

To John W

SEC DEF HAS SEEN

American Embassy
Tokyo, Japan
November 25, 1975

~~PERSONAL AND
CONFIDENTIAL~~

Dear Don:

First, congratulations - warm and hearty ! I'll miss having a friend in the White House, but it will be great having you right where you are, especially since there are a couple of things related to this part of the world on which we can work together.

When your predecessor was out here in August, he got a couple of things started that you will inherit. I thought I might give you a personal evaluation of them.

At the outset I should say that Jim's visit here served a very positive purpose. The present Defense Minister, Sakata, plus a few of the more broad-gauge Japanese are gradually trying to inject some realism into the Japanese public consciousness on the subject of their own security. As you know, it has been a blind spot here for years. While they cannot be effectively pushed faster than their own painstaking pace, we can reinforce their efforts, and that is what Jim helped us do in significant ways.

Both to bolster the Defense Minister's efforts and in our own self interest, he agreed to two things. My views on these two are the reason for this letter.

First it was agreed that the U.S. and Japanese Defense Ministry heads would hereafter meet and consult annually, normally alternating the country site of the get-together. Since he came here in '75, Jim invited Sakata to come to Washington in '76.

The Honorable
Donald Rumsfeld,
Secretary of Defense,
Washington, D. C.

OK.
25 Nov 75

DECLASSIFIED
Authority EO 12958

12 MAY 1999

Chief, Declass Br
Dir. & Reg. Div. WHC

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Sec Def Cont Nr. X-23662

I-13132/75

I have a suggestion with respect to the timing of such a Washington visit. Next April or thereabouts might be well worth your consideration. You will then have had a few months to fit 'your feet under the new desk and get winter budget activity well under way. By then Sakata will be in a position to assess the several-month result of his consciousness-raising activity here and to then use the visit to further his effort. In other words, the between-meetings spacing would be good.

The political situation here, including Miki's (and Sakata's) political future, may then be more clear. (It could hardly be less so than today.) The U.S. political campaign will not have reached the passion and pace of later months. So April may be worth special consideration.

No decision need be made now nor even for the next couple of months, but I wanted to start you thinking about the subject. We can nail it down later. It is vitally important, however, to regard such a visit as a commitment by us that should be fulfilled sometime well before next August.

The second thing we are committed to is the establishment of a mechanism to engage in cooperative joint defense planning. This is an exceedingly delicate subject in Japan where the attitude toward closer U.S. defense ties has long been marked by ambivalence and apprehension. By carefully couching the verbiage describing the creation and function of this mechanism in terms such as "explore, " "study" and "forum, " and by not attempting to delineate its specific form, subject content or objectives, the concept has gained public acceptability in Japan. The post-Vietnam apprehension about Northeast Asian security here probably helped.

It is, however, a concept that needs careful groundwork for several reasons. First, as indicated above, to avoid raising undue public apprehension. Second, to avoid overlapping with other security communication mechanisms already established between us. And thirdly, to capitalize on what may prove to be a useful new vehicle for propelling the Japanese into a more realistic appreciation of their current defense limitations and to provide some guidance for them in the best ways to remedy these limitations.



Since Jim's departure here, we have been engaged in some operating-level preparatory work on this subject. Japan's Defense Ministry and Foreign Ministry as well as our local military commands and the Embassy are all involved, so progress has been slow. CINCPAC has also been doing some work on the subject, so some special coordinating effort on our side will be needed. We will pursue this.

Inasmuch as we are already getting press pressure for a progress report on this project, it is my view that sometime within a few weeks after the first of the year we may have to make some sort of a public statement with respect to where it stands. We hope before then to have some recommendations for your people. It is unlikely that any role for the Secretary of Defense will be included in the new structure, but it will have important responsibilities.

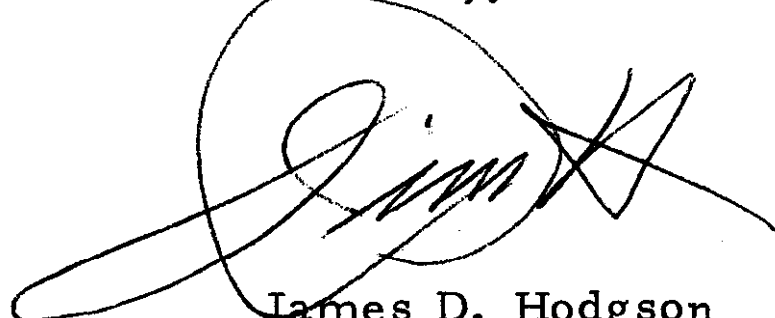
Well, these are my thoughts. They may constitute more than you really wanted to know on this special subject area at the outset of a busy job. But with the clock ticking, I suspect we must give these matters some real attention in the next 90 days. Naturally I'll have more to share with you on the latter item in a few weeks.

At the moment I consider these the only active policy-level items here involving DOD.

We're looking forward to the President's fueling stop here in Tokyo on his way to Peking next week. Sorry you won't be along this time for a greeting.

I hope this has been helpful.

Sincerely,



James D. Hodgson
Ambassador

