

The eyes and ears of Japan

Tokyo's new director of intelligence talks exclusively to Roger Falgout on East-West relations

THREE-STAR army general Kunimi Masahiro, Japan's new director of intelligence since January, is keen to inaugurate a new era in East-West intelligence co-operation.

For the time being Kunimi is directing operations from a spacious office in the Japanese Defence Agency (JDA) headquarters in the Roppongi district of Tokyo.

This is only a temporary arrangement. A new intelligence headquarters is emerging in another part of the capital, Ichigaya, to house Japan's first co-ordinated agency since the Second World War, the Defence Intelligence Headquarters (DIH).

As I met Kunimi over green tea, with the cherry trees blooming outside his office, he was carefully monitoring the North Korean famine crisis and the Albanian upheaval.

The setting up of the agency was prompted by important changes in world affairs: the end of the Cold War; the Gulf War, to which the Japanese contributed, if only financially; the rise of China as a superpower; and the accelerating spread of organised crime.

Kunimi said: "Before setting up the agency we sent delegations to Europe, who with our defence attachés studied the French, British and German organisations to help us decide what would be the best structure for us."

"We have seen intelligence agencies reduced in size in all countries, but in ours we need high-level strategic intelligence. Our new assessment-directorate needs to provide assistance



Watching brief: Kunimi Masahiro and Roger Falgout in Tokyo. The agency signals Japan's growing autonomy from the US

for the type of peacekeeping operations we performed on behalf of the United Nations in Somalia or Cambodia."

The main problem for the JDA is that Japan is constitutionally debarred from having any offensive military unit. Its link with the United States intelligence establish-

'The main danger could come from the Korean peninsula'

ment goes back to 1945, and some observers see the new organisation as an attempt by the Japanese military to distance itself from the US. But the approach is two-pronged: Japan wishes to retain the umbrella protection provided by the US but be free to oppose its ally on economic matters.

One thing Kunimi is determined to do is expand links with Europe. "More exchanges and collaboration with European intelligence colleagues will be welcome on

situations such as Albania or Chechnya," he said. "We are all watching the Russian situation carefully. But we also need to exchange information on new dangers."

Japan itself has not been immune to attack. The Aum cult carried out a murderous gas attack on the Tokyo underground. Drug trafficking is rising because of organised crime. The Japanese Red Army Faction had been planning new attacks from its Lebanese stronghold before its ringleaders were arrested a few weeks ago. Peruvian guerrillas held hostages in the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima for four months before this week's release.

While cultivating European links, the Japanese agency is anxious not to antagonise the US. Recently Kunimi travelled to Okinawa to reassure Americans that there would be no threat to their military presence in this part of the Japanese archipelago, in spite of

increasing popular opposition. Leases on the American bases were renewed only after an angry debate in the Japanese parliament last month.

KUNIMI is also a skilled "China-watcher". In the early 1980s he was defence attaché in Beijing at the time when the late Deng Xiaoping set up the Chinese equivalent of the KGB, now heavily involved in the reabsorption of Hong Kong.

In addition to his fluent English, Kunimi speaks Mandarin Chinese. He is well aware that if China becomes a major strategic sea power it could threaten Japan's oil supply from the Middle East or attempt a military assault on Taiwan.

"China could be a danger to regional security next century," said Kunimi. "Its military budget is always increasing. They buy aircraft and ships from the Russians, and hope to build their own

aircraft-carrier. But today they are not capable of a sustained military offensive. In the short term, the main danger could come from the Korean peninsula."

Formerly commanding officer of troops in the Nagoya region, Kunimi, now in his fifties, has spent most of his career in the intelligence field. He was well prepared for questions on the possible use of undercover operations, though able to take refuge in the Japanese constitution, which forbids such activities.

"We are not the Japanese CIA," he said. "We shall not indulge in undercover operations. There is a difference between 'spying' and intelligence gathering." We are entitled to acquire intelligence only through open sources, reports from our

military attachés, and from signal intelligence sources." Signal intelligence monitoring stations target not just Korea, China and Russia but also some of Japan's allies. This side of the agency's operation is not made public, just like its telephone interceptions.

When the word "Internet" comes up, Kunimi displays a series of intelligence reports written in Japanese. It is a printout of a website that purports to describe the Japanese intelligence community for the online world.

"It is always interesting to know what they know about us," he commented. Not much, it appears.

As the interview ends I cannot resist asking a question with political implications. Is it true that Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto may be thinking of transferring control of the DIH from the military joint staff council to the prime minister's cabinet?

"Ah, so you heard about that," Kunimi observes. He will not confirm it, but if it happened the DIH could be united with other civilian outfits and become a more significant unit in a few years. It would include the cabinet's intelligence and research office whose new director, Sugita Kazuhiro, became a European specialist when attached to the Paris embassy. As if to emphasise this possible trend, a friend of Hashimoto's has been named deputy director of DIH and adviser to the embassy chief office.

But as so often in Japan, the speculation could be part of a bureaucratic war between departments that would like to be privy to the secrets of the DIH.

Whatever the truth, analysts are convinced that the setting up of the new agency is the most significant move towards autonomy from the US since the Second World War.

Hands link again across the Atlantic



The American Field Service exchange is celebrating 50 years of bringing Europeans and Americans together

ARE YOU one of the quarter of a million people from around the world who spent a year in the United States last summer, Britain, on 27 July. Prices start from \$2,220, inclusive of full board, airfare from any European country to friend? If so, AFS International Programs would like to hear from you.

This summer, to celebrate the organisation's 50th anniversary, it is inviting former exchange students to a gala reunion across the Atlantic. An altogether grander trip than usual is envisaged on the QE2, to arrive in Boston in time for the AFS World Reunion weekend from 1 to 3 August.

George Broch, national director of AFS Norway, said: "There will be lots of opportunities for discussions and entertainment. It will not only be a time to look back but to look forward to the next 50 years of AFS."

There are 1,500 places on board, but organisers warn that demand is high. With more than 100,000 volunteers worldwide, AFS is one of the largest voluntary organisations in the world. The exchange programme began in 1947 when members of the former American Field Service ambulance corps, who had served as volunteers on the battlefields of both world wars, invited 50 students from ten

European countries to spend a school year with American families. The QE2 crossing will take five days, sailing from Southampton, Britain, on 27 July. Prices start from \$2,220, inclusive of full board, airfare from any European country to Britain, and return airfare from the US.

Contact: *George Broch, Karl Amdam or Erik Helstad, AFS Norway, Akersgaten 18, N-0158 Oslo. Tel: +47 2241 4389, fax +47 2233 3913.*

■ APPROXIMATELY 600 French ramblers plan to walk in the English county of Kent on 1 May. Michael Stokes, chairman of the Ramblers' Association in Kent, said: "To mark their 50th anniversary, the French have asked us to present them with a flaming torch which will be 'walked' to Paris during the summer."

Each group of 50 walkers will start from different points around Canterbury and converge on the city centre.

Contact: *Mike Sharp, The Ramblers Association, Kent, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1634 845656; fax +44 (0)1634 832253.*

■ If you would like to contribute to Global Village, contact *Zena Simons at The European, 200 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8NE, UK. Fax: +44 (0)171-713 1600.*

Pioneer breakthrough may cut thrombosis toll

Tessa Thomas on a new treatment for a condition that affects millions in Europe

HUNDREDS of thousands of Europeans die every year because they are not receiving medication that could prevent their developing a potentially fatal ailment. Yet medicine is readily available, delegates at an international symposium heard.

Thrombosis kills millions of people every year in Europe. "The number could be cut dramatically if the treatment were more widely used," said Professor Vijay Kakkar, director of the Thrombosis Research Institute which organised the symposium, attended by 240 delegates from 18 countries.

Thrombosis is a potentially fatal condition in which blood vessels become blocked by a clot and vital organs are starved of oxygen. The clot can build up over years or can appear suddenly, particularly after surgery.

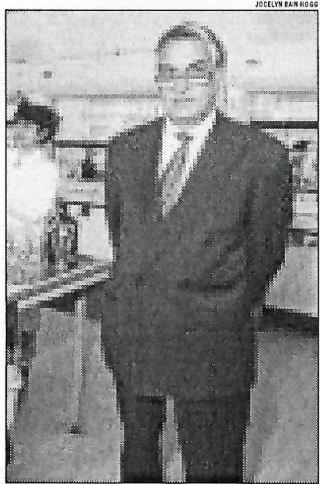
More than half of patients having surgery on bones and joints get deep-vein thrombosis, a severe clot in a vein that can fatally migrate to the lungs. If a clot blocks an artery to the heart it causes coronary heart disease and if it blocks a channel to the brain it results in a stroke.

Heart disease kills 600,000 people every year in the European Union and strokes kill almost half a million people.

Kakkar pioneered the use of a substance called Low Molecular Weight Heparin (LMWH) which can prevent the blood clotting. But in some countries, including Britain, Spain and the United States, it is infrequently used.

"Twenty-five thousand deaths a year could be avoided in Britain alone if it were routinely used after surgery," said Kakkar, who demonstrated the efficacy of LMWH as far back as 1980.

Until now there has been little hard data on the effects



Professor Vijay Kakkar: wants to expand the use of Fragmin

of its long-term use. But now a new report by five experts from Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and France has demonstrated that patients can double their chances of survival by taking LMWH after hip surgery.

The issue is becoming more important as the European population ages and the diseases associated with blood clots increase. One in three women over 65 can now expect to develop the bone-thinning disease osteoporosis.

"A new report has shown that blood clots are the principal cause of death in elderly women," said Kakkar. Clots can be prevented using an older form of heparin which is popular with surgeons in some countries such as Spain and Italy.

Paolo Prandoni of the Institute of the University of Padua, is that cancer surgery carries a high risk of blood clots. Cancer patients are more than twice as likely as other patients to develop a clot.

Cancer is the most common cause of death in the European Union, killing close to a million people every year.

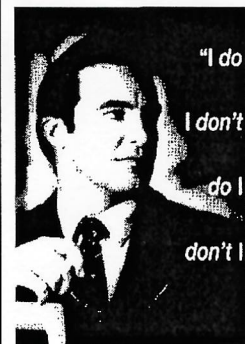
LMWH may have even more dramatic benefits for cancer patients. A large Swedish study of more than 2,000 patients has shown it to be more effective in preventing thrombosis after cancer surgery, while studies in North America demonstrate its effectiveness in the treatment of cancer-associated thrombosis.

"However, we do not want to raise hopes too high at this stage," said Professor Ajay Kakkar (Vijay's son) of Hammersmith Hospital, London.

But LMWH has other far-reaching benefits not attributed to other anti-thrombotic drugs. Unlike ordinary heparin, it can be given by a simple once-a-day injection that patients can administer at home. So they do not have to be wired up to drips and monitored or confined to hospital which cuts the cost of treatment and the likelihood of clots developing through immobility, said Professor H Parsch of the Wilhelmshim Hospital, Vienna.

So great are the potential benefits of LMWH that hundreds of thousands of lives are already being saved. It reflects a major breakthrough in the treatment of thrombosis," Kakkar told the international symposium.

"Now we are looking forward to the results of trials in progress which may confirm further benefits from this preparation in other groups of patients."



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