

## Reception Marks Arrival of Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Training Squadron

Two Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) vessels – JS Kashima and JS Inazuma – docked in San Diego from Thursday, June 13 until Sunday, June 16, led by Training Squadron Commander and Rear Admiral Daisuke Kajimoto. The vessels arrived with some 580 crew members, including about 190 officer trainees who recently graduated the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Officer Candidate School, who will sail for about 160 days, making 13 port visits in 11 countries.

The Training Squadron sails with the purpose of training newly commissioned officers, promoting friendship with nations through port visits, and enriching understanding about Japan. San Diego has hosted past exercises between the U.S. military and JMSDF, making it an important part of the Japan-U.S. friendship.

On the evening of June 13, Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles Akira Chiba and Commander Kajimoto co-hosted a reception aboard the JS Kashima. Senior naval officers, including commanders from the U.S. Navy Third Fleet, senior Marine Corp officers, as well as representatives from local Japanese-related organizations attended the reception.

The reception started with a traditional Japanese *Kagami-biraki* ceremony, where the lid of a sake barrel is broken open with a wooden mallet and sake is served. Reception attendees also enjoyed a musical performance by JMSDF members, enjoying delicious Japanese cuisine using fresh ingredients from Japan. The evening was a success, helping to strengthen the Japan-U.S. friendship.

