

CAS, NHC, OP 563, 65, Bx 26

5712  
11000/1 (2)



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

IN REPLY REFER TO  
Op-601F2/sk  
Op-60 B/M  
#001628-64

☆☆

SECRET  
SECRET

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

Via: Vice Chief of Naval Operations - HAS COPY

Subj: Bonin - Volcano Islands (U)

7 DEC 1961  
OP-00 saw  
OP-002 ✓  
OP-003 mm  
OP-004  
OP-005  
OP-006  
OP-00C  
09 HLC

1. It appears certain that Prime Minister SATO of Japan will again raise the question of the Bonin - Volcano Islands during a visit to the United States which is tentatively planned for January.

2. The problem has been a recurring one and concerns Japanese efforts to repatriate former Bonin residents of Japanese descent, or as a possible first step, obtain permission to have these people visit ancestral graves in the islands.

3. In anticipation of a probable State Department request for justification of present DOD policy which opposes repatriation or visits, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) (Mr. SOLBERT) has requested a briefing on the subject and the attached presentation will be given to him at 1500 on 9 December by Op-60.

4. Mr. NITZE has also requested the briefing, and he will be given the same presentation at 1000, 9 December.

A. M. ...  
Vice Chief of Naval Operations and Policy

SECRET  
SECRET

SECRET

BONIN-VOLCANO ISLANDS

Good afternoon Mr. Secretary. This short briefing is designed to highlight for you a resume of the settlement of the Bonin-Volcanos, recent developments regarding them, their strategic value to the United States and the desirability of retaining them.

---1st Chart - MAP --- The Bonin-Volcano group consists of a total land area of approximately 40 square miles, and lies 600 miles south of Tokyo and 800 miles east of Okinawa. Marcus Island, which is also included in the same administrative area is approximately 700 miles to the east of the Bonins. Three islands are of major military significance; Iwo Jima, with a total land area of 8.9 sq. miles, Chi Chi Jima, 9.5 sq. miles and Haha Jima, 8.2 sq. miles. There are numerous other smaller islands in the Bonin-Volcano grouping which could become useful for military activities not involving direct support to operating units, as for example, development and testing of weapons and other military equipment in an environment of secrecy with the sparse population lending an additional safety factor.

---The islands were first sighted by the Spanish in 1543. No attempts were made to colonize them, however, and they remained uninhabited until the 19th century, despite frequent recorded visits by Japanese, English, American and Russian vessels. In 1830, the British Consul at Honolulu sponsored an emigration to the islands by outfitting a ship, and recruiting some 30

SECRET

SECRET

colonists. This first group of permanent residents consisted of 2 Americans, an Italian, 1 Dane, an Englishman and about 25 Hawaiian natives. One of the Americans, Nathaniel Savory, a Bedford, Mass., seaman, has direct descendents still living in these islands.

----Commodore Perry, in his efforts to open the Far East to trade with the West recognized the importance of these islands. In 1853, he landed at what is now Chi Chi Jima and purchased a parcel of land from Nathaniel Savory for \$50, intending that it be used as a coaling station by U. S. merchantmen. ←

----In 1870 a group of Japanese landed and thoroughly explored the islands. The alarmed colonists appealed to the American Minister in Tokyo who asked Washington for a statement of policy. The Secretary of State ruled that inasmuch as possession of the islands had never been expressly sanctioned by the U.S., the American residents were to be regarded as expatriots.

----The Japanese began full scale colonization in 1875. They annexed the islands in 1877 and made the islanders Japanese citizens. Although the colony has never been prosperous, the number of Japanese people in the islands gradually rose to a World War II high of nearly 7,000 civilians, most of whom were working in support of the Japanese military installations, with the major portion of their means of sustenance being imported from Japan.

SECRET

----in 1944, following an attack by U. S. naval aircraft, the Japanese military authorities decided that civilians would interfere with military operations, and forthwith evacuated the total civilian population to Japan, where the bulk of them have continued to reside. Those civilians of caucasian extraction were poorly treated and some were incarcerated.

----Current United States rights to the Bonin-Volcanos are provided for under the authority of Article 3 of the Japanese Peace Treaty ratified on 28 April 1952, which states in part: "...Japan will concur in any proposal of the United States to the United Nations to place under the trusteeship system, with the U. S. as sole administering authority...Nanpo Shoto, south of Sofu Gan (including the Bonin Islands...and the Volcano Islands). Pending the making of such a proposal, and affirmative action thereon, the U. S. will have the right to exercise all and any power of administration, legislation and jurisdiction over the territory and inhabitants of those islands, including their territorial waters." CINCPACFLT has been the military governor of these islands since the end of World War II, acting through Commander Naval Forces, Marianas, the Deputy Military Governor.

----In 1945, a policy decision of the State-War-Navy Coordination Committee prohibited the return of the former civilian inhabitants to Bonin-Volcanos. This decision was based upon the desirability of continuing unrestricted military use

SECRET

and lack of indigenous resources to support a civilian population. The decision was modified in 1946 to permit the return of those residents of caucasian extraction who had been forcibly removed to Japan during the war and who had petitioned the US to return. Approximately 130 people in this category were repatriated and with their families are now the sole permanent residents of the islands. Several of the men have married Japanese women and periodically visit Japan as wards of the military government, not as Japanese nationals. The repatriated Bonin Islanders are self-governing with the help of the naval military government. The Military Government Representative makes every effort to stimulate interest in self government. There is a Bonin Island Council consisting of five elected members, to serve for a period of one year. Elections are held annually in June. All citizens, 18 years of age or older, if of sound mind may vote. The council is authorized to enact local rules, ordinances, and regulations subject to the approval of the Military Government Representative.

----There is a Bonin-Volcano Trust Fund which was created by the Military Governor in 1948. The Trust Fund is made up of monies received on behalf of the indigenous inhabitants and is held or used for their benefit. These monies are generated from such sources as compensation for residual scrap material removed from the Bonin-Volcanos by the armed forces of the

\*\*

SECRET

U. S., fines assessed for violation of the territorial waters, interest on invested capital. The Military Governor is the Trustee of the Fund.

----Local commercial activities include a barber shop, laundry, tea house and the Bonin Island Trading Co. The Trading Company is a locally owned cooperative which also acts as the marketing agent for the agricultural and marine products exported to Guam.

----Medical and dental care is provided by the Navy.

----These islanders requested United States citizenship on several occasions, believing that their social and cultural heritage which they had preserved for several generations is wholly western. Their applications have not been acted upon however, due to the U. S. Government view that the Japanese retain residual sovereignty over the islands, and that these people are, in fact, Japanese nationals.

----In 1947, the "League of Bonin Evacuees for Hastening Repatriation" was established and is recognized by the Japanese Government as being representative of the former Bonin Islanders of Japanese descent. Little post-war effort has been expended toward integrating these people into Japanese society. The "League" has kept almost continuous pressure on the Japanese Government in its attempt to obtain U.S. Government approval of repatriation or, more recently, permission for these people to visit ancestral graves.

SECRET

-----The major importance of these islands to U.S. interests in the Far East has been repeatedly emphasized to the Japanese Government, and has thus far, been instrumental in preserving their unfettered status for our military utilization. The following examples however will serve to illustrate the recurring nature of this problem:

In May 1953, a U.S. inter-agency group met at Pearl Harbor to discuss the repatriation situation. The group consisted of representatives of State, Defense and Interior Departments and reached the following conclusion:

["Because of the strategic interest of the United States in the Bonin-Volcano Islands, it is agreed that during the present unstable security situation in the Pacific, the status-quo should be maintained with respect to United States control over the Bonin-Volcano Islands and with respect to the policy of retaining the Bonin-Volcano Islands closed to further colonization, as established by the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee in 1945."] This agreement was subsequently approved by the State, Defense and Interior Departments. The President reaffirmed this policy in June 1957.

----In 1961, as a result of further consideration of the problem, the US government paid a sum of \$6 million to the Government of Japan for distribution to former Bonin Islanders in compensation for their loss of property. This payment was intended for the 503 families who held property on the islands prior to the war and was not intended to "legitimatize" their repatriation

SECRET

claims. This total disbursement amounted to \$1060/acre or \$3500/family unit. The hope that the payment would lessen the clamor for repatriation has not been realized.

-----Again, in 1962, the Japanese government indicated its belief that our use of the islands for military purposes did not seem to be very great and noted the desirability of repatriating former residents.

-----The JCS were invited to study and comment upon this situation and the following judgment was forwarded to the Secretary of Defense:

"From a military standpoint, a substantial increase in the utilization of the Bonin-Volcano Islands is not required or warranted at this time. The development of significantly increased military activities in the islands as a tactic to justify U.S. control appears to have little prospect of providing a convincing argument to the Japanese. The high level of military activity in the Ryukyus has not reduced Japanese pressure for their return...The Bonin-Volcano Islands provide a natural back-up for the forward defense perimeter extending from Japan through Korea, Okinawa and the Philippines. Under complete U. S. control, these islands represent an important, latent military potential for meeting a wide range of requirements that could develop under various contingencies."

-----The Joint Chiefs concluded by saying "The question of Japanese access to the Bonin-Volcano Islands is recognized as a



SECRET

sensitive political issue to which the United States must be prepared to firmly and effectively respond...Degradation of US control over the islands would lead to the eventual loss of the islands; seriously reduce if not nullify their military potential and further jeopardize the US position in the Ryukyus."

--- Within the last 2 weeks, Mr. Secretary, Mr. Sumio Edamura of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a discussion with State Department representatives, brought up again the need for reciprocal trade between the Bonins and Japan; the fact that Bonin Islanders cannot go to the islands; the Japanese custom of visiting ancestral graves, etc. He indicated that the Japanese Foreign Minister and Prime Minister SATO may re-open this issue when visiting the US in the near future. It is possible that State Department will request further justification from the DOD relating to preservation of the current status of these islands.

-----The question reduces itself to a definition of the extent to which US national interests are supported by the continuing, politically unrestricted use of these islands. ★

----The first and most obvious fact relating to the value of Bonins is their location. Situated as they are just to the east of Japan and the Ryukyus, they provide a natural back-up for the northern tier of our existing far east bases. Should presently discernable pressures relating to adverse balance of payments or Japanese politics eventually force phasedown of our support facilities in Japan and the Ryukyus, use of the Bonin-Volcano group could well become a critical consider-

SECRET

ation in effective military operations in the WESTPAC area. It is conceivable for example, that within the next decade, we may be faced with a Japanese government which will interpret Japanese interests as being incongruant with our own.

2nd Chart - "Strategic Value"

-----Secondly, even assuming continuation of approximately the same level of activity at existing support facilities in Japan and the Ryukyus, limited or general war situations would precipitate the following major uses for Bonin Island facilities:

a. Chi Chi Jima has a fine natural harbor (Futami Ko) with approximately one square mile of anchorage with depths of 22 fathoms. The harbor is capable of handling at least six large ships and with dredging could accommodate more. It is envisioned that the naval facility at Chi Chi Jima would provide support to a tender-based submarine squadron in addition to providing mine assembly and storage facilities. It is further noted that one seaplane ramp is still useable, as are many underground storage areas, some of them copper-lined and at one time, air conditioned. A nuclear weapon storage area is of course, already in existence. In this connection, if the confidential understanding we have with the GOJ regarding introduction of nuclear weapons should become public knowledge, Chi Chi Jima could assume even greater peacetime value as a possible nuclear weapons storage site for naval vessels visiting Japanese ports.

b. The USAF facility on Iwo Jima would be used to relieve

SECRET

pressure on other far eastern facilities in staging or supporting strike aircraft during periods of intensive operations. This facility, which is a SAC divert base, consists of an operational 10,000-foot runway and storage for over 500,000 gallons of aviation fuel.

c. It should be noted that all facilities are expandable should the tempo of operations so dictate. The real estate is available, and in many cases so are extensive networks of roads, tunnels and caves.

-----Finally, it may be mentioned that these islands are part of the "Strategic Island concept" recently approved by the JCS. This concept envisions stockpiling access rights to strategically located islands that have potential military utility.

-----The question that remains, Mr. Secretary, is "How will our utilization of these islands be jeopardized if we permit repatriation of some of the former Bonin residents or at least allow groups of former residents to visit ancestral graves?" There are several military and non-military reasons why we feel the US position on this question should not change:

(Chart #3, Reasons)---First of course, is the security problem. Now; required security forces are minimal. Periodic visits would require a "beefing up" of security forces and precipitate a requirement for nearly continual escort of these Japanese nationals. Permanent residency of groups of former Bonin Islanders would eliminate the virtual isolation and unrestricted

SECRET

use of these facilities and diminish their value to the point of requiring consideration of new locations. Secondly, any modification in the US stance on these islands could be interpreted as a "foot in the door" by certain Japanese, with an eye toward eventual reversion of the islands to a status of Japanese prefecture. (2)

----There is little question that some Japanese would view visitation privileges as a first step down the road to recovery of the excellent fishing grounds around the Bonins and even more important, the recovery of lost Japanese territory even apart from economic considerations.

-----On the practical side, it should be noted that several of the repatriated Bonin-Islanders testified at the Japanese War Crimes trials following WWI, against certain Japanese officials in the Bonins, and rightly or wrongly fear reprisal action at the hands of the former Japanese residents.

-----Another practical consideration relates to the amount of arable land available. The living standard that is enjoyed by the current inhabitants is perhaps equivalent to some rural areas in the US. But there is little additional land that could be placed under cultivation.

-----Regarding the grave visits, it has been pointed to the Japanese Government that there are no facilities to handle visitors, not even rudimentary sanitary facilities and further, that numerous grave sites have been bombarded during World War II and overgrown through the years to the point of obliteration.

SECRET

It is noted that a group of Japanese officials did go to Iwo Jima in 1953 to honor Japanese war dead and erect suitable markers. It was understood then that there would be no further requests for such visits. Should the US accede to Japanese pressure, to consider grave visits on a case-by-case basis, it is probable that we would be unable to restrict such visits to pre-war residents. In view of the fact that there are literally thousands of Japanese war dead in these islands, approval of a single request would soon precipitate a continuous stream of further requests from relatives of these Japanese dead. Certainly, any visit would be given wide publicity to a sympathetic audience and would unquestionably result in renewed pressure for repatriation and reversion to Japanese control.

-----In summary, Mr. Secretary, it is considered that the previous justifications voiced by both OSD and military personnel which resulted in a US position of "standing fast" in relation to this problem, remain valid. At a time when the JCS are recommending the acquisition of access rights to additional strategically located islands, it would appear to be anomalous to accede to policy changes which inevitably will erode control of islands already in our possession. It is strongly recommended that our position of not permitting repatriation or visits (except in bona fide emergencies) be unchanged during forthcoming discussions with Japanese officials.