

Why Japan Cancelled Installation of American Missiles in Its Territory. US Military Presence Threatens Japan's Security

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Since 1945, when the United States bombed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with nuclear weapons, Japan has entered an era of total submission to Washington, demilitarizing and abdicating its own real sovereignty. Tokyo came under the umbrella of American military protection. For a long time, defense and security were not priority issues for the Japanese government, which relied on cooperation with the United States as a way of dealing with all its international problems and regional tensions. Likewise, in the last few decades, the US has achieved a status of global hegemony and has become the current world police, which allowed the American government to act freely on their military affairs in any of their allied countries on all continents.

As part of this great cooperation between Japan and the US, recently, both countries started a new project, consisting of the acquisition of the American missile systems Aegis Ashore and their installation on a Japanese platform. The aim of the project was to strengthen Japanese defense to face the tensions with North Korea and China. The project was approved by the Japanese government in December 2017 and forecasts were that by 2023 the systems would be fully operational in Japan, at the disposal of its armed forces. However, the development of the project was not so simple.

The installation of the missiles required complex work. The project intended to cover the entire Japanese territory under the Aegis Ashore systems, maintaining terrestrial protection for the entire country, in aid with the SM-3 System missiles, which provide naval security on board of several Japanese destroyers. The number of American troops in Japan increased significantly with the project, raising an atmosphere of concern on the part of Moscow, which, knowing Washington's hostile policy towards Russia, came to see Japan as a potential regional threat. In addition, the project costs were estimated at more than 2 billion dollars.

High prices, the intensification of US military presence of Japanese soil, slowness in the development of the project and the increase of regional tensions – instead of more security – were factors that contributed to a marked decision by the Japanese government which chose to cancel the cooperation. According to the Japanese defense minister, Taro Kono, the project would be irrational with so many costs and with so much waiting time. Kono pointed out: “Due to considerations of cost and timing, we have stopped the process of introducing the Aegis Ashore system (...) For the time being, Japan will continue to counter (missile threats) with Aegis-equipped ships.” In the same vein, Toshimitsu Motegi, Japan's foreign

affairs minister, stressed the strategic and rational character of the decision and stated that it does not imply other military cooperation projects with the United States. These are his words: “My opinion is that this decision will not influence various forms of cooperation with the United States, a belief that we will maintain a strict cooperation with and will continue to enhance the allied capacities of response and dissuasion”.

It is understandable that members of the Japanese government try to reduce the causes of the project’s cancellation, claiming that it is only a “rational calculation” of time and money, but obviously, it is not just that. In fact, Japan realized that currently there is nothing strategic about filling its territory with hundreds of American soldiers and submitting the country even more to Washington’s might, hoping, in return, for “protection” against its regional rivals. With the increase of the American presence in Japan, regional rivalries will increase and, consequently, the country’s security will be more threatened, not guaranteed.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy how the decrease in American power is already being noticed in all parts of the world. Not only does Japan no longer trust the blind protection of Americans, it can also unilaterally halt the program and decide the direction of its defense projects – something that would have been unthinkable a few decades ago, where Washington’s imposing relationship with Tokyo was much clearer and more violent.

In fact, as American dominance gradually crumbles, its main allies are step by step moving away. Currently, we can see Europe becoming increasingly critical of NATO, Germany opting for alternative defense strategies instead of aligning completely with Washington as well as many other signs that, currently, American influence on global governance is diminishing. The cancellation of the Aegis Ashore project is the proof that it is not currently the United States that unilaterally decides where to deploy its missiles.

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