

OKINAWA: AMERICAN MILITARY ENCLAVE IN ASIA

Okinawa is the largest of the Ryukyu Islands, a chain that stretches south from Japan across the East China Sea. In terms of cultural, linguistic and ethnic background, the Okinawans are indisputably Japanese. The Islands appear in Japanese records as early as A.D. 616. Being far from the central Japanese authority, however, they developed a native kingship and prospered in the 13th and succeeding centuries as a center of transit trade between Japan, China and Southeast Asia. During the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, the semi-independent kingdom of Okinawa was forced to pay tribute both to Japan and China. From 1872 until 1946 the Ryukyu Islands were under the direct control of Japan. They were considered a semicolonial outpost of Japan until well into the 20th century.

While the Ryukyu Islands legally remain part of Japan and acknowledged so by the United States in the Peace Treaty of 1951 and the Security Treaty of 1960, they are nevertheless controlled directly by a military appointee of the United States Government. The officer in charge of the islands' administration is called the United States High Commissioner and on paper, at least, his powers approach those of an absolute monarch. He is accountable only to his own superiors--the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defence. Neither the Japanese nor the American Constitution operates in the islands. Okinawa's basic law is Executive Order 10713, signed by the President of the United States on June 5, 1957. This document provides for a High Commissioner to head the Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) with powers to promulgate laws, ordinances or regulations. The High Commissioner must be an officer on active duty, and so far he has always been a general commanding at the same time the military and civil establishments on the island. Although successive High Commissioners have delegated more and more authority to the Government of the Ryukyu Islands, this authority is revocable at any time. The High Commissioner can remove any official, elected or appointed, from office, can veto any legislation and replace it with an ordinance.

The strategy of the American Government in relation to local political expression has been to encourage as much home rule as will not interfere with base operations. The local government consists of a directly elected chief executive and a 32 man legislature; 31 are of four political parties and one is Independent. All parties are in favor of Okinawa's reversion to Japan. The Chief Executive, Mr. Chobyu Yara, was elected primarily because of his strong stand for the reversion of the Ryukyu Islands.

The total population of the Ryukyu Islands is nearly one million. The American population, in comparison is quite small--75,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and civilians. Yet, the large complex of American bases constitute almost one quarter of the land area, and are mostly situated on the island of Okinawa. American military installations, large and small, on the Ryukyus number 124, compared to 148 in Japan proper. All but half a dozen of these installations are located on Okinawa. Needless to say, the United States Government dominates and controls the economy. It is America that has helped Okinawa's economy grow at the rate of 18 per cent a year, which has brought the per capita income to \$580.00--61 per cent of that of Japan. American bases employ nearly half of the

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working population, 59,000. This heavy dependence on America's military presence rather than developing indigenous industry or resources will be of critical importance in the Ryukyus' reversion to Japan. The island's imports vastly exceed its exports, \$379 million to \$89 million. U.S. spending at the rate of about \$220 million a year almost plugs the hole. The remainder of the gap is more than wiped out by \$39 million in U.S. economic aid, and also \$63 million in Japanese aid (Japan last year offered \$40 million, the Okinawans at once demanded \$80 million).

The Cold War, the "fall of China to the Communists", the Korean War and the Japanese Government's desire for inexpensive external security were the elements that finally led to the U.S. military control of Okinawa. This strategic location is considered the "keystone" of America's containment policy. Its vantage point was recognized in the Korean War as it is today with the Viet Nam War. The U.S.-Japan Security Treaty of 1960 continued to extend to America complete and unhindered control over the military bases in the Ryukyus. Within a radius of 1,700 miles, existing U.S. Aircraft can reach any Asian nation with which the United States has a security agreement, including Thailand, and could also cover every important area of mainland China; yet unlike Taiwan, Okinawa is far enough out to sea to give its defenders sufficient "reaction time" against attack from C China or Korea. It is America's freedom of action that is the heart of the problem in the reversion of the Ryukyu Islands. This same freedom for the U.S. military does not exist on Japan proper. In Japan, America must have "prior consultation" with the Japanese government before military action is taken and must receive permission before that action is carried out. This would mean that the U.S. would have to request authorization before it sent bombers to Viet Nam. As Japan is interested in maintaining good relations with her Asian neighbors, such as China, an American military request to bomb an other Asian nation (Viet Nam, Cambodia, etc.) would probably be denied. At present, the existing treaty permits the United States to (1) send B-52 bombers on raids to Viet Nam, (2) use the north portion of the island to train troops for guerrilla warfare, (3) the planning of supply missions to support the entire U.S. war effort in Viet Nam and, (4) the maintaining of nuclear missiles.

The reversion of Okinawa has been formally agreed upon by both the American and Japanese government at this time. What is in the process of being negotiated and what will probably be decided on during Premier Sato's visit to the United States in November 1969, are the conditions under which the existing military bases will continue to operate. The Japanese government is primarily concerned with changing two aspects of the American military installations: (1) "homeland conditions"--that is, the same rules for Okinawan bases as for those in Japan so as to require "prior consultations" before military action is taken and, (2) that all nuclear weapons be removed. It is expected that reversion will be completed by 1972 or 1973 and, that the demands for "homeland conditions" and the removal of the nuclear missiles will be carried out. If the American Government refuses to grant at least these two concessions, the present pro-American government of Premier Sato may be toppled and in turn forcing a decision in the Diet that would either open the Security Treaty to abrogation or a more radical amendment.

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The U.S. military is now seriously considering moving their Okinawan operations if the restrictions that follow reversion seriously impede the war efforts and their ability to guard the Asian territory. The two greatest problems that the military faces if they decide on this action is; (1) finding a suitable location and (2) training the 59,000 civilians it will take to staff an operation the size of Okinawa. Looking at possible alternative sites in the western Pacific and Southeast Asia sources say that the military would prefer the combined uses of the bases in South Korea and Nationalist China. South Korea, in fact, is encouraging more American forces to come into its territory. The U.S. military would prefer to move forward rather than back 1,200 miles to Guam, an American territory or the Marianas which the United States controls under a United Nations trusteeship.

It seems relatively certain that military installations will continue their present functioning for some time to come and that the American policy of containment shall be maintained. The Okinawan issue is a part of the overall policy to contain "communism" in Asia; it is a partial explanation to the reason for the conflict in Viet Nam. This is an issue which needs to be discussed, and understood, as well as broadened if a lasting peace is to be attained. If the U.S. Japan Treaty abrogation and the reversion of Okinawa fails to bring about the changes in America's foreign policy in Asia, then more enlightened demands followed by direct political action are needed. The United States military has no intention of leaving Asia and if an illusion of this is brought about through manipulation and accommodation, then the implication of America's intentions should be brought to light. The United States policy is to maintain the status quo, contain struggles of self-determination as in Viet Nam and to secure that area of the world for capitalist investment.

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