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Mr. President:

In our great concentration on the conflict in Viet Nam, we tend
to relegate other international situations to the background. It is understandible that Viet Nam should come first with us. By the same token, however, it should be recognized that other nations may also be preoccupied with issues of primary concern to them. Japan is a case in point. There is, at this time, a heavy pressure emanating from that nation for a prompt adjustment in the status of the Bonin (including the Volcanos) and the Ryukyu Islands.

The Senate will recall that the United States has administered these island-groups since the end of World War II. We exercise this administrative authority, however, in the context of a treaty-commitment, to the effect that the islands remain Japanese territory and shall revert to full Japanese control at an appropriate time.

The question of what would be an appropriate time has been involved for many years with problems of security of the United States, Japan, and other nations of the Western Pacific. During these years, the United States has developed at great cost on the island of Okinawa an enormous military base complex of immense power.

In remarks which I made in Japan last week I dwelt at some length on the question of Okinawa. Among other things, I suggested that it might be helpful to a satisfactory final Japanese-J. S. resolution of this question if there could be, first, a tripartite conference. My thought was that we
would know better what to do about the bases on Okinawa and when if we had
an exchange of views, as among Japan, the United States, and the Soviet
Union on the prospects for peace in the Western Pacific and other questions
of that region.

On the basis of an exploration of that kind, it seems to me that
the United States could proceed with Japan, as we must at some point, to a
satisfactory bilateral solution of the security issues which are involved
in the Okinawan reversion. In a similar fashion, moreover, it seems to me
that Japan and the Soviet Union might also subsequently be able to find a
satisfactory bilateral settlement of the problem of the Habomais and Shikotan,
Etorofu and Kunashiri (the southern Kuriles), all islands which are claimed
by Japan but are held by the Soviet Union at the northern end of the
Japanese chain.

There was considerable disagreement expressed in the Japanese
press and elsewhere with the proposed tripartite approach. In general,
the disagreement appeared to arise primarily from a Japanese concern about
possible complications or a postponement in the settlement of the Okinawan
problem. The Japanese clearly desire to have Okinawa returned to Japanese
control without delay.

I can understand these anxieties, Mr. President, and insofar as
the non-military aspects of the Okinawan question are involved, I do not
think, as I made clear in my statement, that there ought to be any undue
delay in seeking agreement. However, I still think that the possibilities
of arriving at a sensible bilateral resolution of the military aspect of
the Okinawan problem, as between Japan and the United States, would be
greatly enhanced by a better understanding of Soviet intentions and other
insights which might result from a prior tripartite meeting.

In any event, Mr. President, the discussion which has been sti-
mulated by the proposal for a tripartite conference seems to me to be a
contribution to clearing the air of U. S.-Japanese relations and to bring-
ing the issue into a better perspective. In spite of Viet Nam, Mr. President,
I would urge that the matter be pursued most attentively. The issue of
China has become, quite suddenly, a central problem in the U. S. relation-
ship with Japan. And there is no other relationship of greater significance
to the interests of the United States in the Pacific and to the peace of
that region.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of my
address to the Japanese-American Assembly on U. S.-Japanese relations
which was given on September 15, 1967, in Shioda, Japan, be included
at this point in the Record.