
TOKYO GREATLY CONCENTRATES ON RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA, SAYS JAPAN'S DEFENSE CHIEF

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Japanese Minister of Defense Itsunori Onodera has stated that his country pays great attention to bilateral relations with Russia.

"Massive events were held between our countries last year," the defense minister said on Tuesday at negotiations with Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu in Moscow.

These are chiefly Shoigus visit to Japan this March, Commander in Chief of the Ground Forces Oleg Salyukovs visit to Japan in November 2017 and Chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimovs visit in December 2017, he said. The minister noted that his negotiations with the Russian counterpart, which took place in 2017 in the Philippines, continued for more than an hour. "These meetings were carried out as agreed by the two state leaders. It shows that Japan pays great attention to bilateral relations with Russia."

Onodera noted that the "2+2" consultations (between the foreign and defense ministers of the two countries) "were also carried out according to the strong will of the two state leaders for developing dialogue and cooperation in the sphere of security."

He reiterated that this is the first time in 12 years a Japanese minister of defense visited Russia. "My visit has great importance," the minister said. "I hope that this memorable visit will bolster mutual understanding and consolidate confidence between our countries."

Onodera also congratulated Shoigu on the successful organization of FIFA World Cup by Russia. "By the way, Team Russia was ranked higher than Team Japan," the Japanese minister joked.

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