

2. History



In 1872, the Japanese government sent the first Superintendent General Toshiyoshi KAWAJI to Europe to study the police system. He returned the following year, then established the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department in the Ministry of Interior in 1874. This was the first modern police organization in Japan. Police power, at that time, was held by the national government.

In the process of democratization of Japan after World War II, the Public Safety Commission system was established under the former Police Act enforced in 1948. This created a structure consisting of national and municipal police with the aim of ensuring democratic management and decentralization of police power.

The former Police Act had an epochal significance in democratizing the police. However, it had institutional shortcomings such as the existence of a multitude of municipal police forces in parallel with the National Rural Police. This caused several problems such as inefficiency of police force operations and low cost-effectiveness due to geographical segmentation of the police units and unclear distinction of responsibilities between the municipal police forces and the national government in terms of maintaining public peace and order.

Hence, the former Police Act was amended in its entirety into the present act in 1954 by retaining its merits and improving the institutional shortcomings. Consequently, the National Police Agency was established and the present police system was formed.

3. Organizational Structure

The Police Act empowers the national government to establish a central police organization to control and supervise prefectural police forces on matters of national concern. The Act also gives each prefecture the authority to carry out police duties to "protect the lives, bodies, and property of individuals" and "maintain public safety and order" within its jurisdiction. At both the national and prefectural levels, Public Safety Commissions have administrative supervision powers over the police.

A. National Police Structure

The National Public Safety Commission (NPSC) and the National Police Agency (NPA) constitute Japan's national police organization.

(1) National Public Safety Commission

After World War II, the Public Safety Commission system was established through the police reform. The main objective of establishing this system was to ensure democratic administration and political neutrality of the police under the administrative supervision by the Commission which consists of members representing the good sense of the public.