

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: June 4, 1964

SUBJECT: U.S. Policy toward the Ryukyu Islands

PARTICIPANTS: Lt. General Albert Watson II, USA, High Commissioner Designate of the Ryukyu Islands
 Col. John J. Duffy, USA, Director, Civil Affairs, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, Department of the Army
 Mr. Leonard L. Bacon, Acting Director for East Asian Affairs
 Mr. Robert A. Fearey, Acting Deputy Director for East Asian Affairs
 Mr. Richard W. Petree, Acting Officer-in-Charge, Japanese Affairs

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After welcoming General Watson to the Department, Mr. Bacon led off by remarking that President Kennedy's policy statement of March 19, 1962 forms a sound basis for U.S. policy toward the Ryukyu Islands. Mr. Bacon said that we in the Department of State feel that effectuation of the policy outlined by President Kennedy has not moved as fast as we had originally hoped. He noted also the great importance of effective communications between the High Commissioner and Embassy Tokyo. General Watson said he was acquainted with Minister Emmerson and in fact had already exchanged letters with him.

Mr. Bacon said that in our thinking the two major problem areas in the Ryukyu Islands are Ryukyuan desires for greater autonomy from U.S. controls and the handling of Japan in relation to the Ryukyus. Concerning the first, he felt that there may have been a tendency in our administration to over-protect the Ryukyus from their own mistakes. He said we believe the Ryukyus should be given greater freedom to govern themselves even if their lack of experience or irresponsibility produced failures. We feel the psychological basis for Ryukyuan discontent under our present paternalistic style of administration is the same as has motivated many other peoples in the world.

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Our second major policy problem, creating a role for Japan in the Ryukyus, has up to now been approached with a very narrow perspective. Mr. Bacon said we strongly believe that the Japanese do not want us out of Okinawa, that they in fact understand the security advantages to Japan of our military presence in the Ryukyus. However, the Japanese Government must make statements and take positions publicly which give the appearance of support for Japanese nationalistic desires for the return of the Ryukyus. This political posture is essential to the ruling conservative elements of Japan, which we believe are likely to remain in power at least throughout the rest of this decade, in order to blunt the pressures of the left-wing political opposition and the nationalistic sentiments of the general populace.

We believe that the philosophy of President Kennedy's 1962 statement is sound as a basis for coping with Japan in relation to the Ryukyuan problem. The statement recognizes Japan's residual sovereignty over the Ryukyus, our clear expectation that the Ryukyus ultimately will return to Japan, the need to conduct our administration of the Ryukyus so as to pave the way for smooth reversion of the Ryukyus, and the need for gradual expansion of Japan's role and influence in the Ryukyus without hurting our essential military interest. In the Department we have been disappointed by the general lack of progress in the direction of this policy.

Mr. Bacon drew a parallel between the Okinawan attitudes toward the American administration and the attitudes of the Saarlanders toward France in the 50's. He noted that local government leaders in the Saar found it politically necessary to maintain public postures opposing France on certain issues, but in reality the same leaders did not wish to upset the agreements providing for Saar autonomy under France. On its side, the French Government recognized the need for the local authorities to take freely an independent stand on issues not vital to continued French authority.

Mr. Fearey commented that someone has said, "When the Ryukyans itch, the Japanese scratch." General Watson asked whether it is only the leadership group in the Ryukyus or the whole populace that itches. Mr. Fearey said that there are expressions of discontent by some labor leaders, leftist politicians and others but that overall our presence is well accepted. There is no crisis in the Ryukyus. Our objective is to ensure that none arises, that a political situation is preserved which allows us to stay there for

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a long time to come. This, we believe, calls for implementation of the letter and spirit of President Kennedy's statement, to make conservative Japanese our partners in the Ryukyus rather than suspected intruders. We consider this an entirely feasible objective.

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