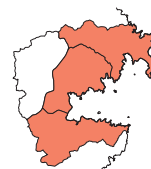


Withdrawal of the Self-Defense Forces

Gratitude and loneliness



▲ Minamisanriku residents gathered along the roadside to bid farewell to the soldiers, constantly waving their hands.

Most of the Self-Defense Forces, which were stationed in Minamisanriku to search for missing persons and to support recovery efforts, were withdrawn at the end of June 2011. For Minamisanriku, a town that had lost all its infrastructure in the tsunami, the continued support of the Self-Defense Forces since the days immediately after the earthquake had been highly significant.

The 22nd Infantry Regiment of the Ground Self-Defense Force (Tagajo, Miyagi Prefecture) carried on its assignment until August 2011. In addition to searching for missing persons, the regiment also supported the town in numerous other ways including the provision of meals, the supply of water, the provision of bathing facilities, and the extermination of flies.

On August 5th, 2011, a ceremony marking the withdrawal of the 22nd Infantry Regiment of the Ground Self-Defense Force was held at the multi-purpose plaza in Bayside Arena.

A total of 34 personnel attended the ceremony. Then regiment commander Kunitomo Akira made a remark that warmed the hearts of the people of Minamisanriku: "I pray for a strong recovery for your town."

Mayor Sato Jin expressed his sincere gratitude with the words: "The presence of the Self-Defense Forces has offered immense encouragement to the people of Minamisanriku." Residents who rushed to the event to bid a reluctant farewell to the troops could not stop waving goodbye.

Without the reassuring presence of the Self-Defense Forces, the people of Minamisanriku were left with a tinge of loneliness.