



Secret Files Expose Tokyo's Double Standard on Nuclear Policy

Recommended Citation

YOSHITAKA SASAKI, "Secret Files Expose Tokyo's Double Standard on Nuclear Policy", nuke policy, August 25, 1999, <https://nautilus.org/nuke-policy/secret-files-expose-tokyos-double-standard-on-nuclear-policy/>

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Asahi Shimbun

August 25, 1999

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As many people may have long suspected, the Japanese government employed a double standard in espousing "three non-nuclear principles" under the "nuclear umbrella" offered by the United States.

A U.S. aircraft carrier based in Yokosuka would carry nuclear weapons until the early 1990s, while Japan was in the front line of U.S. contingency plans in the case of a global nuclear war, according to a report released by the California-based think tank Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development. In a research paper titled "Japan Under the Nuclear Umbrella," the nonprofit Nautilus Institute said its findings were based on declassified top secret documents related to U.S. nuclear policy in Japan.

Nuclear weapons were removed from the aircraft carrier homeported in Yokosuka after the U.S. government declared in 1991 it was withdrawing all nonstrategic nuclear weapons. However, scrutiny of the documents shows that the situation was so serious that it should not be forgotten out of hand. The institute used the U.S. Freedom of Information Act to uncover more than 500 pages of confidential papers about U.S. nuclear war planning in Japan. Particularly noteworthy is the disclosure of "command histories" of the commander in chief of the U.S. Pacific Command (USCINCPAC). They cover the Asia-Pacific theater, forward deployed aircraft carriers and U.S. forces stationed in Japan and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). They project an overall picture of U.S. nuclear weapons deployment and strategy involving Japan.

Homeporting of aircraft carrier armed with nuclear weapons
CINCPAC Command History
(1972, top secret)

"The carrier plan had still not been briefed to the Japanese government when key Foreign Office officials were advised of the deployment possibility at the Hawaii talks on Aug. 31, 1972. Some conflict continued, however, between the State Department and the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) regarding housing of additional personnel in the Yokosuka area and treatment of nuclear weapons problems. While the Japanese government had tacitly accepted nuclear weapons on ships entering and departing Japanese ports in the past, homeporting could surface the issue to a degree that would not permit continued tacit approval. The State Department had indicated that carrier weapons should be removed prior to entry into a port; this suggestion was operationally unacceptable to the CNO."

The U.S. government reached this conclusion on homeporting as a result of internal discussions. Although it is not known whether Japan was kept informed, in September 1972, the Japanese government announced it was studying the issue in accordance with its obligations under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and moved toward accepting the proposal. As a result, Yokosuka became the home port of the aircraft carrier USS Midway in 1973.

Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird's letter to Secretary of State William Rogers dated June, 1972 (Secret. Declassified in December 1998 and obtained from the U.S. National Archives by Professor Masaaki Gabe, University of the Ryukyus, in February 1999) "It would appear that the recommended approach would provide the government of Japan an opportunity to raise--and resolve--the matter of prior consultation in private if so desired.

"... In his letter, (Undersecretary of State) Alexis (Johnson) requests an assessment of the possibility of homeporting in Japan a carrier without nuclear weapons aboard. We have examined this alternative carefully, but feel that it is neither militarily practical nor legally necessary.

"To deny the nuclear mission to a Japan-based carrier would substantially degrade its military utility and create difficult operational problems for the remaining nuclear-capable forces in the theater. Such a degradation would be neither in the U.S. nor the Japanese interest. Moreover, from the worldwide U.S. perspective, a precedent set by acquiescing in Japanese pressure on this matter could lead to similar demands by other countries all around the globe--a development which might ultimately threaten the viability of a significant portion of our seaborne nuclear deterrent.

Furthermore, unless we were prepared to reverse our long-standing 'neither confirm nor deny' policy, there would be no way for us to take advantage of the fact that the homeported carrier in fact carried no nuclear weapons." In fact, prior consultation was not carried out and things proceeded as stated in Laird's letter.

Laird's letter and the 1972 CINCPAC command history also agree on the point that the Japanese government tacitly accepted the passage and calling of U.S. warships armed with nuclear weapons at Japanese ports. The following White House document at the time of negotiations on Okinawa's reversion also gives an account to the same effect.

U.S. National Security Council "NSSM5--Japan," Part III Okinawa Reversion
(April 1969, secret)

"Japan now acquiesces in transit by naval vessels armed with nuclear weapons. This right would extend automatically to Okinawa. (This is sensitive and closely held information.)"

The document also makes reference to the fact that safety and license inspections indispensable to warships equipped with nuclear weapons were carried out onboard.

USS Midway Command History
(1978, secret)

"As scheduled, Midway transited to the Subic operation area (in the Philippines) and received a defense nuclear surety inspection (DNSI) conducted by Chief Inspector for Weapons, Commander Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet, during the period Nov. 19-24. Upon completion of the DNSI, Chief Inspector for Weapons assisted by Inspection Board member from Nuclear Weapons Training Group Pacific inspected all remaining areas necessary to complete the Navy Technical Proficiency Inspection and Nuclear Safety Survey. The objective of the inspection was to evaluate and recertify Midway's capability to perform assigned nuclear tasking."

CINCPAC Command History
(1965, top secret)

"During September, (U.S. Strategic Air Command's new airborne command post aircraft) Blue Eagle and teams visited Clark Air Base (in the Philippines), Yokota Air Base and Kadena Air Base. The above bases were designated Blue Eagle dispersed operating sites."

U.S. bases in Japan
CINCPAC Command History
(1974, top secret)

"New in 1974 was a deployed ground alert concept in which the CINCPAC Airborne Command Post (ABNCP) initiated random 24- to 48-hour ground alert watch periods in conjunction with bi-monthly deployments in the West Pacific. ABNCP ground alert periods were randomly scheduled among Clark Air Base in the Philippines; Ching Chuan Kang Air Base, Taiwan; and Kadena (Okinawa) and Yokota in Japan. From those locations, which bordered the submarine patrol areas, the ABNCP could rapidly enter an operational orbit within Very Low Frequency/Low Frequency and High Frequency range with the capability to relay Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) emergency action messages to the submarines."

SIOP is a comprehensive U.S. nuclear war plan that brings together under unified control all nuclear weapons that spread to such vehicles as surface warships, submarines, bombers and ground-launched missiles. In accordance with SIOP, CINCPAC's air command is always in a state of readiness to cope with serious emergencies such as nuclear wars. Yokota and Kadena served as dispersed operating bases for this purpose.

Hans Kristensen, the author of the Nautilus research paper, wrote: "Facilities in Japan were routinely used for nuclear command and control operations to exercise SIOP. ... The new evidence described in this report of the use of Japanese facilities for nuclear war planning, therefore, reveals the depths to which a non-nuclear country can find itself involved in nuclear arms rivalries--whether it is aware of it or not--by accepting the security guarantees of a nuclear-armed ally." Withdrawal of nonstrategic nuclear weapons In September 1991, the administration of then-President George Bush declared it was withdrawing nonstrategic nuclear weapons deployed outside the United States. The declaration put an end, for the time being, to the practice of bringing nuclear weapons in to Japan.

By July 1992, nuclear weapons were completely removed from U.S. naval surface vessels and attack nuclear submarines. In reviewing the U.S. nuclear posture in 1994, the Clinton administration decided to dismantle the nuclear capability of warships, including aircraft carriers.

Still, this does not mean the United States will not bring nuclear weapons in to Japan in the future as the U.S. declaration carries a provision to the effect that it only applies "under normal circumstances."

If another country challenges the United States with nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, the

situation is certain to change quickly. Furthermore, the 1994 review assumed that attack nuclear submarines alone may be equipped with nuclear Tomahawk cruise missiles and decided to continue drills and operational planning for that purpose.

Moreover, submarine-launched ballistic missiles carrying strategic nuclear warheads continue to be forward deployed. Although the "command histories" disclosed this time are only up to 1992 editions, reference to SIOP appears virtually every year.

CINCPAC Command History
(1992, secret)

"ABNCP training was again conducted in November 1992. The ABNCP visited Wake Island, Kadena Air Base, Japan, and Osan Air Base, (Republic of) Korea. Battle staff training covered all facets of the SIOP and site surveys were conducted at each location to determine the feasibility of using those locations during alternate command facility operations. Although logistics support for the deployment at Kadena was considered outstanding, support at Osan was only marginally satisfactory." "Such nuclear command and control exercises (using U.S. military bases in Japan) continued well into the 1990s, and probably continue even today," Kristensen wrote.

Time to Press for Nuke-Free Zone in Northeast Asia

Asahi Shimbun
August 25, 1999

Top secret documents that show Japan in the forefront of U.S. nuclear strategy are sure to continue to be unveiled one after another under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act that characterizes U.S. democracy. Each time such a document is made public, the double standard of the reality of the U.S. "nuclear umbrella" and Japan's official "three non-nuclear principles" of not making, possessing or bringing in nuclear weapons will be brought to light.

The Japanese government's official interpretation of the term "bringing in" is both "introduction" and "transit," while that of the United States excludes "transit." The double standard must be corrected. To do so, we must weaken and eventually eradicate the *raison d'etre* of the nuclear umbrella.

For now, the quickest way to do so is to turn the Japanese archipelago, the Korean Peninsula, northeastern China and Far East Russia into a nuclear-free zone following the post-Cold War trend for nuclear disarmament.

Instead of the stated "three non-nuclear principles," Japan may opt to adopt "2.5 non-nuclear principles" by banning the introduction of nuclear weapons while recognizing their passage and transit. In fact, it has been pointed out by some historians that such a secret agreement existed between the Japanese and U.S. governments at the time of the 1960 security treaty negotiations.

But passage and transit may lead to the introduction of nuclear weapons on Japanese land and contravenes the basis of the three non-nuclear principles. If a secret agreement exists, it must be abolished without delay.

The Japanese government has maintained that since the bringing in of nuclear weapons is subject to prior consultations and since no prior consultations have been held, nuclear weapons have not been brought into Japan. But such rhetoric provides no solution.

It is time that Japan talked concerned countries, including the United States, China and Russia, into accepting the idea of creating a nuclear-free zone in northeastern Asia. With the Cold War a thing of the past, what better time is there than now to move forward?

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