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<http://atimes.com/2015/08/japan-eyeing-5-trillion-yen-defense-budget/>

## Japan eyeing 5 trillion yen defense budget

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Japan's Ministry of Defense will likely make a record budget request for fiscal 2016 as it seeks to buy new airborne refueling aircraft and continue building an Aegis destroyer. Soaring procurement costs due to the weaker yen will also be factored into the request.



The ministry expects to request a budget of more than 5 trillion yen (\$40.3 billion) for fiscal 2016. The request is part of a two-step system. After each ministry submits its request, by the end of August, the government will debate the overall budget. After this process, the government

compiles budget proposals, at the end of the year. For the first time, the government's defense proposal to the Diet is expected to top 5 trillion yen.

It will be the first time for the Defense Ministry to request money for — and spend it on — airborne refueling and transport aircraft. Plans to purchase three such aircraft are included in the ministry's 2014-2018 Mid-Term Defense Program.

The government is currently seeking to pass a set of bills that would allow Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defense. If the bills become law during the current parliamentary session, Japan's Self-Defense Forces would be able to conduct greater logistical support of U.S. and other allies' armed forces.

This means the JSDF would be allowed to provide in-flight refueling service to U.S. military aircraft. The Defense Ministry is expected to choose either the Boeing KC-46A or Airbus A330 MRTT by the end of this year.

In addition, the ministry in fiscal 2016 will budget expenses for building an Aegis destroyer equipped with the latest ballistic missile defense system, just as it did for the current fiscal year. Under the plan, the ministry intends to share location data of enemy missiles with other Aegis vessels and airborne early warning aircraft.

This would enable Japan to respond to missiles targeting U.S. vessels, a scenario envisioned by the government in rationalizing the defense-related bills.

Since 2002, defense-related expenditures, including the cost for U.S. military realignment and other matters, had been on the decline. But defense spending has risen in each of the three years since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took office in late 2012. During the current fiscal year, defense spending is seen reaching a record 4.9801 trillion yen. Last August, the Defense Ministry requested a budget of 5.0545 trillion yen.