

Statement

Statement on Research
for Military Security



March 24, 2017
Science Council of Japan

The original statement was written in Japanese.

This statement is decided by the Executive Council of Science Council of Japan based on deliberation and the report of its Committee on National Security and Scientific Research.

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March 24, 2017

Decided in the 243rd meeting of the Executive Council

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Science Council of Japan (SCJ) was established in 1949. The following year SCJ adopted a statement on its commitment to never become engaged in scientific research for war purposes, and in 1967, issued again a statement on its commitment to never become engaged in scientific research for military purposes, which included the same wording used in the 1950 statement. Behind these statements there existed remorse for the scientist community's past cooperation with war efforts and a deep concern for a possible resurgence of similar situations. In recent years, the distance between scientific research and military endeavors has been narrowing again. Therefore, by recognizing the tension between two sides, namely, academic freedom and a sound development of the sciences on one side, and research for national security employing military measures, in other words, research for military security conducted at universities and research institutions, on the other, we affirm the previous two statements.

What the scientist community should pursue, above all, is a sound development of the sciences through which it can respond to the responsibilities entrusted to it by society. Past experience demonstrates that scientific research is often restricted or mobilized especially by political powers. Therefore, autonomy of research, especially the unrestricted publication of research results, must be guaranteed. However, for military security research, there exist concerns that government intervention in the activities of researchers might become stronger in regards to the direction of the research and the preservation of confidentiality during project periods and thereafter.

The Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency (ATLA) of the Ministry of Defense started a research funding program called National Security Technology Research Promotion (Anzenhoshou-gijutsu-kenkyuu-suisin-seido) in the fiscal year 2015. In this funding program, research proposals are invited and reviewed with a clear objective of awarding prospective projects which are likely to produce results useful to the future development of defense equipment. In addition, officials of the ATLA, not outside experts, administrate on-going research and their progress during funding periods. It should be pointed out that this funding program has many problems due to these governmental interventions into research. From the standpoint of a sound development of the sciences, funding should be increased further for research in civilian areas where autonomous research by scientists and unrestricted publication of research results are assured.

Contrary to the original intentions of scientists, research results may sometimes be diverted to military applications and for aggressive goals. Therefore, prudent judgment is required on sources of research funding and other conditions before actual research activities begin. Universities and research institutions are responsible for the management of their facilities, information, intellectual properties, and other resources, and for the preservation of unrestricted research and educational environments open to domestic and foreign nationals. Accordingly, each university or research institution should create a system to review research proposals that might be used for military security research for their appropriateness, both technologically and ethically, based on the validity of their research objectives, methods, and potential applications. Academic societies and other communities are required to develop guidelines depending upon the characteristics of their respective disciplines and fields.

As to appropriateness of the research, a shared understanding should be formed within the scientist community based on cumulative academic deliberations and judgments. Sincere discussions should be ongoing among not only respective scientists, but also universities, research institutions, academic societies, and the scientist community as a whole, and should be open to the rest of society. SCJ, an organization that represents the scientist community in Japan, will continue to lead deliberations on relevant issues to provide viewpoints and findings that contribute to this discussion.