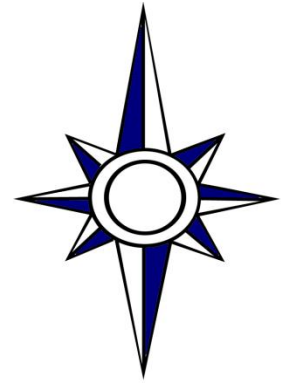


# Comparative Connections

A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



## US-Japan Relations: Responding to Multiple Crises

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The earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster that struck Japan on March 11 tested the leadership credentials of the Kan government and the capacity for alliance coordination in response to simultaneous crises. With the exception of disconnects in assessing the nature of the nuclear emergency at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, the March 11 tragedy revealed the strength of the alliance as the Obama administration further demonstrated US solidarity with Japan by announcing a partnership for reconstruction to support Japan's recovery. Prime Minister Kan reshuffled his Cabinet for the second time and unveiled a policy agenda aimed at "the opening of Japan" but faced scrutiny for failing to usher budget-related legislation through a divided Diet. Bilateral diplomacy proceeded apace and was aimed at advancing economic and security cooperation though a controversy over alleged remarks about Okinawa by a senior US diplomat had the potential to cause another crisis in the alliance.

### Japanese domestic politics: Kan under pressure

Prime Minister Kan Naoto began the year by reshuffling his Cabinet for the second time since assuming office in June 2010 to boost his sagging popularity and prepare for a heated budget battle in the Diet. The biggest surprise was the new Minister of Economic and Fiscal Policy Yosano Kaoru, a fiscal hawk and former Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) member who had criticized Kan's predecessor Hatoyama Yukio as the "king of tax evasion" when Hatoyama was embarrassed by a funding scandal last year. Kan also appointed Edano Yukio as chief Cabinet secretary to replace Sengoku Yoshito, who was censured by the Diet last fall, while retaining Foreign Minister Maehara Seiji and Defense Minister Kitazawa Toshimi and shifting Yosano's predecessor Kaieda Banri to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. The new Cabinet appeared designed to project continuity on foreign and security policy and ingenuity with respect to an economic growth strategy but Kan struggled to develop momentum right out of the gate.

Kan addressed the Diet on Jan. 24 and employed the theme "opening of Japan" to outline a comprehensive policy agenda including social security reform, trade liberalization, and renewed diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific, but fresh rhetoric could not mask the reality that with the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) lacking a majority in the Upper House (the result of a poor showing in an election last summer), the LDP could block legislation needed to enact his record \$1 trillion budget for the fiscal year beginning April 1. (The Lower House can pass the budget without Upper House consent but related bills must pass both chambers.) His budget appeared even more conspicuous after Standard and Poor's (S&P) downgraded Japan's sovereign debt rating on Jan. 27 due to concerns about the public debt and political paralysis. Kan's attention to economic matters also came into question when he said he was unaware of the S&P decision

when queried by reporters, and some analysts wondered why he didn't take advantage of this development to bolster his case for fiscal discipline and tax reform, which he had advocated as finance minister under Hatoyama and was why he presumably brought Yosano into the fold to champion. Kan subsequently vowed to introduce tax reform legislation but found himself in a defensive position at the outset of a contentious Diet session centered on the fiscal policy debate.

The indictment on Jan. 31 of former DPJ secretary general and Kan rival Ozawa Ichiro over an alleged funding scandal at first glance appeared to strengthen Kan's hand, but served only to further his image as the leader of a divided party. In mid-February, 16 Ozawa supporters petitioned DPJ Secretary General Okada Katsuya to form a separate bloc within the Diet that would not necessarily support the government on key legislation. That request was denied but added an element of dissension within DPJ ranks that compounded the pressure Kan was already facing from the LDP. The following week, one day after the party voted to suspend Ozawa (prohibiting him from running for party president, a post he held from 2006-2009), one of his loyalists, Kenko Matsuki, resigned as parliamentary secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries and criticized Kan for failing to manage Diet affairs and secure the passage of the budget. Kan's approval rating had fallen below 20 percent in some polls and the public appeared increasingly frustrated by the stalemate over the budget. Kan tried to strike deals with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and others to get budget bills through the Upper House but could not find any takers. He also threatened to call a snap election, though that carried little weight as most pundits predicted the DPJ would lose. But just as this political drama reached its zenith and Kan's own political position seemed doomed, Japan suffered a natural disaster of unprecedented proportion that quickly shifted the focus of the Kan government to crisis management.

### **“3-11”**

On March 11 a magnitude-9.0 earthquake struck off the coast of the Tohoku region in northeastern Japan and triggered a massive tsunami that devastated coastal areas and crippled the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Fukushima Prefecture. This triple disaster, which took over 14,000 lives and caused upward of \$300 billion in damage according to initial Japanese government estimates, necessitated the simultaneous coordination of disaster-relief efforts in Tohoku and the response to a developing nuclear emergency at Fukushima Daiichi, a daunting challenge for any government and one that would test the leadership credentials of Prime Minister Kan. One hundred thousand Self-Defense Forces (SDF) personnel were dispatched to Tohoku and led search-and-rescue and relief efforts in close coordination with the US military (more below). The central government also had to coordinate closely with Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), the operator of the plant, on the effort to restore power, cool down the reactors, and prevent the release of radioactive materials. On March 12, one of the reactors was damaged in a hydrogen explosion that occurred hours after Prime Minister Kan had visited the plant to take stock of the situation, an incident which accentuated the extent of the nuclear emergency but also became a source of criticism among Kan's detractors who questioned his decision to inspect the facility as the crisis was still evolving. The Kan government was increasingly blamed for difficulties in coordinating with TEPCO and disseminating information to the public in the days and weeks that followed as the situation at Fukushima Daiichi deteriorated. After a brief respite from bitter partisanship and rancor within

the DPJ, Kan once again became a target as public frustration with the government's handling of the nuclear crisis mounted.

On March 17, Kan brought Sengoku Yoshito back into the government as deputy chief Cabinet secretary to help coordinate the government response to the disaster. Kan also reportedly contacted LDP President Tanigaki Sadakazu on March 19 and proposed a grand coalition between the two parties. Tanigaki turned down that offer, but the LDP promised to cooperate on an emergency supplemental budget to fund earthquake recovery and reconstruction efforts. (A \$49 billion supplemental passed the Lower House unanimously on April 30.) Public opinion polls indicated majority support for a grand coalition but the groundwork had not been laid and the LDP concentrated more on critiquing the government's response to the crisis. The DPJ then suffered severe setbacks in unified local elections held April 10 and 24, further eroding support at the grassroots level and prompting Hatoyama and Ozawa to openly criticize Kan and maneuver behind the scenes to seek his ouster. A *Nikkei Shimbun* poll dated April 17 found 70 percent of the public dissatisfied with the government's response to the disaster and 69 percent of respondents suggested the prime minister should be replaced. The Kan Cabinet approval rating stood at 27 percent, but the LDP proved more popular than the DPJ by a margin of 34 to 24 percent. In an example of how twisted Japanese politics had become, Ozawa Ichiro topped the list of most desirable candidates for prime minister with 9.2 percent of responses to an open-ended question about political leaders in a *Fujisankei* poll released April 26. Though the political winds looked less and less favorable for Kan, there was a fair chance he would remain in office given the risk associated with a leadership change in the middle of a crisis, the absence of a clear successor, and little indication that a grand coalition would take form. But nothing could be ruled out in such an unpredictable political environment.

### **A flurry of bilateral diplomacy**

Foreign Minister Maehara visited Washington Jan. 6-7 to confer with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Vice President Joe Biden, and other senior officials on a range of issues including bilateral security cooperation with an eye toward a Security Consultative Committee or "2+2" meeting sometime in the spring followed by a visit to Washington by the prime minister in the first half of the year. Maehara also addressed the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and underscored an emphasis on economic diplomacy and the need to develop "institutional foundations" in the Asia-Pacific region based on rules and norms; examples included US and Japanese leadership in multilateral institutions such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and the Trans-Pacific Partnership as an important first step toward the realization of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP).

Senior US officials also traveled to Japan in the first month of the year, though focused more narrowly on security cooperation. Defense Secretary Robert Gates met Defense Minister Kitazawa, Prime Minister Kan and Foreign Minister Maehara in mid-January and was soon followed by US Pacific Command Commander Adm. Robert Willard, who visited Gen. Oriki Ryoichi, chief of staff, Joint Staff, Japan Self-Defense Forces and other officials for regular consultations. US Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth met Vice Foreign Minister Sasae Kenichiro in Tokyo on Jan. 7 to discuss next steps on the Korean

Peninsula and Deputy Secretary of State James Stenberg visited Foreign Minister Maehara and other officials at the end of January to discuss North Korea and other regional issues. This series of consultations at senior levels seemed designed to build on dialogue last year in response to North Korean provocations and Chinese assertiveness in the region.

The Kan government also engaged the government in Okinawa regarding a thorny issue in US-Japan relations – the impasse over the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. Though Okinawan public opinion remained opposed to relocating the facility within the prefecture, a position reiterated by Governor Nakaima Hirokazu, Defense Minister Kitazawa, Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano, and Foreign Minister Maehara all visited the prefecture within a 10-day period at the end of January to explore a way forward. Any hopes that these efforts would at least improve the dynamic between the central government and local officials were dashed, however, when in mid-February former Prime Minister Hatoyama noted in an interview with Okinawa media that his justification for endorsing the May 28, 2010, agreement between the US and Japan regarding the relocation of US forces on Okinawa – the importance of the US presence for deterrence – was an expedient excuse (*hōben*). Hatoyama had promised to relocate Futenma outside the prefecture for months but reversed course abruptly last spring after failing to produce viable alternatives and declaring to the media that he finally understood the importance of deterrence. Explaining that away as a political expediency proved offensive to many in Okinawa and demonstrated his capacity to adversely affect the bilateral relationship even after leaving office. How the two governments would address Futenma in the tentatively planned 2+2 remains an open question.

### **The Week of March 6**

Washington lost a close partner in shaping the agenda for the US-Japan alliance when on March 6 Foreign Minister Maehara abruptly resigned his Cabinet post for accepting funds from a South Korean resident of Japan in violation of the Political Funds Control Law. Maehara claimed he had no direct knowledge of the donations, which totaled approximately \$2,400, but chose to step aside rather than subject the government to intense scrutiny amid the fierce budget battle in the Diet. (Prime Minister Kan acknowledged on March 11 that his campaign office unknowingly received approximately \$12,500 in donations from a South Korean national but refused to resign, saying the individual listed a Japanese name.) On March 9, Kan appointed State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Matsumoto Takeaki to succeed Maehara and orchestrate a seamless transition, but Maehara was a popular figure in the US and his departure came as a shock.

Okinawa also resurfaced in a bilateral context, this time in comments attributed to a senior US diplomat. On March 6, *Kyodo News* published a story alleging that State Department Director of Japan Affairs Kevin Maher made disparaging remarks about the people of Okinawa during a meeting with a group of students in December 2010. Drawing from what the story claimed were notes taken by students who attended the meeting, Maher allegedly referred to the people of Okinawa as lazy and “masters of manipulation and extortion” in their relations with the central government. Maher refused to comment on what was understood to be an off-the-record session with students preparing to embark on a study tour to Japan but the story generated a great deal of ill will and led Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell to repeatedly express regret for the controversy during a previously scheduled trip to Tokyo March

9-10. Campbell also announced during a roundtable with reporters on March 10 that Rust Deming would return to the State Department to serve as Director of Japan Affairs. The decision to remove Maher from his post was taken ostensibly to prevent another crisis in the alliance centered on the US military presence in Okinawa. But on March 11 the strength of the alliance would be tested in response to a very different set of crises.

### **Response to “3-11”**

The US government moved quickly to support Japan in responding to the March 11 triple disaster. President Obama issued a statement the day of the tragedy sending condolences to the people of Japan and pledging US assistance. On March 13, the White House issued a statement on the US response including the dispatch by the US Agency for International Development of a Disaster Assistance Response Team to Japan including nuclear experts from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the positioning of the *USS Ronald Reagan* Carrier Strike Group off the coast of Japan to support the SDF in search-and-rescue and refueling efforts. The SDF and US military quickly established a joint coordination center and engineered what became the largest bilateral mission in the history of the alliance in what US forces dubbed *Operation Tomodachi*, or “friend” in Japanese. At its peak, this humanitarian relief operation involved approximately 16,000 US military personnel, 20 ships and 140 aircraft. The mission was generally viewed in a positive light and demonstrated the importance of the alliance as a public good and interoperability between US and Japanese forces.

On the financial front, the Bank of Japan elected to hold interest rates at 0-0.1 percent on March 14 and expand an asset purchasing program to support monetary easing. The Nikkei average closed down 6 percent that day but gradually rebounded. The US and other G7 nations conducted a joint intervention in currency markets on March 18 to help stabilize the yen and Finance Minister Noda Yoshihiko thanked Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner for US leadership in that effort during a visit to Washington April 14-15 for a meeting of G20 finance ministers and central governors. The G20 issued a communiqué that included a message of solidarity with the Japanese people and confidence in the resilience of the Japanese economy and financial sector.

One area of disconnect was in the US and Japanese governments’ assessments of the radiation danger at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. On March 13, authorities in Japan established an exclusion zone 20 km around the plant to guard against the spread of radioactive material. But on March 16, during congressional testimony in Washington, NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko offered a much more grave assessment of the situation at Fukushima Daiichi, suggesting that radiation levels were extremely high and that there was little water left in a pool storing spent fuel in one of the reactors, leaving fuel rods exposed to the atmosphere. Jaczko also recommended an 80-km exclusion zone for US citizens, four times the size of the Japanese perimeter, which seemed to suggest fundamentally divergent views on the nature of the nuclear emergency. Later that day, the State Department issued a travel warning advising US citizens against traveling to Japan, those in Japan to consider departing, and authorizing the voluntary departure from Japan of eligible family members of US government personnel in Tokyo, Nagoya, and Yokohama. President Obama then delivered remarks at the White House on March 17 to reiterate US support for Japan while elaborating on these decisions with respect to the

nuclear emergency. The following week the two governments established bilateral working groups focused on Fukushima Daiichi to improve coordination in an otherwise impressive joint response to the triple disaster of March 11.

Secretary of State Clinton visited Tokyo on April 17 to reiterate a message of US solidarity with Japan and met Prime Minister Kan, Foreign Minister Matsumoto, and the Emperor and Empress. During a press conference with Keidanren Chairman Yonekura Hiromasa and US Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Thomas Donohue, Foreign Minister Matsumoto and Secretary Clinton announced a public-private partnership for reconstruction to enhance cooperation between Japanese and American businesses and between civil society groups and public officials. Clinton and Matsumoto discussed these plans further on April 29 in Washington but also covered other issues including North Korea, the Middle East, and plans for a 2+2 meeting, perhaps a sign that the initial crisis response phase had ended and the governments could refocus on crafting a future vision for the alliance.

One month after the triple disaster, CSIS and the Japanese Business Federation Keidanren established a Partnership for Recovery Task Force chaired by Boeing Chairman, President and CEO Jim McNerney. The CSIS Task Force will work in cooperation with Keidanren and then produce independent recommendations to strengthen US-Japan relations and assist Japan with the medium and long-term process of recovery and reconstruction.

### **The next few months**

Prime Minister Kan will likely brief his colleagues on Japan's recovery efforts and the prospects for the Japanese economy during the G8 Summit scheduled for May 26-27 in Deauville, France. Back at home, the debate over the budget, fiscal policy writ large, and the Kan government's response to the March 11 disaster should feature prominently in the current Diet session scheduled to end in late June. Kan is also expected to visit the US at the end of June. The Obama administration will host a series of preparatory meetings in the lead-up to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum scheduled for November in Hawaii. Washington and Tokyo could settle on a date for a 2+2 meeting and put forth a framework for bilateral security cooperation. Political maneuvering within the DPJ and the Diet as a whole in the coming weeks and months will also determine whether Kan stays on as prime minister until the next issue of *Comparative Connections*.

## **Chronology of US-Japan Relations January – April 2011**

**Jan. 6, 2011:** Foreign Minister (FM) Maehara Seiji meets Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Washington to discuss bilateral security cooperation and addresses the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

**Jan. 7, 2011:** US Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth meets Vice Foreign Minister Sasae Kenichiro to discuss next steps on the Korean Peninsula.

**Jan. 7, 2011:** FM Maehara meets Vice President Joe Biden in Washington.

**Jan. 12, 2011:** Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Okada Katsuya hints at revisions in the party's policy platform in announcing that party leaders would reexamine the 2009 election manifesto.

**Jan. 13-14, 2011:** Defense Secretary Robert Gates meets with Prime Minister (PM) Kan Naoto, FM Maehara, and Defense Minister Kitazawa Toshimi in Tokyo and delivers remarks at Keio University.

**Jan. 14, 2011:** PM Kan reshuffles his Cabinet.

**Jan. 17, 2011:** A *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll posts a 34 percent approval rating for the new Kan Cabinet. *Asahi Shimbun* reports 26 percent approval and *Nikkei Shimbun* records 31 percent.

**Jan. 20, 2011:** PM Kan refers to the US-Japan alliance as the cornerstone of Japanese foreign policy in a speech on diplomacy in Tokyo.

**Jan. 20, 2011:** Defense Minister Kitazawa visits Okinawa and meets Gov. Nakaima Hirokazu to discuss US basing issues.

**Jan. 21, 2011:** FM Maehara and US Ambassador to Japan John Roos sign a five-year agreement on host nation support for US forces in Japan.

**Jan. 21, 2011:** Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano Yukio visits Okinawa and meets Gov. Nakaima to discuss US basing issues and economic development.

**Jan. 24, 2011:** PM Kan introduces the theme "Heisei-Era opening of Japan" and outlines policy priorities including trade liberalization and social security reform in an address to the Diet.

**Jan. 25-28, 2011:** Adm. Robert Willard, commander, US Pacific Command, visits Japan and meets Gen. Oriki Ryoichi, chief of staff, Joint Staff, Japan Self Defense Forces (SDF).

**Jan. 27, 2011:** Standard and Poor's downgrades Japan's sovereign debt due to concerns about the fiscal deficit.

**Jan. 27, 2011:** Opposition lawmakers demand that former DPJ Secretary General Ozawa Ichiro deliver unsworn testimony in the Diet over his alleged involvement in a funding scandal.

**Jan. 27, 2011:** Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg meets FM Maehara and other senior officials to discuss issues including regional security and developments on the Korean Peninsula.

**Jan. 29, 2011:** FM Maehara meets Gov. Nakaima in Okinawa and asks residents to accept a US-Japan agreement on the relocation of Futenma within in the prefecture.

**Jan. 31, 2011:** DPJ Secretary General Ozawa is indicted for alleged involvement in a political funding scandal.

**Feb. 4, 2011:** Fifty-six percent of the Japanese public believes Ozawa should resign according to a survey published by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

**Feb. 8, 2011:** *US National Military Strategy 2011* is released and references work with the SDF to improve their out-of-area operational capabilities.

**Feb 8, 2011:** US Department of Transportation releases the results of a study on unintended acceleration in Toyota vehicles, which found no electrical flaws in Toyota vehicles that would create high-speed unintended acceleration incidents.

**Feb. 12, 2011:** A *Kyodo News* poll finds the Kan Cabinet approval rating at 19.9 percent.

**Feb. 13, 2011:** Okinawa newspaper *Ryukyu Shimpo* publishes an interview with former PM Hatoyama Yukio in which he states that his justification for the agreement between the US and Japan regarding the relocation of US forces on Okinawa was an expedient excuse (*hōben*).

**Feb. 14, 2011:** Japanese government confirms that China had surpassed Japan as the world's second largest economy in 2010.

**Feb. 17, 2011:** Kan Cabinet's approval rating falls to a low of 17.8 percent according to a *Jiji News* survey.

**Feb. 22, 2011:** Moody's Investors Service changes its outlook on Japan's Aa2 credit rating to "negative" from "stable" citing concerns about public debt.

**Feb. 23, 2011:** Kenko Matsuki resigns as parliamentary secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries to protest PM Kan's management of the government.

**March 1, 2011:** The Lower House of the Diet passes a record ¥92.4 trillion (\$1.1 trillion) budget for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2011, and sends it to the Upper House for consideration.

**March 6, 2011:** FM Maehara resigns for accepting donations from a foreign national to his political office, a violation of the Political Funds Control Law.

**March 6, 2011:** *Kyodo News* publishes a story alleging that State Department Director of Japan Affairs Kevin Maher made disparaging remarks about the people of Okinawa during a meeting with a group of students in December 2010.

**March 7, 2011:** *Yomiuri Shimbun* issues a survey in which 51 percent of voters think PM Kan should resign and 56 percent say they would blame the government and the DPJ if bills to enact the budget for fiscal year 2011 are not passed.



**March 8, 2011:** US Ambassador John Roos calls Chief Cabinet Secretary Edano to express regret that news reports about controversial remarks attributed to a senior US official had caused offense in Okinawa.

**March 9, 2011:** PM Kan appoints Matsumoto Takeaki to succeed Maehara Seiji as foreign minister.

**March 10, 2011:** Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs Wallace Gregson discuss a range of issues related to the US-Japan alliance with FM Matsumoto, Defense Minister Kitazawa, and other senior officials.

**March 10, 2011:** During a media roundtable in Tokyo Campbell expresses regret for the controversy surrounding alleged statements concerning the people of Okinawa and announces that Rust Deming would return to the State Department to serve as Director of Japan Affairs.

**March 11, 2011:** PM Kan acknowledges that his campaign office unknowingly received donations from a foreign national and refuses to resign.

**March 11, 2011:** A magnitude-9.0 earthquake strikes off the northeast coast of Japan, generating a tsunami that devastates coastal areas and damages the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Fukushima prefecture.

**March 11, 2011:** President Obama issues a statement sending condolences to the people of Japan and pledging US assistance.

**March 11, 2011:** State Department issues a travel alert advising US citizens to avoid travel to Japan.

**March 12, 2011:** Prime Minister Kan visits Fukushima Prefecture to take stock of the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

**March 13, 2011:** Japanese government announces a 20-km evacuation zone around the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

**March 13, 2011:** White House issues a press statement on the US response to the earthquake and tsunami in Japan including the dispatch by the US Agency for International Development of a Disaster Assistance Response Team to Japan including nuclear experts from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the positioning of the *USS Ronald Reagan* Carrier Strike Group off the coast of Japan to support the SDF in search-and-rescue and refueling efforts.

**March 14, 2011:** *USS Ronald Reagan* and the Carrier Strike Group move further away from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant due to radiological concerns.

**March 15, 2011:** FM Matsumoto and Secretary Clinton meet on the margins of the G8 Foreign

Ministers Meeting in Paris to discuss efforts to respond to the earthquake and tsunami and other bilateral issues.

**March 16, 2011:** Emperor Akihito delivers a message to the public in his first-ever nationally televised address.

**March 16, 2011:** Gregory Jaczko, chairman of the NRC, offers the first US government assessment of the emergency at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant and announces an evacuation zone for US citizens four times larger than that issued by the Japanese government.

**March 16, 2011:** The *USS Ronald Reagan* and the Carrier Strike Group reposition to the north but operate out of the area affected by the earthquake and tsunami.

**March 16, 2011:** President Obama discusses the latest developments in Japan's response to the earthquake and tsunami in a telephone call with PM Kan.

**March 16, 2011:** State Department issues a travel warning advising US citizens against traveling to Japan, those in Japan to consider departing, and authorizing the voluntary departure from Japan of eligible family members of US government personnel in Tokyo, Nagoya, and Yokohama.

**March 17, 2011:** A US Air Force *Global Hawk* unmanned aerial vehicle and *U2* spy planes fly over the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant to survey damage.

**March 17, 2011:** Defense Secretary Robert Gates authorizes \$35 million in initial Defense Department funds for humanitarian assistance to Japan.

**March 17, 2011:** President Obama signs a book of condolence messages for the victims of the March 11 disaster at the Embassy of Japan in Washington and delivers remarks on the situation in Japan, summarizing US relief efforts and explaining the decision to recommend an evacuation of US citizens around the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

**March 18, 2011:** The Group of Seven (G7) industrial nations conduct a joint intervention in currency markets to help stabilize the yen.

**March 19, 2011:** PM Kan reportedly calls Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Tanigaki Sadakazu and invites him to join the Cabinet and form a grand coalition government between the DPJ and LDP.

**March 21, 2011:** The World Bank estimates that the March 11 disaster caused up to \$235 billion in damage.

**March 22, 2011:** Secretary of State Clinton signs a book of condolence messages for the victims of the March 11 disaster at the Embassy of Japan in Washington.

**March 22, 2011:** The US and Japanese governments establish a joint working group on the Fukushima Daiichi accident comprised of officials from various government agencies.

**March 22, 2011:** The US Food and Drug Administration bans imports of milk, milk products, and produce from six prefectures in Japan due to concerns about radioactive contamination.

**March 23, 2011:** Cabinet Office estimates damage from the March 11 disaster of up to \$300 billion.

**March 23, 2011:** US Ambassador to Japan John Roos, US Pacific Command Commander Adm. Robert Willard, and US Agency for International Development Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance Director Mark Bartolini travel to the area devastated by the tsunami.

**March 28, 2011:** NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko travels to Tokyo to meet Japanese counterparts and assess the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

**April 1, 2011:** Approximately 18,000 SDF and 7,000 US military personnel begin a three-day joint operation to find people missing since the March 11 disaster.

**April 5, 2011:** A *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll finds 64 percent of the public supports a grand coalition between the DPJ and LDP. Sixty-one percent expressed dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. The Kan Cabinet's approval rating stood at 31 percent with a disapproval rating of 56 percent.

**April 7, 2011:** The Bank of Japan keeps interest rates unchanged at 0-0.1 percent and creates a special lending facility to offer low-interest loans to financial institutions in areas hardest hit by the March 11 disaster.

**April 10, 2011:** The DPJ suffers a setback in the first round of unified local elections, losing three key gubernatorial races and faring poorly in prefectural assembly elections.

**April 11, 2011:** A message of thanks from PM Kan to the international community appears in several Western newspapers.

**April 12, 2011:** Japanese government raises the severity level of the emergency at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant from level five to the maximum seven on an international scale.

**April 14-15, 2011:** Finance ministers and central bank governors of the G20 convene in Washington, and issue a communiqué including a message of solidarity with the Japanese people and confidence in the resilience of the Japanese economy and financial sector.

**April 15, 2011:** Japan's Finance Minister Noda Yoshihiko meets Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner in Washington to express thanks for the March 18 G7 intervention in financial markets to stabilize the yen and for US support of Japan's recovery efforts.

**April 15, 2011:** State Department lifts the travel warning for Tokyo and the voluntary authorized departure status, allowing dependents of US government employees to return to Japan.

**April 17, 2011:** Secretary of State Clinton meets PM Kan, FM Matsumoto, and the Emperor and Empress of Japan during a visit to Tokyo.

**April 17, 2011:** Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) announces a six- to nine-month timetable for stabilizing the reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

**April 20, 2011:** Japan's Ministry of Finance reports a 2.2 percent decline in exports in March compared to a year earlier, the first decline in 16 months, leading to a 78.9 percent decline in the country's trade surplus.

**April 22, 2011:** Kan government approves a \$49 billion supplementary budget to support earthquake relief efforts.

**April 24, 2011:** The DPJ suffers additional setbacks in the second round of unified local elections, losing a Lower House by-election in Aichi prefecture and winning only three of 10 city and ward mayoral elections in which it went up against the LDP.

**April 26, 2011:** A *Fujisankei* poll finds a 21 percent approval rating for the Kan Cabinet with 79 percent of respondents suggesting Kan did not display leadership in response to the nuclear crisis. When asked who would be most desirable as prime minister, Ozawa Ichiro tops the list with 9.2 percent of the responses.

**April 27, 2011:** Standard and Poor's revises its outlook on Japan's credit rating from "stable" to "negative" citing the potential for increased deficits after the March 11 earthquake.

**April 29, 2011:** FM Matsumoto meets Secretary Clinton in Washington to discuss earthquake relief efforts, security cooperation, regional issues, and developments in the Middle East.

**April 30, 2011:** The Lower House of the Diet votes unanimously to approve a \$49 billion supplementary budget to support earthquake relief efforts.