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September 22, 1967

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

Mr. President:

In our great concentration on the conflict in Viet Nam, we tend to relegate other international situations to the background. It is understandable 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-U. S. resolution of this question if there could be, first, a tripartite conference. My thought was that we

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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

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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 stimulated 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 bringing 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 Okinawa has become, quite suddenly, a central problem in the U. S. relationship 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 Shimoda, Japan, be included at this point in the Record.