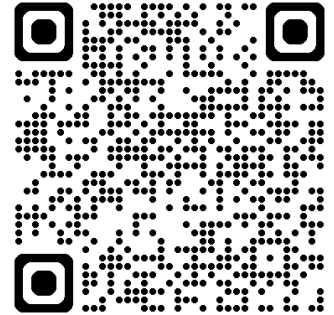


Okinawa's legacy of Japan's shadow emissary



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20260105124226634/>

Japan is committed to prohibiting the presence of nuclear weapons, but they were deployed in Okinawa during the postwar US occupation. Now a historic document written by a key player in secret talks on the island's reversion and the status of those weapons has been made public for the first time.

The will of noted academic Wakaizumi Kei was donated to the Okinawa prefectural archives in November. It was addressed to the people of Okinawa prefecture. Wakaizumi writes that he feels a heavy responsibility for the consequences of his involvement in the secret talks on Okinawa's reversion to Japan. He follows up gravely saying, "I will take my own life."

This is an extremely valuable document in looking at the challenges Okinawa faced during the battle of Okinawa, the American occupation, and post reversion.

Wakaizumi played a key role in negotiating that transfer of control. In 1969, Japan's Prime Minister Sato Eisaku and US President Richard Nixon make a historic announcement.

Okinawa will be returned to our country completely free of nuclear weapons.

At that time, Wakaizumi was involved in a secret agreement stating that nuclear weapons can be introduced again in the event of an emergency. The agreement was not in line with the wish of Okinawans: removing nuclear weapons already deployed on the island during the decades long occupation.

This is where the nuclear missiles were stored. Everything is still here.

During the cold war, the US deployed nuclear missiles in four of its bases in Okinawa that could reach China and parts of the Soviet Union.

One thinks that this is the only place that can convey the situation during the cold war after the battle of Okinawa. It's known that there were nuclear weapons in Okinawa after the war, but this is the only place where you can see with your own eyes where they actually were.

Before the reversion was agreed. People in Okinawa rallied under the slogan "Nuclear free. Equal treatment with the mainland." But Wakaizumi's secret agreement to the US's demand to allow nuclear weapons on Japanese soil in the event of an emergency essentially ignored that call. Former journalist Gushiken Katsuya who was close to Wakaizumi, tells us how he reacted to the reversion in 1972.

Underneath, there is a small hole, right? It's filled with sand now.

He says Wakaizumi had always wanted to know exactly what happened in the fierce fighting in Okinawa. Wakaizumi then joined efforts to recover the remains of people who had died in the war even though he had terminal cancer at the time.

He must have been in horrible pain all over his body. After about an hour of digging I asked him to stop, but he didn't listen. Digging with a small shovel, he brought out big femurs and even sabers. Every time he found something, he cried. He said, "You must have been in pain. You must have hurt."

Wakaizumi also expressed his anger at the Japanese government.

He was muttering to himself that politicians and bureaucrats from the mainland should come here and dig up the remains then they would understand the pain and suffering of Okinawa.

Although 30 years have passed since then, allowing nuclear weapons into Japan is now being spoken of openly as the security environment surrounding the country is said to be more threatening.

Not only was he someone who cared about Okinawa, but he was also sounding the alarm. I think the situation for the whole world is even worse now than it was when Wakaizumi was alive. He felt extremely sad about the continued presence of US bases in Okinawa. I would like to ask Wakaizumi what he thinks about Japan today. I'd like to hear that for myself.

Source: (NHK World News)

Now discuss the questions with a partner.

1. Do you think the US should be allowed to store nuclear weapons at bases in Okinawa or other parts of Japan? Why or why not?
2. How do you feel about Wakaizumi's comment about politicians and bureaucrats?
3. Is it acceptable for governments to hide information from the public during times of war?
4. Have you ever been to Okinawa? How do you feel about the military presence there?
5. Why do you think this topic is relevant to the current security environment surrounding Japan?