

TO: Dr. [REDACTED]

DATE: February 27, 2009

SUBJECT: Discussion with Japanese political counselor

Following the full Commission meeting on Wednesday, I stayed to attend the meeting with the Japanese Embassy's new political counselor, Takeo Akiba. Counselor Akiba was accompanied by two other Embassy officials, one of whom was Mr. Kanai. The Commissioners present were Chairman Perry, Vice-Chair Schlesinger, Keith Payne, Johnny Foster, and Harry Cartland. Paul Hughes, Bruce MacDonald, Brad Roberts, John Harvey's assistant, Wade Boese, and I also attended. Prior to his presentation, Counselor Akiba circulated a three-page memo summarizing Japan's perspective on the U.S. extended nuclear deterrent (I can either fax this to you ASAP or bring it with me to our next meeting, your choice). The Counselor's opening remarks precisely followed the memo text.

Counselor Akiba did nothing to "walk back" the October statements by Minister Ishii. The questions asked of Counselor Akiba were framed in such a way as to illicit responses that confirmed the previously held views of the Commissioner's in attendance, most of whom tend to paint Japan's perspective on the U.S. extended deterrent in the most dire possible light. I can almost guarantee that during next month's Commission meeting, Dr. Payne, Dr. Schlesinger, and/or Dr. Foster are likely to point to the discussion to overstate the extent to which:

- 1) some U.S. allies have become seriously concerned about the credibility of the U.S. extended nuclear deterrent;
- 2) some in Japan believe that other security options will have to be examined if the U.S. extended nuclear deterrent loses credibility; and
- 3) some in Japan see specific characteristics of U.S. nuclear forces as particularly beneficial for extended deterrence, including TLAM-N and low-yield earth-penetrating weapons. For example, Mr. Kanai stated that low-yield earth-penetrating weapons would strengthen the credibility of extended deterrence.

Following the discussion, Keith Payne told Wade Boese and me that what we just heard was "mind-blowing". Dr. Payne claimed that he's never heard the Japanese be so explicit about their concerns, nor have they ever circulated something in writing that lays out these concerns in such a precise and straightforward manner.

My key "take-aways" from the discussion were:

- Japan is clearly worried about the threats posed by China and North Korea.
- Japanese officials are nervous that unilateral reductions of U.S. operationally deployed nuclear warheads could have an adverse effect on Japanese security.
- However, Counselor Akiba did not express opposition toward "deep cuts" in U.S. operationally deployed strategic warheads, so long as close consultations with Japan are held well in advance and China's nuclear expansion and modernization are kept in mind.

Given that the size of the U.S. operationally deployed forces is thousands of warheads larger than China's holdings, the U.S. would likely be able to make substantial reductions without compromising extended deterrence. The Counselor also stressed that he did not oppose U.S. engagement with China, but that Japan merely did not want to be surprised by the form and content of such negotiations.

- On the issue of whether Japan would like to see a high-level consultations with the U.S. along the lines of NATO's Nuclear Planning Group, Counselor Akiba noted that Japan's constitution as well as domestic opposition with Japan might make such a forum difficult, but that he himself favored it. Regardless of the form consultations with the U.S. may take, the Counselor and the Embassy officials that accompanied him stated that Japan wants to be more informed about the U.S. nuclear posture and planning.
- In response to a question from Dr. Schlesinger on how Japan might view the construction of a nuclear storage site on Okinawa or Guam, Counselor Akiba stated that he found such a proposal persuasive.
- On the question of whether the U.S. ought to maintain its TLAM-N and ALCM capability, Counselor Akiba stated that if the U.S. were to consider eliminating these capabilities, Japan would like to be consulted well in advance on how the loss of this capability would be offset. Regrettably, none of the Commissioners present pressed the Counselor on what statements or alternative conventional capabilities might reassure Japan as U.S. nuclear weapons are reduced or eventually eliminated.
- None of the Commissioners or staff members present asked how Japan views President Obama's promise to renew U.S. leadership on disarmament and nonproliferation.

In sum, I think the discussion reinforced your view that the U.S. should begin a process of in-depth discussions with Japan and the ROK about the US nuclear posture and the nuclear umbrella for the two countries. At the same time, I heard nothing that would suggest that the twin goals of maintaining a credible extended deterrent and reducing the size and salience of our nuclear forces are incompatible.