



THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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10 September 1946

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JCS Memo, 100-17, 1973
By: [redacted] NARS, Date 3-17-77

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

In J.C.S. 1619/5, a document expressing State Department views as to the degree and extent of control which should be retained by the United States over various Pacific islands formerly administered by Japan, the conclusion was drawn by the Department of State that the Ryukyu Islands should be regarded as minor islands to be retained by Japan and demilitarized. This document is understood to have been forwarded to the President by the Secretary of State with J.C.S. 1619/6, which expresses views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff concerning Pacific Islands.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff view with grave concern the proposal that the Ryukyu Islands should be returned to Japan. It would appear that a decision on this question could and should be reached apart from consideration of the general degree of political control to be exercised by the United States over other Pacific islands.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the necessary degree of United States control in the Ryukyus could be obtained by placing this group under a trusteeship in which Okinawa and adjacent small islands were designated as a strategic area. Under such circumstances, those northern islands of the Nansei Shoto adjacent to and formerly a part of the prefecture of Kyushu might well be returned to Japanese sovereignty and demilitarized.

Okinawa is a key base of primary importance in the over-all United States Pacific base plan. It covers that area of the Pacific between the Aleutians and the Philippines and west of the Marianas. In the event of war involving the USSR, Soviet power would inevitably flow southward into Manchuria and North China, completing Soviet control over the industrial heart of northeast Asia in the area surrounding the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan. Other than Japan proper, Okinawa is the only base area from which our force could be projected into that area. Furthermore, control of the Ryukyus by an Asiatic power possessed of the

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weapons of war which will be available in the near future could give dominance of the northwestern Pacific and of the lines of communication to China. In hands other than our own the Ryukyus will become a major adverse element in the defense of the Philippines. The area around the Yellow Sea is the best, if not the only, hope for a bastion against Soviet progress to the southward which could within two decades extend to the Malay barrier by war or even by means short of war. In short, Okinawa, in our hands, is a springboard from which to exercise some stabilizing influence over the area around the Yellow Sea. Conversely, in the hands of another great power or lying neutralized ready for seizure by such a great power, it constitutes the open door to achieving or at least disputing control of the northwestern Pacific. Certainly, with the world situation as it now is, the basic essentials of U.S. long-range military security require that no action be taken to prejudice our ultimate possession of Okinawa as a military base.

In light of the foregoing, the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe the question of Okinawa is of such military importance as to warrant further consideration by the Department of State.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff request that no action be taken which in any way prejudices the stand stated in this memorandum prior to a complete presentation of the problem to the President.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

WILLIAM D. LEAHY,
Fleet Admiral, U. S. Navy,
Chief of Staff to the
Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy.

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