

October, 2007

To the Members of the Press

Regarding Questionnaire on the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement Issued to Candidates for the Presidency of the United States of America

I have sent the attached questionnaire to the 12 members of the Republican Party and 8 of the Democratic Party who have declared their candidacies for President of the United States.

I have requested that they submit their answers to me by the answers by November 17. It may be that I will receive replies from all the candidates, or some, or even none at all, but in any case I would like to inform you of my intentions.

These days in Japan, the governing and opposition parties are engaged in a heated debate regarding the continuation of Japan Self Defense Force refueling operations in the Indian Ocean, but I believe that the Japan-U.S. Status-of-Forces Agreement is an even more fundamental agreement between our two countries than this issue. Based on the Japan-US security treaty, it forms the foundation for providing a part of Japan's land to the US military.

Under normal circumstances Japan should make up her own mind before asking other countries for their opinion. But I think you are well aware that the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) and the present government have made no revision or reconsideration of the agreement, and have coped with all incidents simply by applying it as it stands.

Even some members of the ruling parties are calling for revision of this agreement. Prefectural governors have also been making frequent demands to the same effect. I do not believe that Japan's policy regarding the agreement will remain unchanged for ever. I think it very important for the future of both countries that I ask the candidates for the next President of the United States how they view the present relationship between Japan and U.S. and what they understand about the Japan-U.S. Status-of-Forces Agreement. I inform you of my intentions, in the hopes that I will certainly receive replies to my questionnaire.

Tsuyoshi Saito

Former Member of the Japanese House of Councilors