

# Japanese Red Army<sup>1</sup>

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The **Japanese Red Army** (**日本赤軍** *Nihon Sekigun*<sup>?</sup>, **JRA**) was a Communist terrorist group founded by Fusako Shigenobu early in 1971 in Lebanon. It sometimes called itself **Arab-JRA** after the Lod airport massacre. The JRA's stated goals were to overthrow the Japanese government and monarchy and to start a world revolution.

The group was also known as the **Anti-Imperialist International Brigade (AIIB)**, **Holy War Brigade**, and the **Anti-War Democratic Front**.

## Japanese Red Army 日本赤軍

Dates of operation	1971–2001
Leader	Fusako Shigenobu
Motives	Proletarian revolution in Japan, World Revolution
Active region(s)	Japan, Southeast Asia and Middle East
Ideology	Communism
Notable attacks	Lod Airport massacre, Hijacking of Japan Airlines Flight 351, Malaysia Airlines Flight 653 (suspected)
Status	Defunct, now replaced by Movement Rentai

### *Red Army Faction in Japan*

Shigenobu had been a leading member of the Red Army Faction (Sekigun-ha) in Japan, whose roots lay in the militant new-left Communist League. Advocating imminent revolution, they set up their own group, declaring war on the state in September 1969. The police arrested many of them very soon, its founder and intellectual leader Takaya Shiomi was in jail in 1970. The *Sekigun* lost about 200 members and the very few left merged with a maoist group to form the *Rengo Sekigun* or United Red Army in July, 1971. This group grew notable because its members slaughtered twelve of their own in its training camp hideout in the Mount

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<sup>1</sup> ที่มา [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese\\_Red\\_Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_Red_Army) เข้าถึงวันที่ 30 ธันวาคม 2554

Haruna in the winter of that year. A weeklong siege by hundreds of police, the Asama-Sanso incident ended this fiasco. The Red Army in Japan was finished. Fusako Shigenobu had left Japan with only a handful of dedicated people, but her group is said to have had about 40 members at its height and was from the Lod airport massacre on one of the best-known armed leftist groups in the world.<sup>[1]</sup> The *Japanese Red Army, Nihon Sekigun* from 1971 had very close ties to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). By 1972 the United Red Army in Japan was finished and the Shigenobu group dependent on the PFLP for financing, training and weaponry.

In April 2001, Shigenobu issued a statement from detention declaring the Japanese Red Army had disbanded.<sup>[2]</sup> A 2011 NPR report claimed some of the people associated with this group were imprisoned in a highly restrictive Communication Management Unit.<sup>[3]</sup>

The National Police Agency publicly stated that a successor group to the JRA was founded called Movement Rentai.<sup>[4]</sup>

### *Known Members*

- Fusako Shigenobu, founder and leader, arrested in Osaka, Japan, November 2000. This surprised many people since she was thought to live in Lebanon. Shigenobu is accused of orchestrating attacks, kidnappings and hijackings. At one time labeled by critics as "the most feared female terrorist in the world"<sup>[citation needed]</sup>, she helped plan the 1972 attack at Lod Airport. A court in Tokyo sentenced her in February 2006 to serve 20 years in prison.
- Haruo Wakō, former leader, arrested February 1997.
- Osamu Maruoka, former leader, arrested November 1987 in Tokyo after entering Japan on a forged passport. Given a life sentence, he died in prison on 29 May 2011.<sup>[5]</sup>
- Yū Kikumura was arrested with explosives on the New Jersey Turnpike in 1988 and served a long prison sentence in the United States. In April 2007 Kikumura was released from US incarceration and immediately arrested upon his return to Japan. He was released in October 2007. [1]
- Yoshimi Tanaka, was sentenced to 12 years for the Yodo-go hijacking that ended in North Korea.
- Yukiko Ekida, a long-time JRA leader, was arrested in March 1995 in Romania and subsequently deported to Japan. She received a sentence of 20 years for attempted murder and violating the explosives law in a series of bombings targeting large companies in 1974 and 1975. The trial of Ekita was originally started in 1975 but was suspended when she was released from prison in

1977. Her release was part of a deal with the Japanese Red Army during the hijacking of a Japanese airliner to Bangladesh.

- Kōzō Okamoto is the only survivor of the group of three guerilleros attacking the Israeli Lod airport in 1972, now called Ben Gurion International Airport. He was jailed in Israel, but in May 1985, Okamoto was set free in an exchange of prisoners between Israeli and Palestinian forces. Subsequently, he was imprisoned in Lebanon for three years for forging visas and passports. The Lebanese authorities granted Okamoto asylum in 1999 because he was alleged to have been tortured in prison in Israel. At his stay in Lebanon, Okamoto converted to Islam to prevent being sent home.<sup>[6]</sup>
- Masao Adachi, Kazuo Tohira, Haruo Wakō, and Mariko Yamamoto were also imprisoned in Lebanon on charges of forgery yet were sent to Jordan. As the Jordanian authorities refused to allow them into Jordan, they were handed over to Japan. In January 2005, Yamamoto shoplifted dried cuttlefish (a Japanese popular relish taken with beer) at a supermarket in Tokyo and was arrested.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>
- Kuniya Akagi, a collaborator of the JRA, was arrested after returning to Osaka from Pyongyang via Beijing in order to be questioned over the kidnapping of three Japanese nationals in Europe by North Korean spies in the 1980s. He is linked to Shirō Akagi, who took part in the *Yodo-go* hijacking (See also: Japan Airlines Flight 351).<sup>[7]</sup>

### *Activities*

During the 1970s and 1980s, JRA carried out a series of attacks around the world and in Japan, including:

- March 31, 1970: Nine members of the JRA's predecessor, the *Red Army Faction* (whose leaders had been a part, but were thrown out of the *Communist League*), conducted Japan's most infamous hijacking, that of Japan Airlines Flight 351, a domestic Japan Airlines Boeing 727 carrying 129 people at Tokyo International Airport. Wielding katanas and a bomb, they forced the plane to fly to Fukuoka and later Gimpo Airport in Seoul, where all the passengers were freed. It then flew to North Korea, where the hijackers abandoned the plane and the crewmembers were released. Tanaka was the only one to be convicted. Three of Tanaka's alleged accomplices later died in North Korea and five remain there. According to Japan's National Police Agency, another accomplice may also have died in North Korea.<sup>[8]</sup>
- May 30, 1972: The Lod Airport massacre: an assault rifle (Sa vz.58) and grenade attack on Israel's Lod Airport in Tel Aviv, now Ben Gurion International Airport, killed 26 people; about 80 others were injured<sup>[9]</sup>. One of the three attackers then killed themselves with a grenade, although some

believe this to be an accident. Another was shot in the crossfire of the only surviving attacker Kōzō Okamoto. It has been claimed that the PFLP was behind the attack.

- July 1973: Red Army members led a hijacking of Japan Airlines (JAL) plane over the Netherlands. The passengers and crew were released in Libya, where hijackers blew up the plane.
- January 1974: Laju incident: Red Army attacked a Shell facility in Singapore and took five hostages; simultaneously, the PFLP seized the Japanese embassy in Kuwait. The hostages were exchanged for a ransom and safe passage to South Yemen in a Japan Airlines plane.
- September 13, 1974: The French Embassy in The Hague, Netherlands was stormed. The ambassador and ten other people were taken hostage and a Dutch policewoman, Hanke Remmerswaal, was shot in the back, puncturing a lung. After lengthy negotiations, the hostages were freed in exchange for the release of a jailed Red Army member (Yatsuka Furuya), \$300,000 and the use of a plane. The plane flew the hostage-takers first to Aden, South Yemen, where they were not accepted and then to Syria. Syria did not consider hostage taking for money revolutionary, and forced them to give up their ransom.<sup>[10]</sup>
- August 1975: The Red Army took more than 50 hostages at the AIA building housing several embassies in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The hostages included the US consul and the Swedish chargé d'affaires. The gunmen won the release of five imprisoned comrades and flew with them to Libya.
- September 1977: The Red Army hijacked Japan Airlines Flight 472 over India and forced it to land in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Japanese Government freed six imprisoned members of the group and allegedly paid a \$6M ransom.
- December 1977: A suspected lone member of the army hijacked Malaysia Airlines Flight 653.<sup>[citation needed]</sup> The flight was carrying the Cuban ambassador to Tokyo, Mario Garcia. The Boeing 737 then crashed killing all onboard after he shot both pilots and himself.
- May 1986: The Red Army fired mortar rounds at the embassies of Japan, Canada and the United States in Jakarta, Indonesia.
- June 1987: A similar attack was launched on the British and United States embassies in Rome, Italy.
- April 1988: Red Army members bombed the US military recreational (USO) club in Naples, Italy, killing five.
- In the same month, JRA operative Yū Kikumura was arrested with explosives on the New Jersey Turnpike highway, apparently to coincide with the USO bombing. He was convicted of these charges and served time in a United States prison until his release in April 2007. Upon his return to Japan he was immediately arrested on suspicion of using fraudulent travel documents.

- The JRA launched a series of 17 bombings on buildings belonging to large corporations, including Mitsui & Co. and Taisei Corp., injuring 20 people. Eight people were killed in the 1974 bombing of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd.'s head office building in Tokyo.<sup>[11]</sup>

### *Films*

- *Sekigun - PFLP. Sekai Sensō Sengen, Red Army - PFLP: Declaration of World War*, 1971, shot on location in Lebanon, produced by Kōji Wakamatsu. Patricia Steinhoff translates its title *Manifesto for World Revolution* which makes perhaps more sense. A propaganda film for the Red Army sympathisers in Japan.

One of the people showing the film around Japan with the producer was Mieko Toyama, a close friend of Fusako Shigenobu. She was murdered in the winter training camp massacre.

- *Jitsuroku Rengō Sekigun, Asama sansō e no michi, United Red Army* (The Way to Asama Mountain Lodge), 2007, shows the horrors of the *United Red Army* winter camp, but also the history of the militant Japanese student movement. See also *United Red Army* (film)
- *Suatu Ketika... Soldadu Merah* (Once Upon A Time... Red Soldier), an 8 episode Malaysian TV drama series based on the Japanese Red Army attack in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 1975. Produced by NSK Productions (Malaysia), the series was shot in 2009 and currently airs on Malaysia's local cable channel, ASTRO Citra 131. Read *Hostage Drama* article by TheStar newspapers.
- In 2010, Fusako Shigenobu and Masao Adachi were featured in the documentary *Children of the Revolution*, which tells the story of Shigenobu and the Japanese Red Army through the eyes of Mei Shigenobu.
- In the 2010 French TV Film *Carlos* members of the Japanese Red Army feature when they stormed the French Embassy in the Hague and associating with the PFLP and the German Revolutionary Cells

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3. [DATA & GRAPHICS: Population Of The Communications Management Units](#), Margot Williams and Alyson Hurt, [NPR](#), 3-3-11, retrieved 2011 03 04 from [npr.org](#)

4. "Movements of the Japanese Red Army and the "Yodo-go" Group". Japanese National Police Agency.  
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9. "In what became known as the Lod Airport Massacre three members of the terrorist group, Japanese Red Army, arrived at the airport aboard Air France Flight 132 from Rome. Once inside the airport they grabbed automatic firearms from their carry-on cases and fired at airport staff and visitors. In the end, 26 people died and 80 people were injured." *CBC News, The Fifth Estate*, "Fasten Your Seatbelts: Ben Gurion Airport in Israel", 2007. Accessed June 2, 2008.
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- A Brief History of the Japanese Red Army. Too Far, Too Fast, Too Bad A review of William Farrell's *Blood and Rage*, by Dan Spalding, The George Jackson Brigade Information Project (online)
- Red Army members expelled by Lebanon *The Guardian* (online) Saturday March 18, 2000
- Patricia Steinhoff interview

### *External links*

- Video of 1974 Mitsubishi Heavy Industries building bombing.
- List of incidents attributed to the Japanese Red Army on the START database