

# U.S. planed in mid-1950s to deploy nuke arms in Japan

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## Documents reveal U.S. plan in mid-1950s to deploy nuke arms in Japan

TOKYO (Kyodo) — The U.S. government sought to promote the peaceful use of atomic energy vis-a-vis Japan in the mid-1950s to pave the way for eventually deploying nuclear weapons in the country by easing the antinuclear sentiment of the Japanese people, according to top-secret U.S. government documents found at the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

The declassified documents included a letter, dated Nov. 18, 1955, to Reuben Robertson, deputy secretary of defense at that time, from Acting Secretary of State Herbert Hoover Jr., acknowledging that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had “reviewed the requirement for the deployment of nuclear components of atomic weapons to Japan.”

The correspondence also said the Joint Chiefs of Staff “determined that the requirement still is valid and should be accomplished at the earliest time consistent with the maintenance of a satisfactory state of United States-Japanese relations,” while recognizing “that it is probably not feasible to press for immediate action at this time.”

Hoover, responding to Robertson’s suggestion, voiced support for a proposed joint study between the state and defense departments on the possibilities of “influencing Japanese leadership toward a favorable understanding of American military atomic policy.”

According to the letter, Robertson had suggested that “a greater appreciation by the Japanese of the possibilities of the United States program for the peaceful uses of atomic energy would be useful in reducing existing psychological barriers as well as fostering a greater appreciation of the realities of the military atomic program.”

The United States stepped up cooperation with Japan in the field of nuclear energy after the Fukuryu Maru No. 5, a Japanese tuna fishing boat, was hit by radiation from a U.S. hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific in March 1954.

The documents obtained by Shoji Nihara, a researcher of Japan-U.S. relations, reveal the U.S. intention to deploy atomic weapons in Japan which was hidden behind its nuclear cooperation policy.

In a separate letter dated Dec. 3, 1956, Gerard Smith, special assistant to the secretary of state at that time, told Gordon Gray, assistant secretary of defense, that U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Allison and Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer, then commander of Army Forces in the Far East, might discuss the possibility of “measures to reduce the political obstacles to storage of nuclear weapons in Japan.”

Noting “the dangers in opening the subject prematurely” concerning bringing to Japan nuclear components containing fissionable materials, Smith also wrote, “In the short run, we can do ourselves the most good by concentrating on the peaceful uses of atomic energy.”

The U.S. military had since kept seeking to deploy nuclear weapons in Japan but in vain, according to another document.

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