

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 000284

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TAGS: PREL, PGOV, MOPS, JA

SUBJECT: SOKA GAKKAI GROUP MOVING TO SUPPORT SENDING
JAPANESE TROOPS ABROAD

REF: TOKYO 216

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer per 1.4 (b/d)

1. (C) Summary: The ruling Liberal Democratic Party's efforts to pass a Permanent Dispatch Law will require the support of ruling coalition partner Komeito Party, which to date has not embraced the plan to allow the government the authority to dispatch Self-Defense Forces abroad. As the Komeito's primary supporter, the Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai's views matter. The president of the Soka Gakkai, in a recent conversation with Embassy Tokyo, indicated that his once staunchly pacifist members are coming around on the issue of the Permanent Dispatch legislation, provided the right Constitutional and legislative conditions are in place. "The time has come for Japan to contribute more to international peacekeeping...the time for one-country pacifism is over," he said. End summary.

2. (C) The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is seeking to pass a "Permanent Dispatch" Law, which would eliminate the need to pass separate authorizations for each overseas deployment. The most recent example is the legislation to allow Japan to rejoin OEF-related refueling activities in the Indian Ocean). To that end, the LDP has been consulting with coalition partner Komeito Party, which to date has not offered support for Permanent Dispatch legislation (reftel). However, in a conversation with Embassy Tokyo Political Minister Counselor on January 30, Minoru Harada, the president of Soka Gakkai, the Buddhist lay organization that

is Komeito's primary supporter, said that the time has come for Japan to "contribute more" to international peacekeeping.

That said, certain conditions would have to be imposed for these activities, including that they fall within the constraints of Japan's Constitution, have the Diet's approval and are in support of a UN-sanctioned operation, Harada explained. Furthermore, restrictions on the use of weapons will also be needed, he said.

3. (C) With these conditions in mind, the Komeito Party will continue to develop its policy on the Permanent Dispatch legislation and will seek the general public's understanding, he continued. Regardless, "the time for one-country pacifism, such as that espoused by the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, is over." The public recognizes that there is a need for Japan to contribute more internationally, Harada stressed.

4. (C) Responding to a question about whether Soka Gakkai's Women's and Youth Bureaus would offer resistance to a Permanent Dispatch Law, Harada said that while these groups believe strongly in building peace, they are also aware that pacifism is not the right way to make a true contribution to international peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts. In an era of globalization, the pursuit of peace requires international contributions, and Japan must be prepared to shoulder its share of responsibility, Harada said.

5. (C) Soka Gakkai has once before had to deal with staking a position related to international peacekeeping efforts. At the time of the Gulf War, although Komeito was then in the opposition, it nonetheless supported the decision for Japan to make a multi-billion dollar contribution. Harada explained, with a laugh, that Soka Gakkai (SGI) leaders had explained to the rank-and-file that there were SGI believers in the U.S. Armed Forces, and that some U.S. warships had Buddhist alters for SGI worship services, a fact that persuaded most to drop their opposition to aiding the United States. In the same way the Women's Bureau and others were convinced of the need to make an international contribution during the Gulf War, today's Soka Gakkai leadership will be

able to win over doubters within its ranks, Harada predicted.
SCHIEFFER