

East Asia

Tokyo enters spy Alliance circle: Japan almost a 'sixth eye' as Five Eyes keep closer watch on Chinese military, North Korea

Sunday 2 February 2020, by [RYALL Julian](#) (Date first published: 29 January 2020).

- **Tokyo is one of three new non-member partners to the Five Eyes spy alliance which collects intelligence on North Korean ballistic missile launches**
- **Under the 'Five Eyes plus' framework, partners will exchange data on a range of areas, including China's military, cybersecurity and outer space**

Tokyo has become nearly a "sixth eye" to the Five Eyes intelligence alliance that shares information on North Korean ballistic missile launches, a United States government source said, as the spy group last week joined hands with three new partners.

Under an expanded "Five Eyes plus" framework, the group - which comprises Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the US - will work with Japan, France and South Korea to strengthen intelligence activities on North Korea, government sources from Japan and the US said.

The framework, which does not entail full membership, will also see the eight partners exchanging information on China's growing military muscle and on newly developing areas such as outer space and cybersecurity, the sources said.

A US government source said Japan's proximity to China and North Korea, and its capabilities of collecting relevant data through satellites and signals intelligence, made it almost a "sixth eye".

Japan has long wanted to be a full member of the Five Eyes, which evolved from an intelligence-sharing agreement between Britain and the US in the years immediately after World War II.

But Garren Mulloy, a Japan-based defence expert, said the core countries were unlikely to share all the data they obtained with the new partners.

"These three countries will be given enhanced, but still limited, access and they're not full members of Five Eyes for the good reason that the other nations just don't trust them," said Mulloy, a professor of international relations at Daito Bunka University.

"With France and Japan seen as prone to leaks, they're going to be incorporated into an enhanced framework that will focus specifically on missile defence," he said.

Leaks from France during the Kosovo conflict revealed targets in advance of air attacks, he pointed out, while Japan earlier this month admitted a ninth incident in which Russian intelligence operatives managed to obtain secret information from a Japanese firm.

A former employee of SoftBank Corp was arrested last Saturday for allegedly passing proprietary information from the phone carrier to two Russian trade officials in Tokyo.

The data was related to mobile phone base stations and other communications facilities, and Japanese authorities have requested that the Russian government hand over the two diplomats for questioning. Moscow has denied any wrongdoing in the case.

The partnership was nevertheless a “big bonus” for Japan, Mulloy said, as the country seeks to move away from relying almost entirely on the US for its intelligence.

While the enlarged Five Eyes agreement was ostensibly aimed at countering North Korea’s military development, Mulloy said the “elephant in the room” was still China.

“Japan has constantly referenced North Korea and the threat it poses to Japan, but the well-understood code behind that is China,” Mulloy said. “Everyone accepts that, but to avoid diplomatic problems – particularly as Japan prepares to welcome Chinese President Xi Jinping this spring – they all talk about North Korea.”

When contacted, Japan’s Defence Ministry and Ministry of Foreign Affairs declined to comment on Tokyo’s position within the Five Eyes mechanism. They also did not comment on Japan’s reliability to handle top secrets.

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P.S.

- “Japan almost a ‘sixth eye’ as Five Eyes keep closer watch on Chinese military, North Korea”, South China Morning Post. Published: 6:00pm, 29 Jan, 2020:
<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3048079/japan-almost-sixth-eye-five-eyes-keep-closer-watch-chinese>

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