

Japan's Defense Ministry Requests Nearly 12% Budget Increase to Bolster Military's Strike Capability

TOKYO — Japan's defense ministry is requesting a nearly 12% budget increase that includes two warships with advanced radar and long-range cruise missiles as it further fortifies the nation's military in the face of North Korean threats and Chinese military advancement.

The record 7.7 trillion yen (\$52.5 billion) request for the 2024 fiscal year marks the second year of a rapid five-year military buildup under a new security strategy Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government adopted in December. It focuses on reinforcing strike capability in a break from Japan's postwar principle of having a military only for self-defense.

Under the five-year plan, Japan plans to spend 43 trillion yen (\$315 billion) through 2027 to nearly double its annual spending to around 10 trillion yen (\$68 billion), making Japan the world's third-biggest spender after the United States and China. How to finance and justify the growing military spending is uncertain in a country with steeply declining births and increasing costs of caring for its aged population.

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