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This thorough and insightful study dissects the public and behind-the-scenes negotiations leading to the 1969 Okinawa Reversion Agreement between the U.S. and Japanese governments that included a confidential Agreed Minute, often called 'the secret agreement,' on nuclear weapons. Among other recent accounts in English, Kensei Yoshida's 2002 book provides an overview of events.¹ My 2013 article focuses on the consequences of the 'secret agreement' for the village of Henoko in northern Okinawa Island where nuclear weapons were stored before reversion. Henoko is currently the Japanese government's proposed site for the long-delayed construction of a U.S. Marine airfield vehemently opposed by local residents.² Drawing extensively on scholarly and official sources, some only recently declassified, Yukinori Komine provides fresh insights into the convoluted process of deliberations and debates that dragged on for years inside Japan, inside the U.S., and between the two governments. His archival evidence ranges widely in Japanese and English, from published books and articles in magazines and newspapers to formerly confidential communications and policy position papers circulated among government officials and their advisers. It includes published and unpublished recollections of the negotiators themselves, for which Komine provides appropriate contexts and illuminating critical analysis. The author breaks new ground by examining how 'frontchannel' negotiations over the military bases

¹ Kensei Yoshida, *Democracy Betrayed: Okinawa under U.S. Occupation* (Western Washington University Center for East Asian Studies, 2002).

² Steve Rabson, "Okinawa's Henoko was a 'Storage Location' for Nuclear Weapons: Published Accounts," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol 11, Issue 1, No. 6 (January 14, 2013) (<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Steve-Rabson/3884>).

between U.S. State Department and Japanese Foreign Ministry officials were linked to ‘backchannel’ discussions about nuclear weapons between Prime Minister Sato’s secret emissary, Kei Wakaizumi, and President Nixon’s National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger.

As the author notes, the idea of returning the administration of Okinawa to Japan while retaining U.S. bases, with the nuclear weapons option, dates well before the November 1969 summit meeting between Prime Minister Eisaku Sato and President Richard Nixon. He quotes from a 1963 “Record of Conversation” between U.S. Ambassador to Japan Edwin Reischauer and Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Reischauer reported that he had met with Japanese Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira, and had informed him that the U.S. “introduction” of nuclear weapons into Japan meant the placement of nuclear weapons on Japanese soil. (813) In addition to the memo Komine cites, there is a later “Memorandum of Conversation” on a meeting of high-level U.S. military and civilian officials held at the American Embassy in Tokyo on July 16, 1965.³ This time Reischauer put forward a comprehensive post-reversion U.S. strategy for a permanent American military presence in Okinawa with a nuclear weapons option: “Ambassador Reischauer said [that] if Japan would accept nuclear weapons on Japanese soil, including Okinawa, and if it would provide us with assurances guaranteeing our military commanders effective control of the islands in time of military crisis, then we would be able to keep our bases on the islands, even though ‘full sovereignty’ reverted to Japan.”⁴ Both of these provisions later became key elements in post-reversion policy negotiated in the 1969 U.S.-Japan Okinawa Reversion Agreement, which took effect on May 15, 1972. Reischauer’s views expressed in the 1965 memo are at odds with his public description of the meetings on reversion he held with Japanese government officials.: “On more than one occasion I had told Japanese officials [that] I believed the United States would comply on terms acceptable to Japan, which meant all nuclear weapons removed, as in the American military installations in Japan.”⁵

In the 1965 memo, Reischauer predicted correctly that reversion would be such a “politically important symbol” for Japan’s ruling conservative party (Liberal Democratic Party) that the U.S. would not have to “give Japan any real say in the use of our bases.”⁶ In accepting U.S. conditions in 1969, the Japanese government

³ “Memorandum of Conversation,” July 16, 1965. National Archives Record Number 79651.

⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation,” July 16, 1965.

⁵ Edwin O. Reischauer, *My Life Between Japan and America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 321.

⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation,” July 16, 1965.

ignited bitter protests in Okinawa for breaking its own oft-stated promise of a post-reversion Okinawa with military bases reduced to ‘mainland levels’ (*hondo-nami* in Japanese) and ‘without nuclear weapons’ (*kaku-nuki*). What was officially called in Japan *Henkan kyotei* (Reversion Agreement) came to be known in Okinawa as ‘*henken kyotei*’ (discriminatory agreement).

Reischauer’s advocacy for reversion had earlier met with stiff opposition from the U.S. Army, which insisted that the return of Okinawa to Japan would cripple the United States military’s missions. Interviews of former occupation commanders in the Army War College archives include angry denunciations, even questioning of his loyalty.⁷ According to the 1965 memo, when Army Secretary Stanley Resor asked him if he “envisioned a new treaty with Japan placing Okinawa outside the limitations of the [Japanese] Constitution,” Reischauer replied that “something like that would be necessary, although there is no explicit prohibition against nuclear weapons in the Constitution.”⁸

The “something like that” Reischauer refers to anticipates the 1969 Reversion Agreement making the U.S. military presence more or less permanent. The accompanying Agreed Minute permits the introduction of nuclear weapons “in time of great emergency” as determined by the United States government “with prior consultation of Japan” to which “the United States would anticipate a favorable response.” For its part, the Government of Japan agreed to “meet these requirements without delay when such prior consultation takes place.” Despite the stated desire to keep the agreement in “strictest confidence,”⁹ its subsequent

⁷ “Command Interviews” conducted in April, 1975, and collected in the U.S. Army War College archives, Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

⁸ “Memorandum of Conversation,” July 16, 1965.

⁹ Kei Wakaizumi, Satō’s special envoy and interpreter, published a draft of the Agreed Minute in his book *Tasaku Nakarishi o Shinzamuto Hossu* (I Want to Believe There Were No Other Options), *Bungei Shunjū*, 1994. The existence of this document has never been officially recognized by the Japanese or U.S. governments. The English text of the agreement reads,

Agreed Minute to Joint Communique of United States President Nixon and Japanese Prime Minister Sato (Draft), 21st November, 1969

United States President:

As stated in our Joint Communique, it is the intention of the United States Government to remove all the nuclear weapons from Okinawa by the time of actual reversion of the administrative rights to Japan; and thereafter the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security and its related arrangements will apply to Okinawa, as described in the Joint Communique. However, in order to discharge effectively the international obligations assumed by the United States for the defense of countries in the Far East including Japan, in time of great emergency the United States Government will require the re-entry of nuclear weapons and transit rights in Okinawa with prior consultation

revelation showed that Prime Minister Sato had not only broken his oft-stated promise of a post-reversion Okinawa without nuclear weapons, but he had violated his own proclamation in 1967 of The Three Non-Nuclear Principles for Japan (non-production, non-possession, and non-introduction), which was cited as a major reason for awarding him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974. Komine quotes from U.S. records of a conversation in January, 1969 between Sato and U.S. Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson in which Sato called The Three Non-Nuclear Principles “nonsense.” In an October 1969 “Report to the Prime Minister,” documented by the Japanese Foreign Ministry, he said that it was a “mistake” to have included a principle of “not allowing the entry of nuclear weapons” among the Three Principles (823).

The author cites the U.S. government’s public announcement in 1969 that the Air Force would remove Mace-B nuclear-capable missiles from Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, attributing the decision to budgetary constraints. “[Mace-B] had been a symbol of nuclear Okinawa since its first deployment in December 1961. [Both Japanese and American officials] considered that the withdrawal would create a favorable impact on Japanese public opinion” (830-831). No such public announcements were made, however, regarding three other nuclear sites specified in the Agreed Minute, at “Naha, Henoko, and Nike Hercules units.”¹⁰

A 1999 article entitled “Where They Were” by Robert S. Norris, William M. Arkin, and William Burr in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (November/December, 1999, pp. 26-35) reports that “Okinawa hosted 19 different types of nuclear weapons

with the Government of Japan. The United States Government would anticipate a favorable response. The United States Government also requires the standby retention and activation in time of great emergency of existing nuclear storage locations in Okinawa: Kadena, Naha, Henoko and Nike Hercules units.

Japanese Prime Minister:

The Government of Japan, appreciating the United States Government’s requirements in time of great emergency stated above by the President, will meet these requirements without delay when such prior consultation takes place.

The President and the Prime Minister agreed that this Minute, in duplicate, be kept each only in the offices of the President and the Prime Minister and be treated in the strictest confidence between only the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Japan.

¹⁰ Rabson, “Okinawa’s Henoko was a ‘Storage Location.’” The Japanese government did not officially release the 1969 ‘Agreed Minute’ until 2008. In 2009, thirty-four years after Prime Minister Sato’s death in 1975, a copy of it was found in a desk drawer of the study at his former home in Setagaya Ward, Tokyo. See “Secret N-pact comes to light: Japan-U.S. accord was kept at Prime Minister Sato’s home,” iStockAnalyst December 22, 2009. (<http://www.istockanalyst.com/article/viewiStockN>)

during the period 1954-1972.”¹¹ Jon Mitchell argues that in 1971, one year before reversion scheduled for 1972, the U.S. government demanded and received payment from the Japanese government to help defray the expenses of removing nuclear weapons from Okinawa, the first official U.S. admission of their presence.¹²

Other accounts published after Okinawa’s reversion to Japan in 1972 refer to nuclear weapons storage facilities in the northern Okinawan village of Henoko at an Army ordnance depot adjacent to the Marines’ Camp Schwab.¹³

The depot was constructed in 1959, becoming the Army’s 137th Ordnance Company (Special Weapons) and was turned over to the Marines as Camp Henoko (Ordnance Ammunition Depot) following reversion in 1972. It is located only a few hundred yards from the proposed site of the replacement base for the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station. Current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has vowed to push for construction of the base, delayed more than sixteen years by local protests and despite widespread Okinawan opposition.

Having long suspected Henoko to be a nuclear weapons storage site,¹⁴ Okinawans are concerned today that serious environmental hazards could remain where construction of the proposed Marine air base is planned. The aftermath of contamination following the nuclear disaster at Fukushima in 2011 has only heightened such concerns. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Over 1,000 United States locations, including both operational and abandoned sites, are contaminated with radiation. These sites range in size from

¹¹ “Where They Were” by Robert S. Norris, William M. Arkin, and William Burr, “Where They Were,” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, November/December, 1999, pp. 26-35.

¹² Jon Mitchell, “‘Seconds Away from Midnight’: U.S. Nuclear Missile Pioneers on Okinawa Break Fifty Year Silence on a Hidden Nuclear Crisis in 1962,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol 10, Issue 29, No. 1. July 16, 2012. ([http://japanfocus.org/-Jon Mitchell/3798](http://japanfocus.org/-Jon%20Mitchell/3798))

¹³ A website for Army Ordnance veterans includes the following as part of a brief career biography for Chief Warrant Officer 5 Cecil E. Hutson:

He attended the Army Nuclear Weapons Assembly Course at Albuquerque, New Mexico in 1962 and spent three years as NCOIC [Non-commissioned Officer in Charge] of the Nuclear Weapons Assembly Team with the 137th Ordnance Co, [Henoko,] Okinawa. (<http://www.goordnance.army.mil/hof/2000>)

¹⁴ See Okinawa Taimusu-sha, Kichi Mondai Shuzai-han, ed., “Henoko Dan’yaku-ko (Henoko Ammunition Storage Depot)” in *Okinawa no Kichi* (Bases in Okinawa), Okinawa Taimusu-sha, 1984, pp. 37-42. This chapter mentions the extremely tight security surrounding the base as well as an NOP (Nuclear Ordnance Platoon) assigned there, and includes an aerial photograph of a high-wire fenced in area containing heavily fortified storage igloos.

small corners in laboratories to massive nuclear weapons facilities. The contamination may be found in the air, water, and soil, as well as equipment in buildings.” The report states that “these sites are closely monitored . . . to limit potential hazards.”¹⁵ Disturbing questions arise as to whether such assiduous efforts have been undertaken at Henoko. The U.S. military has a dismal record of addressing contamination issues at its present and past military installations. The SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement), concluded under the U.S. Japan Security Treaty renewed in 1960, gives the U.S. military certain extra-territorial exemptions from Japanese civil and criminal law. The agreement provides no environmental protection provisions and the Japanese government is given no rights to on-site investigations within U.S. military facilities. Moreover, the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) exempts U.S. military forces from their responsibility to deal with environmental cleanup at the sites of present or past installations. The Okinawa Prefectural Government submitted bills to revise SOFA in 1995 and in 2000, which included environmental protection articles, to the Japanese and the U.S. governments. But the Japanese government has preferred operational changes to SOFA rather than amendments to it.¹⁶

Of course, the problem of contamination posed by the Henoko ordnance depot and other nuclear installations could have been addressed if all of them had been closed after reversion with the land cleaned up and returned to civilian use. As things stand, they remain potential sites for future “activation” according to the Agreed Minute on nuclear weapons.¹⁷

The Agreed Minute, negotiated in secret, applies only to Okinawa, which already bears 75% of the total U.S. military presence in Japan on 0.6% of the nation’s land area. These are the consequences of the “confidential” diplomacy Komine examines in depth and with critical insight. In his conclusion, the author moves beyond his thorough analysis of the process that resulted in perpetuating this long-imposed discrimination to propose a remedy: “If Japan genuinely wishes to reduce U.S. bases in Okinawa, it must do the following: ask its citizens to what extent Japan should increase its defense capabilities; and ask other prefectures to take responsibility by increasing their burden sharing for the reallocation of U.S. bases” (840).

¹⁵ “Radioactive Contamination at Clean-Up Sites,” www.epa.gov/radtown/clean-up.html

¹⁶ Ichiyo Muto (People’s Plan Study Groups), “U.S. Military Presence in Mainland Japan and Okinawa.” (http://www.jca.apc.org/wsf_support/2004doc/WSFJapUSBaseRepoFinalAll.html#EnvironmentalProblems)

¹⁷ See text of agreement quoted in footnote No. 9.

H-Diplo Article Review

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