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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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5 January 1965

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Subj: Visit of former Bonin Islanders to the Bonin Islands

A meeting was held in Mr. Nitze's office on this date to discuss the position which the Government of the United States should take with regard to the question of visits to the Bonin Islands by former Bonin Islanders. It is anticipated that this subject will be raised by Prime Minister Sato during his visit to the United States this month.

Present for the meeting were: Ambassador to Japan Reischauer; Assistant Secretary of State Gundy; Mr. Marshall Green and Mr. Robert Feary of the Department of State; Mr. Nitze, Admiral McDonald, Admiral Moorer, Rear Admiral Wendt, Captain Zumwalt and Cdr. Robertson of the Navy Department; Mr. Peter Solbert, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs.

The basis for the initial discussion was the background paper attached as Tab-A.

The final action paragraph of the background paper was initially discussed and did not appear to satisfy either Ambassador Reischauer or Mr. Nitze. Mr. Nitze indicated his worry that the visit to the graves was merely the nose of the camel under the tent and that we would be subject to increasing pressures to allow the return of the 7000 Japanese who formerly lived in the Bonin Islands. He indicated the present strategic importance of the islands and emphasized that they would become even more important if we lost our base rights in Japan, or if they fell into hostile hands. Ambassador Reischauer indicated that he was sure that in view of the booming state of the Japanese economy, the Japanese government did not want 7000 people to go back to the Bonins. So far as the Bonins were concerned, they were like a "tail on the pig," the pig being the Ryukyu Islands. Ambassador Reischauer indicated that he thought we could satisfy the Japanese by finding some bones we could call Japanese, putting them in a common grave and marking them with a common grave stone; then we could let representatives visit the site every few years and burn incense. Ambassador Reischauer felt that the Japanese Government looked on this as a way to end the bad publicity which was currently being generated.

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Mr. Bundy indicated that so far as the reversionary pressures were concerned, the question is, do we need the islands from a military standpoint. If so, this would be controlling and we could say no to the Japanese.

There was general agreement of the participants that it would be better not to brief the Japanese on the U. S. security requirements for the Bonins. It was felt that the Japanese officials would be in a better position if they knew only that the islands were important to the United States from a security standpoint.

After some further discussion, it was the consensus of the meeting that we could perhaps meet the Japanese demands by allowing a representative group of ex-Bonin Islanders (about 30 in number) to ~~make a one-time visit to the Bonins for the purpose of erecting and dedicating a monument to the Japanese dead.~~ This course of action would perhaps require a preliminary visit by 4 or 5 persons to select the site and agree on the procedures to be followed in erecting and dedicating the monument.

It was also the consensus of the meeting that there should be no briefing of the Japanese officials as contemplated in the position paper, and there should be no visits by Japanese officials for the administrative purposes mentioned in the position paper.

Mr. Bundy indicated that the State Department would draft for joint State-Defense consideration a position paper spelling out the exact details to which the United States Government was willing to agree. In addition, State would prepare for joint approval a very short statement for use by the President during Sato's visit. This statement would indicate only that the United States granted the Japanese request for grave visits and that the details of what the United States had agreed to would be explained by a subordinate official (unidentified but presumably either SecState or SecDef).

H. B. Robertson, Jr.

H. B. Robertson, Jr.
Commander, USN
Special Counsel to the
Secretary of the Navy

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SecNav Cont. No. 5-47

VISIT OF PRIME MINISTER SATO
January 11-14, 1965

Background Paper

Bonin Islands

The U.S. controls the Bonin Islands, as it does the Ryukyus, under the terms of Article 3 of the Treaty of Peace with Japan. As with the Ryukyus, we recognize Japan's "residual sovereignty" in the Bonins and have agreed to return them to Japan when Free World security interests permit. The Bonins are administered by the U.S. Navy, with the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet serving as Military Governor. U.S. military facilities in the islands include a special weapons storage unit, an auxiliary naval facility, a standby airfield, and weather and navigational aids. Defense advises that the islands are of limited military importance in peacetime but could have major significance in an emergency. //

The Bonins are presently inhabited by approximately 230 Japanese nationals, the families of mixed-blood descendants of early caucasian settlers, who were evacuated to Japan during World War II and returned to the islands by the U.S. at the close of the war. An estimated 7,000 former residents of Japanese ancestry, also evacuated to Japan during World War II, have been denied repatriation since the war owing to security considerations. In June 1961 the U.S. made an ex gratia payment of \$6 million to the Government of Japan in full settlement of all claims by these former residents against the U.S. for the loss of their property in the islands. }

A chronic problem with Japan has been the desire of the former residents now living in Japan to visit the islands temporarily to pay respects in the Buddhist fashion to family graves. A visit for this purpose was allowed in 1953, but.

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subsequent requests have been denied on grounds of military security. Although there is little popular interest in the Bonins as a territorial question, the inability of the former islanders to visit family graves arouses considerable public sympathy in Japan, where respect for ancestors and the maintenance of graves are among the most strictly-observed Buddhist practices. These feelings are intensified by the suspicion in some Japanese circles (including the Government itself) that the Bonins are not being actively used by the U.S., and by the fact that the Soviets have permitted visits to graves in the Soviet-held northern islands of Shikotan and Habomai.

A second problem is an evident feeling on the part of the Japanese Government that it is not being sufficiently informed on matters in the Bonins in which it has a legitimate interest. These matters include the administrative system under which its nationals in the Bonins are governed, the system in effect for recording vital statistics, and procedures for travel abroad. The situation is complicated by the fact that the 230 present Bonin residents, while legally Japanese nationals, appear to have little interest in closer ties with Japan, reflecting their occidental descent. Although they have not breached this aspect of the problem with us, the Japanese Government may be concerned that the continued isolation of these islanders from Japanese influence will make eventual reversion to Japan more difficult.

Prime Minister Sato is expected to raise one or both of these problems with the President or the Secretary. He should be given as forthcoming a response as our actual security requirements will permit. Our refusal in the past to allow temporary visits by former residents have been based less on the likelihood that military security would be compromised than on the political judgment that temporary access to the islands would rekindle the desire of former residents to return permanently. Pressures for repatriation have been much reduced since the claims settlement of 1961, and the greater danger now appears to lie in continued denial of all access to the islands. *Representative groups*

The best solution in these circumstances appears to be an arrangement with the Japanese Government whereby former residents would have U.S.-controlled access to a well-defined

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unrestricted area in the Bonins. It would be well to clear to the Japanese in advance that war damage and tropical growth have virtually obliterated the ancestral grave sites. A monument or memorial shrine might therefore be established by the former residents in the selected area and visited from time to time by parties of residents under agreed conditions.

Should the Bonins be raised by Prime Minister Sato as anticipated, he might, in brief, be informed of our desire to brief him fully and frankly on the present and potential importance to U.S. and Japanese security of the U.S. position on the islands. In view of time limitations during his visit, this confidential briefing might be offered shortly after his return to Tokyo. Sato might further be informed that following the briefing the U.S. would be prepared to consult with the Japanese Government on a plan to allow former Bonin residents to visit a defined area in the islands on a continuing, controlled basis. Finally, he might be told that the Japanese Government will be furnished essential information on the administration and welfare of the Japanese nationals residing in the Bonins, and that representatives of the Japanese Government will be allowed to visit unrestricted areas in the Bonins, ~~on matters involving the legitimate interests of Japan~~ on matters mutually recognized to involve the

official interests of Japan.

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