

Japan and Strategic Nuclear Submarines

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The Japanese government may have planted false rumors in 1969 about U.S. intentions to send strategic nuclear submarines to Okinawa, according to this telegram from the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.

In the telegram, the Embassy speculates that, "it is conceivable GOJ [Government of Japan] is deliberately playing around on this subject for purpose [of] loosening up Okinawa [deleted; probably "nuclear weapon"] problem."

At the time, negotiations were underway between the two countries for the reversion of Okinawa from U.S. control back to Japan. One of the most controversial aspects concerned what to do with the U.S. nuclear weapons deployed on the island. A story in Japanese press said the U.S. had stated a need to visit the island with strategic submarines from time to time after removal of the land-based weapons.

The Embassy telegram reported that the Japanese Foreign Ministry had concluded the rumor originated with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kimura. The Embassy strongly warned against fueling the rumor, partly because it was untrue and would confuse the Okinawa problem even further, and partly because it could have undesirable ramifications with respect to port calls at Japanese ports by other warships.

The Embassy recommended planting a "suitable question" at a press briefing to permit an official denial. In this manner, the telegram ended, "we could get GOJ and ourselves off [the] limb onto which they seem have climbed."

FOIA Document Available

Telegram, U.S. Embassy Tokyo to Secretary of State, "[Subject: Polaris Submarines and Japan](#)," February 7, 1969. Secret. Partially declassified and released under the Freedom of Information Act. (0.11 Mb PDF-version)

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