at the eastern end of the Inland Sea and Osaka Bay. It maintains the JMSDF's listening station at Mihama, at the tip of the Kii Peninsula, in Wakayama Prefecture, at the southern entrance to Osaka Bay.<sup>9</sup> It also maintains a magnetic measurement station at Kariya, near Awaji, on the north-western side of Osaka Bay.<sup>10</sup>

## Maizuru District

The Maizuru Regional District Command is based at Maizuru, in Kyoto Prefecture, and is responsible for defending the central part of the Sea of Japan, from Akita Prefecture in the north-east of Honshu down to Shimane Prefecture, in south-western Honshu. It participated in the search for and subsequent chase of two North Korean 'spy ships' that were found off the Noto Peninsula in March 1999. A detachment of SH-60J Sea Hawk patrol helicopters from the JMSDF's air base at Tateyama in Chiba Prefecture has been deployed to Maizuru since March 2001.<sup>11</sup> The Maizuru District HQ depends on the underwater surveillance stations at Wakkanai, Rebun Island and Matsumae at the northern end of the Sea of Japan, and in the Tsushima Straits at the southern end, to keep it apprised of submarine movements into its area of responsibility.

## Sasebo District

The HQ of the Sasebo Regional District Command is located in the Hirase area of Sasebo City, in Nagasaki Prefecture, in the north-western part of Kyushu. It was established in September 1953 as the Sasebo District HQ of the Maritime Safety Force. Its area of responsibility stretches from the southern part of the Sea of Japan, opposite Yamaguchi Prefecture on the northern side of the south-western end of Honshu, down through the Tsushima Straits, and astride the Ryukyu island chain south to the Sakishima island group (around Miyako Island and Ishigaki Island) in Okinawa Prefecture, east of Taiwan. It commands six

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> 仮屋磁気測定所, 阪神基地隊, ['Kariya Magnetic Measurement Station', Hanshin Base Group], JMSDF, at [www.mod.go.jp/msdf/hanshin/about/kariya/index.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/hanshin/about/kariya/index.html)

<sup>11</sup> 「舞鶴地方隊」 ['Maizuru District Command'], Wikipedia – Japanese, at [ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%88%9E%E9%B6%B4%E5%9C%B0%E6%96%B9%E9%9A%8A](http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%88%9E%E9%B6%B4%E5%9C%B0%E6%96%B9%E9%9A%8A)

destroyers and three missile patrol boats, as well as three minesweepers based at Shimonoseki in Yamaguchi Prefecture, at the western entrance to the Inland Sea, and another three minesweepers based at Uruma in Okinawa.<sup>12</sup>

The Sasebo District HQ supervises and supports four coastal defence stations equipped with undersea hydrophone arrays and ELINT collection systems. A station at Mutsure-jima, off the western entrance to the Inland Sea, is responsible to the Shimonoseki Base HQ. Two stations on Tsushima Island and another on Iki Island are managed and coordinated by the Tsushima Coastal Defense Group HQ on Tsushima, which is directly subordinate to the Sasebo District HQ.<sup>13</sup> The Sasebo District HQ also maintains a magnetic measurement station, with facilities at Sakibe, on the south-eastern side of the entrance to Sasebo Bay, built in 1976, and at Tategami, on the western side of the Sasebo port area, built in 1986.<sup>14</sup>

## JMSDF Radio Communications Stations

The JMSDF's shore-based monitoring stations, and its ASW and ELINT aircraft bases, are connected by a variety of communications systems, including HF radio, microwave relay, satellite communications (Satcom), and optical fibre cables. The hub of the HF radio network comprises the twin transmitting station in Ichihara City and receiving station in Iioka, in Chiba Prefecture. According to a report in May 1984, these stations received data from all of the JMSDF's listening stations, transmitted orders to and received data from the P-3C Orions, and handled the communications with the JMSDF's escort destroyers. Because of the inadequate number of channels in the HF band, however, the shore-based stations were being connected by UHF (microwave relay) systems, with Satcom systems being proposed for the longer term.<sup>15</sup>

The Ichihara Transmitting Station occupies an extensive area next to a golf course in Ichihara City. It has a microwave tower with four dishes, a large HF inverted conical array, strung between six tall masts, a mast with HF and VHF

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12 「佐世保地方隊」 [‘Sasebo District Command’], Wikipedia – Japanese, at [ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%BD%90%E4%B8%96%E4%BF%9D%E5%9C%B0%E6%96%B9%E9%9A%8A](http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%BD%90%E4%B8%96%E4%BF%9D%E5%9C%B0%E6%96%B9%E9%9A%8A)

13 *ibid*; 「下関基地隊」 [‘Shimonoseki Base’], Wikipedia – Japanese, at [ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%B8%8B%E9%96%A2%E5%9F%BA%E5%9C%B0%E9%9A%8A](http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%B8%8B%E9%96%A2%E5%9F%BA%E5%9C%B0%E9%9A%8A); 「対馬防備隊」 [‘Tsushima Defense Group Headquarters’], Wikipedia – Japanese, at [ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%AF%BE%E9%A6%AC%E9%98%B2%E5%82%99%E9%9A%8A](http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%AF%BE%E9%A6%AC%E9%98%B2%E5%82%99%E9%9A%8A); ‘Tsushima Defense Group Headquarters’, at [www1.linkclub.or.jp/~chi-tan/tsushimaboubi.html](http://www1.linkclub.or.jp/~chi-tan/tsushimaboubi.html)

14 「崎辺地区海上自衛隊 佐世保市崎辺町」, 長崎平和委員会 [MSDF Sakibe District, Nagasaki Peace Committee], at [www7b.biglobe.ne.jp/~chi-tan/sakibesdf.html](http://www7b.biglobe.ne.jp/~chi-tan/sakibesdf.html); 「立神地区自衛隊 佐世保市立神町」, 長崎平和委員会 [MSDF Tategami District, Nagasaki Peace Committee], at [www7b.biglobe.ne.jp/~chi-tan/tategamisdf.html](http://www7b.biglobe.ne.jp/~chi-tan/tategamisdf.html)

15 Taoka Shunji, ‘Sea-lane Defence’, *Asahi Shimbun*, 1 May 1984.

vertically polarised inverted conical monopoles, two HF rhombic antennas, two large horizontal HF/VHF log-periodic antennas, and a large horizontal curtain antenna.<sup>16</sup>

The Iioka Receiving Station has a microwave tower with two dishes, three large HF horizontal log-spiral omni-directional broadband systems (supported by six radial catenaries and a central mast), a large HF inverted conical system, a mast with both HF and VHF inverted conical monopoles, several other conical monopoles, a large horizontal HF/VHF log-periodic antenna, and a large TCI Model 524 wide-aperture Super High-gain log-periodic directional HF horizontal curtain antenna.<sup>17</sup> High-resolution Google Earth imagery also shows six satellite communications dishes, three about 8 metres in diameter and three about 5 metres in diameter, next to the receiver building at the south-eastern part of the facility.

The JMSDF also maintains two adjacent transmitting stations at Uenohara and Tateyama, in Tateyama City in Chiba.<sup>18</sup> Tateyama is the home base of the JMSDF's Fleet Air Wing 21, which has two squadrons of SH-60J Sea Hawk maritime patrol and ASW helicopters. The Tateyama transmitters are used for communications with the other JMSDF air bases used by its maritime patrol and ASW aircraft, such as the Fleet Air Force HQ at Atsugi, the EP-3C base at Iwakuni, and the P-3C base at Hachinohe, as well as with both aircraft and ships.

The JMSDF's central communications command at Yokosuka has an attached transmitting and receiving station. It has a tall steel lattice tower with two microwave dishes mounted near the top and at least eight VHF and UHF antennas on the top, as well as a HF doublet strung between two masts nearby, which is used for HF reception. A separate HF transmitting station is maintained at Chiyogasaki, on the Miura peninsula, south of Yokosuka. It has several large HF arrays and a mast with both HF and VHF inverted conical antennas.<sup>19</sup>

In the mid-1990s, the JMSDF also built a pair of transmitting and receiving stations at Kushira and Nejime in Kagoshima Prefecture, in the southernmost part of Kyushu, which provide connectivity with the Yokosuka and Iioka/Ichihara

16 「海上自衛隊 市原送信所」, アンテナの見える風景 [‘JMSDF Ichihara Transmitting Station’, *Landscapes with a View of the Antennas*], at home.p04.itscom.net/yama/Ichihara/Ichihara.htm

17 「海上自衛隊 飯岡受信所」, アンテナの見える風景 [‘JMSDF Iioka Receiving Station’, *Landscapes with a View of the Antennas*], at home.p04.itscom.net/yama/Iioka/Iioka.htm

18 「海上自衛隊 上野原送信所」, アンテナの見える風景 [‘JMSDF Uenohara Transmitting Station’, *Landscapes with a View of the Antennas*], at home.p04.itscom.net/yama/Uenohara/Uenohara.htm; 「海上自衛隊 館山航空基地」, アンテナの見える風景 [‘JMSDF Tateyama Transmitting Station’, *Landscapes with a View of the Antennas*], at home.p04.itscom.net/yama/Tateyama\_kichi/Tateyama.htm

19 「海上自衛隊 横須賀基地 システム通信隊 (受信所・通信所)」, アンテナの見える風景 [‘JMSDF Yokosuka Base, System Communications Unit’, *Landscapes with a View of the Antennas*], at home.p04.itscom.net/Yokosuka\_kichi/Yokosuka\_kichi.htm; 「海上自衛隊 千代ヶ崎送信所」, アンテナの見える風景 [‘JMSDF Chiyogasaki Transmitting Station’, *Landscapes with a View of the Antennas*], at home.p04.itscom.net/yama/Chiyogasaki/Chiyogasaki.htm

stations, and extend the coverage of the JMSDF's HF radio communications thousands of kilometres to the south and south-east. The Kushira Transmitting Station has a microwave tower with a single dish, a large horizontal HF/VHF log-periodic antenna, a large HF conical monopole antenna, and a large triangular HF wire array strung between three tall towers.<sup>20</sup> The Nejime Receiving Station has a tall HF conical monopole, an inverted conical HF array, a large horizontal HF/VHF log-periodic antenna, a HF log-spiral antenna, and a large HF array strung between tall towers.<sup>21</sup>

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20 「海上自衛隊 串良送信所」[‘JMSDF Kushira Transmitting Station’, *Landscapes with a View of the Antennas*], September 2009, at [home.p04.itscom.net/yama/Kushira/Kushira.htm](http://home.p04.itscom.net/yama/Kushira/Kushira.htm)

21 「海上自衛隊 根占受信所」, アンテナの見える風景 [‘JMSDF Nejime Receiving Station’, *Landscapes with a View of the Antennas*], September 2009, at [home.p04.itscom.net/yama/Nejime/Nejime.htm](http://home.p04.itscom.net/yama/Nejime/Nejime.htm)

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