

Reversion

seen peril

## Okinawa:

### a great

### debate

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Special to The Globe

(Ed. note: Mr. Binnendijk is writing his PhD dissertation on the reversion of Okinawa for the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.)

Earlier this week the Upper House of the Japanese Diet approved the controversial Okinawa reversion agreement. With President Nixon's signature expected shortly, reversion is almost a reality.

By completing the transfer, the United States will avoid a major debacle in its relations with Japan. But reversion has left its mark on American strategic capabilities in the Far East. Two schools of analysis are clearly discernible.

1) US military headquarters in Hawaii (CINCPAC) represent an optimistic viewpoint. They state "a salient objective of the negotiations has been to keep a posture on the island which would support the security commitments that exist. The objective in the negotiations has been achieved. We expect no change in the base structure in the future." Both Secretary of State William Rogers and Deputy Defense Secretary David Packard who has since resigned, echoed these sentiments in recent Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings. Osamu Kaihara, director of the Japanese National Defense Council agreed, concluding "US troops will stay in Okinawa for at

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2.) This view is challenged by Lt. Gen. (ret.) Paul Caraway, former high commissioner and Army commander on Okinawa. "US forces on Okinawa will be completely ineffective," he rebuts, "we may as well pack up and go home now." Others joined in this "pessimistic" analysis. Michio Royama, a noted professor at Tokyo's Sophia University, argues that "once Japan regains administrative rights in Okinawa, the psychology of the inhabitants will change. Soon there will be a forced reduction in the significance of Okinawa as a military base."

Upon closer investigation, one finds that this dichotomy exists at three levels of strategic analysis: One, presence of US bases, two, the conditions under which they operate, and three, the necessity for their presence.

Optimists point to list A of the Reversion Treaty

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# Debate rages over Okinawa reversion

## ★ OKINAWA

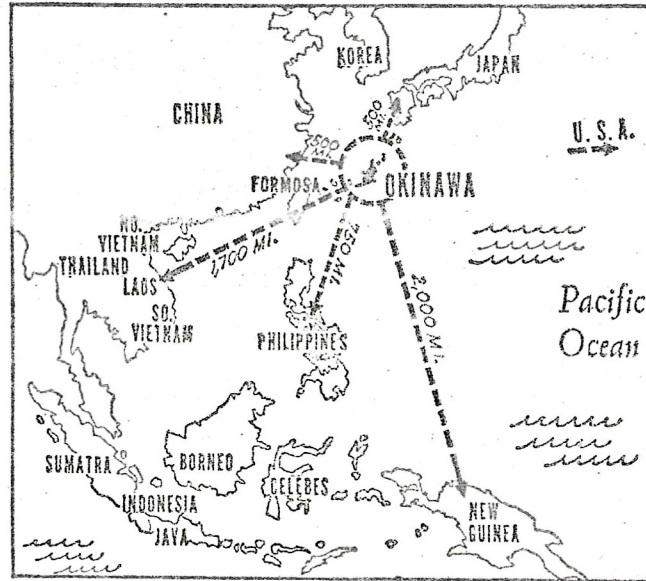
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which shows that 88 bases and over 90 percent of the previous acreage will be maintained by the US. The treaty negotiators proudly state that only one major base, Naha airbase, will be turned over to Japan. With the exception of nuclear weapons, all major weapons systems will remain on the island. In addition, with Japanese troops defending the island, US forces are free to carry out their primary mission, deterring China.

Pessimists look beyond the treaty to growing unrest in Japan and Okinawa. "Pressure for return of base facilities is on now," says one State Dept. official, and "and it is not politically palatable since we just told the Senate that we would keep all 88 of them." Opposition to the treaty is greatest in Okinawa. Chief Executive Chogyo Yara recently presented Premier Sato with a petition asking for renegotiation of the treaty and protesting the continuation of the massive US presence there.

### NEED FOR PRIOR CONSULTATION

Sato himself recently declared "With the return of Okinawa, the US military bases will change by stages." Most analysts expect a dramatic shift in base capabilities when the Japanese land appropri-



OKINAWA'S STRATEGIC LOCATION

tion bill for the bases expires in 1977.

Any US bases that do remain on Okinawa will be subject to the Status of Forces agreement with Japan. The United States is legally obliged to consult with Japan prior to making major changes in the deployment and use of forces (including nuclear weapons) on the island.

Optimists feel that prior consultation does not hamper effective use of the bases. "If there is a serious threat to the security of the Far East, the Japanese government will give the US its consent to act" argues Morton Halperin, "and the necessity for prior consultation may prevent hasty action by the US." Regarding nuclear weapons, Halperin con-

tends that their presence on Okinawa would make no difference in the calculations of deterrence theory.

Others feel that prior consultation greatly reduces US military flexibility and deterrence capability. During the Pueblo incident, for example, American F4s and F104s flew to South Korea from Okinawa while the Japanese delayed similar flights from the homeland. Most analysts further agree that prior consent would not be given for combat flights to Southeast Asia. Pessimists also argue that withdrawing the estimated 1000 tactical nuclear weapons stored in Okinawa will greatly reduce the credibility of the US deterrent, return the US to a policy of massive retaliation, and frighten Japan

into producing its own nuclear defense.

### NEED FOR OKINAWA BASES

Strategists are also divided regarding the continued necessity for a US presence on Okinawa. Optimists feel that the threat of war in the Far East has decreased with President Nixon's overture toward China, and that our commitments have lessened with the Guam doctrine. If trouble breaks out, they argue, a C5A can have thousands of well-equipped troops in Asia within 36 hours.

"Because of a continued military commitments under the Guam Doctrine, and troops cuts elsewhere in Asia," counter pessimists, "Okinawa is needed more now than ever." One military officer on the island took an extreme position. "If we move out of here," he explained, "that's the beginning of World War III. Okinawa is our keystone. Where else can we go?"