



Prelude to Okinawa: Nuclear
Agreements and the Return of the
Ogasawara Islands to Japan

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Introduction

Diplomacy, like law, is very much based on precedents. In the case of the return of administrative rights over Okinawa to Japan by the United States in 1972, there were two particularly important precedents at work--the return of the Amami Islands, just north of Okinawa, in December 1953, and the Bonin, or Ogasawara, Islands in June 1968.

The return of the Amami Islands was the subject of a presentation I gave several years ago here at SHAFR and a book¹ shortly after that. Today, I will introduce the latter one, the return of Ogasawara and Iwo Jima, which is the subject of my forthcoming book.²

In most writings on Japan, as well as the diplomatic history research within Japan, the return of the Ogasawara Islands (I will generally use this term to represent both the Ogasawara Islands group, including Chichi Jima and Haha Jima, and the Volcano Islands group, including Iwo Jima) is

¹ Robert D. Eldridge, *The Return of the Amami Islands: The Reversion Movement and U.S.-Japan Relations* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004).

² Robert D. Eldridge, *Iwo Jima-Ogasawara Shoto o Meguru Nichibei Kankei* (Iwo Jima and the Bonin Islands in U.S.-Japan Relations), (Kagoshima: Nanpo Shinsha, 2008 forthcoming). I have yet to discuss the book project with an American publisher, and thus I am not certain of the U.S. publication date.

no more than an appetizer outdone by the more delicious main course that the Okinawa reversion was. This situation is understandable—Okinawa was infinitely more important militarily, geographically larger and more relevant strategically, and included a population of almost one million Japanese citizens, making it a complicated economic, social, and political problem of major proportions. Nevertheless, the lack of scholarship on the return of the islands, the precedents created, and the overall significance of a country returning territory seized in war to another country peacefully is both surprising and disappointing.

Of course, at the time of reversion, much attention was given to the event; *National Geographic*, for example, covered the return in addition to the major media.³ Moreover, scholarship in other fields, especially linguistics⁴ and anthropology⁵, have given detailed attention to the islands and the social upheavals created locally with reversion. However, Nicholas Evan Sarantakes' article "Continuity through Change: The Return of Okinawa and Iwo Jima, 1967-1972," was probably the first English-language research to devote any significant attention to the return of the islands.⁶ For those not familiar with the article, Dr. Sarantakes' basic argument, which he

³ Paul Sampson, "The Bonins and Iwo Jima Go Back to Japan An Era Ends for the 'Yankee' Isles," *National Geographic Magazine* (July 1968), pp. 128-144.

⁴ See, for example, Daniel Long, "Ogasawara ni Okeru Gengo Sesshoku Shoshi (A Short History of the Language Acquisition)," in Daniel Long, ed., *Ogasawaragaku Koto Hajime* (An Introduction to Ogasawara Studies), (Kagoshima: Nanpo Shinsha, 2002), pp. 271-312.

⁵ As an example of the latter, see the work of the late Stanford professor Mary Shepardson, "Pawns of Power: The Bonin Islanders," in Raymond D. Fogelson and Richard N. Adams, eds., *The Anthropology of Power* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 99-114.

⁶ Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, "Continuity through Change: The Return of Okinawa and Iwo Jima, 1967-1972," *The Journal of American East-Asian Relations*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 1994), pp. 35-53.

expanded on in his book *Keystone*, is that “the return of the two island chains...was an example of diplomacy at its very best...The return of these islands brought continuity through change.”⁷ The presenter agrees entirely with his argument, and would add that not only was the relationship continued but it many ways was also strengthened and stabilized for the long run politically and strategically through increasing Japan’s ownership in the alliance and raising its awareness of the need to play a larger military role.

What about the research in Japan? Again, at the time of reversion, there were several journalistic and legal accounts of the reversion, and an internal history of the League of Bonin Evacuees, an organization created in 1947, was published in two volumes in 1968⁸, but no actual research on the reversion process and meaning existed until my chapter in the interdisciplinary book titled *Ogasawaragaku Koto Hajime* in 2002.⁹ Even then, my chapter looked primarily (but not exclusively) at the plight of the several thousand former inhabitants who could not return to the islands due to U.S. restrictions on travel there and their role in promoting the issue domestically and bilaterally.

In Japan, there is an unofficial Ogasawara “fan club” of scholars and others who have devoted

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35. His book was published as *Keystone: The American Occupation of Okinawa and U.S.-Japan Relations* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000).

⁸ Ishii Michinori, *Ogasawara Shoto Gaishi* (An Overview of the Ogasawara Islands), (Ogasawara Kyokai, 1968).

⁹ Robert D. Eldridge, “Ogasawara to Nichibei Kankei (Ogasawara and Japan-U.S. Relations), 1945-1968,” in Daniel Long, ed., *Ogasawaragaku Koto Hajime* (An Introduction to Ogasawara Studies), (Kagoshima: Nanpo Shinsha, 2002), pp. 245-270.

a significant portion of their time to research about these mysterious islands in their respective fields. There is even an Ogasawara-based think tank called the Institute of Boninology¹⁰ and an Ogasawara Research Committee of Tokyo Metropolitan University, as the islands fall under Tokyo's administrative jurisdiction.¹¹ And yet, the Ogasawara reversion story in the Japan-U.S. relationship has escaped the attention of Japanese diplomatic historians.

In 2000, a fascinating article by nuclear policy specialists in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* first highlighted that nuclear weapons had been stored in Chichi Jima and Iwo Jima during the 1950s and early 60s¹², but even this revelation did not invite subsequent serious examination of the reversion story or the linkage between the secret nuclear weapons storage agreement at the time of Ogasawara's reversion with earlier (and later) secret agreements, with the exception of one book by the young, award-winning journalist Ota Masakatsu.¹³

Does this mean, then, that the reversion of Ogasawara was insignificant, not worthy of consideration? I would suggest otherwise. It is true that, in the end, the decision to return the Ogasawara Islands was made in the hope that it would "buy time" for both the U.S. and Japanese

¹⁰ The institute's name in Japanese is Ogasawara Shizen Bunka Kenkyusho, and publishes the quarterly *I-Bo, the Journal of Boninology*

¹¹ The committee is known in Japanese as the Ogasawara Kenkyu Inkai and publishes two annual journals, *Ogasawara Kenkyu Nenpo* and *Ogasawara Kenkyu*.

¹² Robert S. Norris, William M. Arkin, and William Burr, "How Much Did Japan Know?" *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (January/February 2000), pp. 11-13, 78-79.

¹³ Ota Masakatsu, *Meiyaku no Yami: 'Kaku no Kasa' to Nichibeiki Domei* (The Dark Side of Covenants: The Nuclear Umbrella and the Japan-U.S. Alliance), (Tokyo: Nihon Hyoronsha, 2004).

governments to deal with the domestic political, military, strategic, and practical considerations for returning Okinawa, and that even at the time of the agreement to return Ogasawara at the November 1967 meeting between Prime Minister Sato Eisaku and President Lyndon B. Johnson, little attention was given in the press to that decision or to the signing ceremony in April 1968. Indeed, Sato was even criticized for having “sold out” Okinawa. However, I would argue that the Ogasawara reversion story is very much relevant, not only for the now known secret nuclear agreements and other precedents created, such as financial, memorials, and rights of residents, etc., but for its being an especially interesting case study of the effect that the mix of domestic politics and international affairs has on diplomacy. In the Ogasawara reversion process, one finds the international dynamics of the Cold War, the regional security issues of the Korean and Vietnam wars and a hostile China, nuclear policy, intelligence-gathering, traditional Pentagon-State rivalries, a Navy fighting for its special interests and constantly outmaneuvering and outgunning the State Department, U.S.-Japan bilateral relations, internal conservative Japanese politics, factional and personal rivalries, opposition politics, the movement led by the displaced islanders, a countermovement by those that did not wish them to return, and many, many other forces at work. It will truly take an entire book to tell the “whole” story.

The story today, however, is about how the nuclear weapons storage issue and secret agreement worked out between U.S. Ambassador to Japan U. Alexis Johnson and the Japanese

government came about and to what extent it formed a precedent for the more well known return of Okinawa with its own secret agreement. The paper is based on U.S. and Japanese declassified documents, memoirs, and interviews with officials of both countries, as well as several trips to Iwo Jima and Chichi Jima, and represents a partial summary of the book I am completing. After reviewing the postwar status of Ogasawara, this paper then looks at the agreement and its impact.

Ogasawara as a Bilateral Issue, 1945-1967

Unlike Iwo Jima, its neighbor 125 miles to the southwest, the Ogasawara Islands were generally spared the scars of World War II, but its civilian population of 6600 people, along with the 1100 on Iwo Jima and Kita Iwo Jima, were evacuated in June 1944, and almost all 7700 would be unable to return for the next 25 years when the islands were finally reverted to Japan.

The ones that were able to repatriate in the fall of 1946 were the 135 islanders of Western descent, the descendents of some of the original settlers of the island from Massachusetts and other places who were allowed to return to Chichi Jima due to the economic hardships and discrimination they were facing in early postwar mainland Japan. After reestablishing the settlement, the U.S. Navy, which was charged with administering the islands, would occasionally bring food and supplies, and conduct medical checks, but it essentially did not interfere with the lives of the islanders.¹⁴

¹⁴ For an overview of the Navy's occupation of the islands, see Robert D. Eldridge, "The U.S. Naval Administration of the Ogasawara Islands, 1945-1968," *Ogasawara Kenkyu* (Ogasawara Research), No. 29 (March 2004), pp. 95-124.

Subsequently, the Navy took a strong interest in the islands in light of the tensions in Northeast Asia after the Communist victory in China and more so after the start of the Korean War. Admiral Arthur W. Radford, Commander-in Chief Pacific Command, and later Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argued regularly and forcefully that the Bonins were important, especially if U.S. bases in Okinawa and mainland Japan were rendered unusable. According to declassified documents, undisclosed covert operations supposedly took place on and from the islands, although the full strategic importance of the islands would grow dramatically when nuclear weapons were introduced there in 1956.¹⁵ For these and other reasons, the remaining islanders of Japanese descent were not permitted to return to the islands.

Initially, the Japanese government repeatedly called for the reversion of the islands in the early 1950s shortly after Japan regained its independence in 1952. Hopes that Ogasawara could be returned, too, increased in 1953 after the U.S. announced its decision to return the Amami Islands that Ogasawara could be returned, too, but the U.S. countered by saying that the *status quo* would be maintained “so long as conditions of threat and tension exist in the Far East” with regard to Okinawa and Ogasawara.

With this, the Japanese government and the League of Bonin (and Iwo Jima) Evacuees shifted gears and pushed for the repatriation of the islanders of Japanese descent.¹⁶ The Japanese

¹⁵ Norris, Arkin, and Burr, “How Much Did Japan Know?”

¹⁶ Although Schaller writes that there were no “Japanese currently [liv]ing on the islands,” this is technically not true

side, supported at times by sympathetic officials in the State Department, offered numerous compromise proposals—such as limiting the number of returnees and the areas of resettlement—but little actual progress was made. Japan, conscience of prewar discrimination against Japanese immigrants in America, began accusing the U.S. of racial discrimination in its policy of letting only islanders of Western descent return. Stung by the criticism, the U.S., led by the Navy, nevertheless continued to oppose repatriation. One Navy report written around this time concluded “it is clearly evident that the Japanese will never slacken their efforts to return to the Bonins and will continue...the day we permit any group of Japanese to enter the Bonin-Volcano Islands—for any reason—will be the day the United States begins to lose administrative and security control of these strategic islands, including the Marianas and Carolines to the south.”¹⁷ At the time this report was written, Okinawa, with a population of about 700,000, had just experienced island-wide protests against the bases and the U.S. government began studying whether it should return Okinawa to Japan.

The Navy’s Radford had long foreseen the political and operational problems associated with having U.S. bases among the local population. Seeking to avoid a similar situation in Ogasawara, Radford had suggested, since the time he was CINCPAC, that the evacuees be financially

because the islanders of Western descent (and their Japanese spouses) were all Japanese citizens. See Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan Since the Occupation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 206.

¹⁷ Findley memo. Navy Operational Archives.

compensated for not being allowed to return. This compromise was eventually considered at the State-Defense level while he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Radford had visited the islands twice and took a personal, almost paternal, interest in the islanders of Western descent and became their number one benefactor and protector (the elementary school in Chichi Jima, for example, was named after him). Several pages of his memoirs are devoted to the islands, and in them he lamented that “as the years passed, official Washington...lost interest; and in June 1958 (sic) *without my knowledge* the islands were returned to Japanese sovereignty.”¹⁸ A compensation formula was eventually worked out in the late 1950s and paid in 1961. Compensation could not buy off the islanders who wished to return home, but simply bought time—a few years only.

The next issue to emerge, or re-emerge, was *bosan*, or visiting ancestral graves, which had been denied throughout the postwar. This was finally realized in 1965, after the Soviet Union began allowing visits to the Northern Islands for similar grave visits. Not wanting to be outdone, the U.S. agreed to Prime Minister Sato’s request in January 1965 at his first summit meeting with President Johnson to permit such annual visits. Again, in retrospect, this was only a stop-gap measure. Nothing short of reversion would satisfy Japanese public opinion, and the desires of the affected former inhabitants, as well as their political benefactors, such as former Defense Agency Director General Fukuda Tokuyasu, who is called the “Father of the Ogasawara Reversion,” and

¹⁸ Stephen Jurika, Jr., *From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: The Memoirs of Admiral Arthur W. Radford* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), p. 262.

later Tokyo governor Minobe Ryokichi.¹⁹

The Japanese side knew the Ogasawara Islands were militarily not as important as Okinawa and could be returned. It is unclear, however, when Sato himself had decided to pursue the return of the Bonins in earnest, but a State Department-prepared memo captures the dynamics at work:

Until recently the Japanese government did not evidence great interest in the Bonins per se, apparently being satisfied with the expectation that they would be returned along with the Ryukyus at some unspecified date in the future. However, in recent months Sato has found himself increasingly caught between rising pressures in Japan for some clear forward step on the reversion issue and the acknowledged infeasibility of any major progress, such as establishment of a time schedule, for the Ryukyus.²⁰

It was Foreign Minister Miki Takeo who first officially raised the return of the islands at a secret meeting (later reported in the press) with Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson in mid-July 1967.²¹

Johnson had spent the past year since his arrival in Japan trying to get Japan to assume a larger security role and to change its diplomatic approach in dealing with the U.S. from asking what America's minimum requirements were to "what can Japan do to make a bigger contribution?" to facilitate reversion. This contribution to the alliance and region continued to be primarily economic in nature, but as we'll see Japan would also assume a larger role in anti-submarine warfare

¹⁹ For more, see Fukuda Tokuyasu, *Shiseiten ni Tsuzu Seikai 25 Nen no Ayumi (I Did My Best, with Sincerity: 25 Years in Politics)*, (Tokyo: Gaisei Kenkyukai, 1974), pp. 112-115.

²⁰ "Visit of Prime Minister Eisaku Sato of Japan, November 14-15, 1967, Bonin Islands," Folder: Visit of Prime Minister Sato Briefing Book, 11/14-15/67," Box 253 (2 of 2), NSF Country Files, Japan.

²¹ "Aide-Memoire, Tokyo, July 15, 1967, English translation of 7 Gatsu 15 Nichi, Okinawa, Ogasawara Mondai ni Kansuru Gaimu Daijin, Bei Taishi Kaidan ni Saishi Senpo ni Tawataseru Oboegaki, 7/15/1967," Eldridge FOIA. The author was unable to locate the aide-memoire in the files of the State Department, but was able to locate it through a FOIA request to the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

and sea-lane defense with the return of the Bonins. It would also continue to grant the U.S. relative flexibility in its military strategy by allowing it to reintroduce nuclear weapons into the Bonins if necessary in a contingency.

Returning Ogasawara

Following the July meeting, the Bonins issue was next raised officially at meetings between Miki and Secretary of State Dean Rusk in September. Within the U.S. government, there were few supporters of the Navy's position—even the JCS chairman, Gen. Earle Wheeler, privately agreed that the islands could be returned, although he went through the motions of promoting the Navy's arguments. Ambassador Johnson symbolized these doubts about the Navy's position when he wrote:

The Navy's basic position was that we should not give up anything anywhere that might someday possibly be useful. If we were to lose Japan, Okinawa, Taiwan, and the Philippines, the Navy argued, the Bonins would be an important reserve. I thought this was nonsense. If we were driven from the rest of the Pacific, we certainly could not hold the Bonins or mount a worthwhile counteroffensive from this insignificant cluster of rocks. My position had the advantage of being logical, and it gained headway. The Navy was making very little use of the islands anyway, so its arguments seemed a little pale.²²

While President Johnson did not believe the Bonins to be strategically important either, he nevertheless was not certain the islands should be returned. "We should not give away land just to

²² U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power: The Memoirs of an American Diplomat* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1984), pp. 472-473.

put a man in good humor for 48 hours,” he said to his senior foreign policy advisors.²³ “The Japanese have been treated darn well. Why can’t we say that we don’t want to hold on to the islands, but we cannot secure the world alone.” Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara agreed that Japan needed to be pushed, but he said, “this is not the issue. This will only weaken Sato.” Rusk felt so, too: “[Sato’s] been the most pro-American Prime Minister Japan has had since World War II. Besides, we are only a squatter on the Bonins.” Johnson would eventually agree to the islands’ return, but conditioned on the proper handling of the politically volatile Iwo Jima issue, Japanese willingness to use the Bonins’ return to delay Okinawa reversionist sentiment, Japanese assumption of a greater economic role in the region, and a secret agreement to allow the U.S. to store nuclear weapons again on the islands in a contingency if necessary.

It was JCS Chairman Wheeler who made the case for nuclear weapons. The Bonins, he pointed out, lie on the “great circular route for submarine traffic” between the Chinese mainland and the continental U.S. and as such the U.S. might “in time want to put nuclear weapons on the Bonins [again].” When Rusk pointed out that the Bonins would not be needed unless “Guam is knocked out,” Wheeler observed that it would impact the negotiations on Okinawa, as Japan would cite “the same formula in Okinawa on nuclear weapons and this will be a precedent.” Rusk did not argue, but noted that the “appetite on Okinawa will feed itself. All we are doing is gaining time.”

²³ “Memorandum to the President on Luncheon Meeting with Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, Walt Rostow, CIA Director Richard Helms, George Christian, and Jim Jones, Saturday, November 4, 1967,” Folder: Meeting with Foreign Policy Advisors, November 4, 1967, 2:20 p.m., Meeting Notes File, Box 2, LBJ Papers, LBJ Library.

When Ambassador Johnson told the foreign minister a few days later of the U.S. intention to “reserve the right to raise, discuss, and hopefully reach agreement,” on storing nuclear weapons in Iwo Jima and the Bonins in a contingency, Miki was “obviously rocked.”²⁴ Johnson explained that the U.S. was not “asking for their agreement in the Bonins prior to, and as a condition precedent to, the issuance of communiqué language on the Bonins,” but simply notifying the Japanese government of the U.S. right to raise it.

The Sato-Johnson summit meeting of mid-November saw agreement on entering consultations on the return of the Bonins and negotiations began officially on December 28. After the two and a half hour meeting, Johnson and Miki met privately, with only their interpreters present, to discuss the possible future use of the Bonins for nuclear storage.²⁵ Johnson reminded Miki of their conversation on November 6, and suggested that the U.S. concern on the issue could be accommodated at this time by the ambassador’s presenting a top-secret note advising the Japanese government that in a contingency requiring nuclear storage, the U.S. “would wish to raise [the] matter and would hope [the request] would be regarded in [a] different light than for in Japan proper and would anticipate favorable reaction since [the] request would not be made unless essential for vital security interests of area including those of Japan.” The ambassador mentioned an

²⁴ “Telegram 3060, Johnson to Secretary of State (November 6, 1967),” Folder: Political Affairs and Relations, Japan-U.S. 1/1/68, Box 2249, CFPF 1967-1969, RG 59.

²⁵ “Telegram 4333, Johnson to Secretary of State (December 29, 1967),” Folder: POL 19, Bonin Islands, Political and Defense, Box 1898, CFPF 1967-1969, RG 59.

anti-submarine warfare contingency as an example of the type of emergency in mind, and added that the U.S. “would not expect any GOJ reply to my note.”

Miki was not enthusiastic about a note. Even though “no reply was necessary or expected,” he hoped that no transmittal would be necessary. Miki explained that a contingency whereby the U.S. would contemplate the use of nuclear weapons in the Far East, Japan’s interests would also be deeply involved and that a request for nuclear storage would be considered in a “vastly different atmosphere” than that now prevailing. “At such a crisis,” he continued, “[the] question of nuclear storage would have to be considered with respect to all of Japanese territory and not just a particular part such as [the] Bonins. It would be very difficult to draw a distinction of principle between various parts of the country.” Miki then noted that the issue was political. He and the prime minister had said in the Diet that the “nuclear issue [was] not now involved in return of [the] Bonins but had been careful to keep their freedom of action with respect to Okinawa. The greatest diplomatic political problem the GOJ faces over next few years is that of the Okinawa nuclear issue. Miki would greatly regret anything that could possibly leak out and muddy waters on fundamental Okinawa issue which GOJ had to face.”

When Johnson said the issue was one of “formal official record to which reference could be made in the future” and thus a note was probably the “best method,” Miki said that nevertheless he saw a problem with a note, and wanted to think about it and discuss it with Johnson again. In his

telegram to the Department, Johnson acknowledged that Miki “of course has a point. If knowledge of such a note and lack of any reaction from GOJ came into wrong hands, it could be used by opposition to belabor and embarrass Sato and Miki.” Johnson added that he doubted, therefore, the value of such a note, and suggested instead a “record embodied in my accounts of our official conversations on the subject.”

The following week, in the new year, Rusk wrote back to Johnson to explain that the U.S. government was “not necessarily tied to [the formula] of [a] written note” to the Japanese government.²⁶ “If there is serious danger of [a] leak [of] such note,” Rusk continued, “then other procedures for recording notification to GOJ would be acceptable.” Rusk said the State Department would welcome any suggestions the Embassy had on that score. He clarified, however, that the “basic intent is to assure that successive Japanese governments can be advised of [the] U.S. position.” Rusk agreed that it could probably be done, as Johnson suggested in his telegram, “by recording [the ambassador’s] account of official conversations on subject,” with a copy of such a record being held in the Foreign Ministry “perhaps under [the] same ground rules as special arrangement made in 1960 which has never leaked.” Rusk also told Johnson that the State Department would have no objection if the only copy of record were held in the Embassy, as long as the record was certified in some form by a senior Foreign Ministry official, such as Togo Fumihiko

²⁶ “Telegram 93485 on Nuclear Weapons and Bonins Negotiations, January 4, 1968,” Folder: POL 19, Bonin Islands, 1-1-68, Box 1898, CFPF 1967-1969, RG 59.

(Director, North American Affairs Bureau), that it represented the true record of the U.S. statement.

“Then,” he continued, “there would be far less risk of future GOJ governments questioning whether we had in past advised the Foreign [Ministry] of our views on contingency of nuclear weapons storage in [the] Bonins.”

By late March, Miki and Ambassador Johnson reached agreement on the text (see below) of the oral statements they were to make at the Joint Committee/signing ceremony.

- A. Prior to the signing of the agreement today on the return of the Bonin and other islands, the following conversation took place between the Foreign Minister and the American Ambassador.
- B. The American Ambassador stated: In the even of a contingency requiring the use of the Bonin and/or the Volcano Islands for nuclear weapon storage, the United States would wish to raise this matter with the Government of Japan and would anticipate a favorable reaction from the Government of Japan since such a request would not be made unless it were essential for the mutual security interests of the area, including Japan.
- C. The Foreign Minister stated: Major changes in the equipment of United States forces in Japan, including those in the event of emergency are the subject of prior consultation with the Government of Japan in accordance with the exchange of notes of January 19, 1960, concerning the implementation of Article Five of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. The case you have indicated is precisely one which is subject to the said prior consultation, and at this time I can only say that under the circumstances you cite the government of Japan will enter into such consultation.

Despite this agreement, at the last minute, on April 2, Miki balked at going along, angering Ambassador Johnson and Secretary Rusk and leaving a “sour taste.”²⁷ After much discussion, an understanding was reached in which Miki would orally state Japan’s intention to allow no nuclear weapons on its territory and Ambassador Johnson to counter with a statement confirming the terms of the agreement. Both statements were made on the condition that they would not become part of

²⁷ “Telegram 141066 from State Department to Embassy Tokyo, April 3, 1968,” Folder: POL 19, Bonin Islands, 4-1-68, Box 1898, CFPF 1967-1969, RG 59.

the official written record of the signing ceremony.²⁸ While writing the Department would have “preferred no such exchange,” Rusk nevertheless said it “appears to protect [the] integrity of our arrangement on nucs” and praised Johnson when he wrote that “we think that exchange of oral statements you have worked out is certainly most that we could hope for given Miki’s insistence on reference to Sato’s January 27 speech.”²⁹ (This was a reference to Sato’s speech before the Diet in which he explained that Japan would not possess nor permit the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan.) Eventually, on April 5, the Bonins reversion agreement was signed, and on April 10, after Ambassador Johnson met with Sato to get his support³⁰, a “secret annex” with regard to nuclear weapons was sent to Secretary Rusk.³¹ The actual contents remain classified at the time of this writing, but a later memorandum hints at the contents. Furthermore, its existence is not doubted, as an airgram prepared later in the year, references it.³² In the meantime, Ogasawara and Iwo Jima were returned to Japan on June 26, without incident, although there were some last-minute changes by Miki regarding Iwo Jima as well. A 23-year occupation and administration of an ally’s territory

²⁸ See the editorial comment in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, Japan, p. 270.

²⁹ “Telegram 141066.”

³⁰ Sato Eisaku, *Sato Eisaku Nikki (The Diary of Sato Eisaku), 1967-1969* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1998), p. 264.

³¹ “Telegram 1331 from Embassy Tokyo to State Department, April 10, 1968,” Not Declassified.

³² “Airgram 2370 on Bonin Agreement Nuclear Storage, December 30, 1968” Folder: Pol. 19 Bonin Islands, 4/1/68, Box 1898, CFPF 1967-1969, RG 59. The airgram was prepared due to the fact that Sato had formed a new Cabinet, with a new foreign minister, Aichi Kiichi, the month before and it was necessary to ensure that he knew of the understanding. On December 30, 1968, Ambassador Johnson confirmed with Togo that Aichi had been briefed on it.

and some its citizens came to an end. With Amami and now Ogasawara returned, Okinawa was next.

A year later, in the fall of 1969, another secret understanding was reached with Japan on storage rights for nuclear weapons in Okinawa for contingencies following reversion of the islands (realized in May 1972). While there are several differences in the format and procedures in the latter agreement, including the fact that it was secretly negotiated by special representatives rather than the State-MOFA bureaucracy and was signed by both Sato and President Richard M. Nixon and thus raised the formality and level of commitment, it can be said that Ogasawara had formed the precedent when it came to nuclear storage rights in Japan. Not only this issue, but the entire process, it turns out, was, in the words of the recently published memoirs of a Japanese diplomat at the time, “practice for the return of Okinawa.”³³ However, as this writer stressed earlier, the reversion of the Ogasawara Islands and Iwo Jima was also significant in of itself. As we approach the 40th anniversary of their return, the islands’ story and the bilateral dynamics of their reversion needs to be told.

³³ Okawara Yoshio, *Ooraru Hisutorii Nichibei Gaiko* (An Oral History of Japan-U.S. Diplomacy), (Tokyo: Japan Times, 2006), p. 174.

Appendix 1

**Agreement between Japan and the United States
of America Concerning Nanpo Shoto and Other Islands**

WHEREAS the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of the United States of America reviewed together on November 14 and 15, 1967 the status of Nanpo Shoto and other islands, and agreed that the Governments of Japan and the United States of America should enter immediately into consultations regarding the specific arrangements for accomplishing the early restoration of these islands to Japan without detriment to the security of the area; and

WHEREAS the United States of America desires, with respect to Nanpo Shoto and other islands, to relinquish in favor of Japan all rights and interests under Article 3 of the Treaty of Peace with Japan signed at the city of San Francisco on September 8, 1951; and

WHEREAS Japan is willing to assume full responsibility and authority for the exercise of all powers of administration, legislation and jurisdiction over the territory and inhabitants of Nanpo Shoto and other islands;

THEREFORE, the Government of Japan and the Government of the United States of America have determined to conclude this Agreement, and have accordingly appointed their respective representatives for this purpose, who have agreed as follows:

Article I

1. With respect to Nanpo Shoto and other islands, as defined in paragraph 2 below, the United States of America relinquishes in favor of Japan all rights and interests under Article 3 of the Treaty of Peace with Japan signed at the city of San Francisco on September 8, 1951, effective as of the date of entry into force of this Agreement. Japan, as of such date, assumes full responsibility and authority for the exercise of all and any powers of administration, legislation and jurisdiction over the territory and inhabitants of the said islands.

2. For the purpose of this Agreement, the term "Nanpo Shoto and other islands" means Nanpo Shoto south of Sofu Gan (including the Bonin Islands, Rosario Island, and the Volcano Islands) and Parece Vela and Marcus Island, including their territorial waters.

Article II

It is confirmed that treaties, conventions and other agreements concluded between Japan and the United States of America, including, but without limitation, the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America signed at Washington on January 19, 1960 and the agreements related thereto and the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between Japan and the United States of America signed at Tokyo on April 2, 1953, become applicable to Nanpo Shoto and other islands as of the date of entry into force of this Agreement.

Article III

1. The communications sites (LORAN stations) in Iwo Jima and Marcus Island presently utilized by the United States armed forces will be used by them in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Agreement under Article VI of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America, Regarding Facilities and Areas and the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan, signed at Washington on January 19, 1960. However, in the event that, due to unavoidable delays, it is not possible to comply with the above procedures by the date of entry into force of this Agreement, Japan grants to the United States of America the continued use of those particular sites, pending the

completion of the said procedures.

2. The installations and sites in Nanpo Shoto and other islands which are presently utilized by the United States armed forces, except for those mentioned in paragraph 1 above, will be transferred to Japan upon entry into force of this Agreement. However, in the event that, due to unavoidable delays, it is not possible to complete the said transfer by the date of entry into force of this Agreement, Japan grants to the United States of America the continued use of these installations and sites, pending the completion of the said transfer.

3. The use of the installations and sites which may be made by the United States armed forces under paragraphs 1 and 2 above until such time as the necessary procedures or the transfers are completed shall be governed by the arrangements made pursuant to the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America, signed at Washington on January 19, 1960.

Article IV

The weather station in Marcus Island now being operated by the United States Weather Bureau will be transferred to the Government of Japan upon entry into force of this Agreement. In the event of unavoidable delays in the said transfer, it is agreed that the present operation of the weather station will be continued until the completion of the transfer.

Article V

1 . Japan waives all claims of Japan and its nationals against the United States of America and its nationals and against the local authorities of Nanpo Shoto and other islands, arising from the presence, operations or actions of forces or authorities of the United States of America in these islands, or from the presence, operations or actions of forces or authorities of the United States of America having had any effect upon these islands, prior to the date of entry into force of this Agreement. The foregoing waiver does not, however, include claims of Japanese nationals specifically recognized in the laws of the United States of America or the local laws of these islands applicable during the period of United States administration of these islands.

2. Japan recognizes the validity of all acts and omissions done during the period of United States administration of Nanpo Shoto and other islands under or in consequence of directives of the United States or local authorities, or authorized by existing law during that period, and will take no action subjecting United States nationals or the residents of these islands to civil or criminal liability arising out of such acts or omissions.

3. It is confirmed that during the period of United States administration of Nanpo Shoto and other islands, the United States or local authorities have not taken any official action to transfer title to the property rights and ownership interests in these islands belonging to Japan and its nationals who during that period have been unable to enjoy the use, benefit or exercise of such property rights or interests due to measures taken by the United States of America.

Article VI

This Agreement shall enter into force thirty days after the date of receipt by the Government of the United States of America of a note from the Government of Japan stating that Japan has approved the Agreement in accordance with its legal procedures.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, being duly authorized by their respective Governments, have signed this Agreement.

DONE at Tokyo, this fifth day of April, 1968, in duplicate in the Japanese and English languages, both

equally authentic.

For Japan;

(Signed) Takeo Miki

For the United States of America:

(Signed) U. Alexis Johnson

(Translation)

Tokyo, April 5, 1968

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

The return to Japan of the administration over the Bonin and other islands which the United States Government has exercised under the term of Article 3 of the Treaty of Peace with Japan has filled me with great satisfaction. Amongst the islands that are being returned, one of the hardest battles was fought on the island of Iwo-jima in the course of the Pacific War.

There is a memorial on top of Suribachi-yama dedicated to the United States Marines who fought with great valor. I understand well the American desire to long preserve this memorial. At the same time this battlefield is one where our Japanese soldiers fought also with great courage. Thus, it is my hope, on the occasion of the return of Iwo-jima, that there will be erected a memorial in memory of the Japanese soldiers, and that these two memorials will long remain on this spot as a prayer for eternal peace between the two nations, and as a reminder of the valor and dedication of the brave men on both sides.

Therefore I wish to inform you that it is the intention of my Government to assure the United States that the memorial dedicated to the United States Marines will be preserved on Suribachi-yama and that United States personnel may have access thereto.

Yours sincerely, April 5, 1968

(Signed) Takeo Miki

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

His Excellency

U. Alexis Johnson

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Japan