

Japanese Red Army Report

December 3, 2023

SRA 211 Sec 001

Group 2

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Table of Contents

Purpose Statement	3
Introduction	3
Origin	3-4
Leadership	4-5
Finances	5
Targets Areas of Influence and Tactics	5-6
Historical Case in Review: The Lod Airport Massacre	6-7
Summary	7-8
Citations	9-10

Purpose Statement:

The organization that will be reported on is the Japanese Red Army(JRA). The Japanese Red Army(JRA) was a left-wing extremist group whose mission was to transform the country based on Marxist-Leninist Ideology and unify the world under communism(Movements). The JRA was mostly based in the Middle East after leaving Japan to build international bases(Movements). This organization should be studied and reported not just because of the actions they took to overthrow their government, but also because of the threat they were to other countries around the world. The JRA became worthy of a national audience through the use of terrorist activities which caused them to become a threat to Japan and anybody with ties to Japan. Led by founder Fusako Shigenobu, the organization took part in numerous terrorist activities which included a hijacking and an airport massacre(Movements).

Introduction:

This paper will address the origins, leadership, finances, ideology, influences, targets, and historical cases of the Japanese Red Army. Starting with the origins, the paper will describe how the relationship between Japan and the United States influenced the upbringing of the JRA. From there the report will analyze Fusako Shigenobu, the only leader of the JRA and how she was able to lead the JRA into becoming a well-recognized organization. The report will discuss the JRA close alliance with a Syria-based terrorist group and their dependency on them for finances. The paper will then take a look into the main targets of the JRA and the methods they used to attack such targets. The paper will then conclude with a deep dive into the Lod Airport Massacre, one of the JRA's most notorious attacks followed with a summary of the dissolution of the JRA. All of the different areas of the JRA that will be discussed in the paper are all key topics that must be studied and understood in order to understand how the JRA was able to affect Japan's society and the countries affected by their tactics.

Origins:

The Japanese Red Army was originally known as Sekigun and first formed in the 1960s. The origin of the organization was a group of students protesting the Japanese government, its relationship with the United States, and the Vietnam War. Sekigun was known as the “Red Army Faction” and consisted of these protesting students. The most significant change or transition

from political protestors to terrorists occurred in 1969. This was due to the multiple violent uprisings in the Osaka, Tokyo, and Kyoto Wars. Other violent behavior included stockpiling weapons like poles, iron pipes, and glass bottles for Molotov cocktails. When this violent behavior started, the goals of the JRA shifted to extremist, Communist views that were motivated to transform the mindsets and influence the countries around them. This violent behavior can be attributed to the early attacks of the JRA like the hijacking of a Japan Airlines jet in March of 1970. This attack and the ones that followed by the JRA had a new and shared extremist goal due to the influence of their leadership and the ideals of the PFLP which the JRA showed much support for.

Leadership:

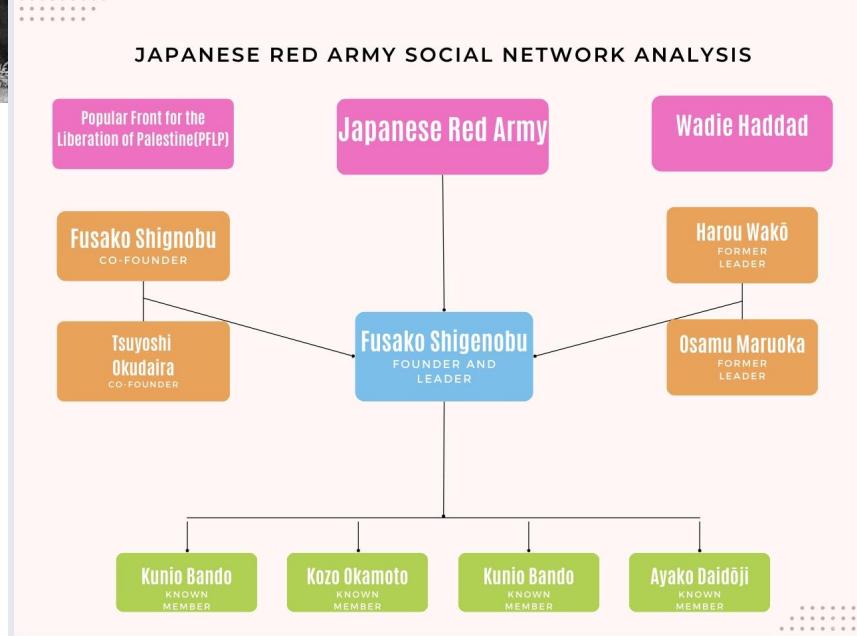
The Empress of Terror or Red Queen are among the names given to the sole leader of the Japanese Red Army, Fusako Shigenobu. On a tactical, political, and ideological level, Shigenobu represented and enforced the ideals and goals of the JRA organization. Shigenobu led the JRA starting in 1970 and ending with her arrest in 2000 after she was found guilty of organizing a hostage situation at the French embassy in 1974. With the goal to overthrow the Japanese government and monarchy, Shigenobu put an end to the JRA's operation in 2001 because she said that it was meant to be a legitimate political party, not revolutionary violence. A line of succession could be the Rentai Movement which, although not a leader of the JRA, is an organization that has all the same operations and movements as a successor to the JRA. The creation of this group followed the arrest of Shigenobu and her request for the dissolving of the JRA. Aside from Shigenobu, sources list Tsuyoshi Okudaira as a co-founder of the organization, despite his lack of involvement in the operations of the JRA. Other members of the organization with some form of leadership included Osamu Maruoka and Harou Wakō who were responsible for the planning of specific attacks like the hijacking of the Japan Airlines flight. On a political level, the JRA had close ties with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine(PFLP) and their leader, Wadie Haddad.



Founder/Leader:
Fusako
Shigenobu



Leader of PFLP:
Wadie Haddad
(captive 1967-)



Finances:

The Finances of the Japanese Red Army came a long way from where they started, gradually improving over the thirty years they reigned as a terrorist group. Most of their finances came through their partnership with the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), a terrorist group based in Syria with common attacks such as highjacking. These two groups had close ties and formed their “strategic alliance” due to similar motives as groups. These groups shared funds to set up attacks and would provide money based on what they earned. As the overall group improved and got stronger, so did the finances. Having their best couple of years from the late 1970’s and into the 80’s, they were a Threat to be reckoned with. The finances slowly depleted as the group started to struggle more later in the 90’s. Having their financial alliance with the PFLP allowed the group to obtain the power they had, and without them, we truly don’t know if they would have ever been to reach that level.

Targets, Areas of Influence, and Tactics:

The targets of the Japanese Red Army were not well defined, but the JRA targeted mostly anyone with ties to Japan. They mainly wanted to cause havoc and gain attention to spread their ideas. Since they were a very small group, it was difficult to make an impact with the small amount of attacks they had while active. Their attacks include airplanes being hijacked, several shootings, and the kidnapping of political figures. Lebanon was the biggest place they operated out of, but had sub-operations in Japan, Europe, South and South Asia, and other Middle Eastern countries. The Japanese Red Army went from Japan to Lebanon almost immediately after being made, and some members were granted political asylum. The JRA had little to no influence to begin with, and even after some attacks still had little influence. Tactics such as such as hijackings, hostage taking, and bombings to affect targets like embassies, ambassadors, and other executives.

Historical Case in Review:

The Lod Airport Massacre was a Japanese Red Army attack that resulted in the death of 26 civilians. This historic case review was excerpted from articles by BBC News UK and the Center for Israel Education. This case provides insight on how the Japanese Red Army operates and is illustrative of its ideological/political aims and the methods and tactics employed to reach its goals of transforming the Middle East based on Marxist-Leninist Ideology and unifying the world under communism.

The Lod Airport Massacre was a terrorist attack that occurred on May 30, 1972 outside Tel Aviv, Israel. The perpetrators were three members of the Japanese Red Army, Kōzō Okamoto, Tsuyoshi Okudaira, and Yasuyuki Yasuda, who were recruited by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - External Operations. The three perpetrators had been trained in Baalbek, Lebanon and the actual attack was planned by the head of the PFLP External Operations, Wadie Haddad. Before the attack, the security at Lod Airport were anticipating the possibility of a Palestinian attack, so they were looking for Arab terrorists.

At 10 p.m. on May 30, 1972, the 3 men arrive at the Lod Airport aboard an Air France flight coming from Rome. Dressed conservatively and carrying violin cases, the men attract little attention. Hidden in the violin cases were assault rifles and hand grenades which the men used to shoot aimlessly at anyone in sight. Yasuda, an attacker, was shot by one of the other attackers. Okudaira ran out onto the tarmac to shoot passengers disembarking a El Al flight and ends up

killing himself with one of his own grenades. Okamoto was shot by security and arrested before he could leave the terminal. During the attack, 26 civilians were killed and 80 were wounded.

Okamoto was sentenced to life imprisonment following his trial in June of 1972.

Okamoto only spent 13 years in prison before being released in a prisoner exchange with Palestinians. He was given asylum in Lebanon where he is considered a hero and converted to Islam. In response to the attack, the PFLP spokesperson was assassinated, and the U.S. Court ordered North Korea to pay \$378 million to families of the attack (CIE, 2020). Our group believes that life imprisonment was a reasonable sentence for Okamoto, but he should have been exempt from the prisoner exchange. Military or legislative action should have been taken instead of economic sanctions because the forced payment is not preventing future attacks.

The target of this attack was the Israeli government, military, security, and civilians. The gunmen were said to “join the Palestinian people in their struggle” because they were getting revenge after two Arab hijackers were killed after attempting to take a plane at Lod Airport on May 8 (BBC, 2005). The tactics used by the gunmen included disguises, assault rifles, grenades, and suicide mission tendencies. The attackers conservative outfits as well as violin cases attracted little attention because it made them appear harmless. The actual weapons used as tactics for the killing of citizens were assault rifles and hand grenades.

The effects of the Lod Airport Massacre included a significant increase to Israeli airport security. This consisted of the division of responsibilities between the police and state security. Lod Airport, now called Ben Gurion Airport, is one of the most secure airports in the world. Among other effects is the suing of North Korea by survivors of Puerto Rican victims. They claimed North Korea provided material support and helped the PFLP plan the attack.

The goals of the Lod Airport Massacre according to the gunmen revolve strictly around revenge after the killing of two Arab hijackers at the same airport. After being trained by the PFLP, the attackers had the same goals as their organization as well as the Japanese Red Army organization. Transforming the Middle East based on Marxist-Leninist Ideology and unifying the world under communism is the main goal of the JRA, but attacks like the Lod Airport Massacre gain attention for this goal. The attackers were most motivated by the goals of the JRA, and Okamoto even said he had nothing against Israeli people, but he did what he had to do because, “It was my duty as a soldier of the revolution” (BBC 2005).

Summary:

In conclusion, the understanding of the Japanese Red Army organization is important because it creates an example of how society can learn and prevent future terrorist organizations. The response from global security organizations is impacted by unique attacks and mindsets of those involved with the Japanese Red Army. Aspects addressed in this paper include the origins of the JRA including the relationship between Japan and the United States, Fusako Shigenobu, the only leader of the JRA, the JRA close alliance with a Syria-based terrorist group, the main targets of the JRA and the methods they used to attack, and an analysis of the Lod Airport Massacre, one of the JRA's most notorious attacks. Overall, the Japanese Red Army was significant enough to gain a national audience through the use of crimes and terrorist activities.

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