

Japan Confirms Secret Nuclear Pacts With U.S. During Cold War

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TOKYO, March 9 (Xinhua) — Japan's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday confirmed the existence of three Cold War-era secret agreements with Washington that included stipulations allowing the U.S. military to bring nuclear weapons onto its territory.

The public announcement ended a decades-long policy in Japan of keeping the agreements secret from the public. Information about the agreements, however, had already been revealed in the United States more than a decade ago.

One of the pacts, signed in 1960, effectively allowed the United States to bring nuclear weapons into Japan without prior consultation. This overturned previous agreements that had stated that Washington must first speak with Tokyo before bringing in any nuclear weapons, in light of Japanese sentiment after atomic bombs were used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of world War II in 1945.

Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada said the possibility that nuclear weapons had entered Japan during the era "cannot be ruled out", after the ministry expert panel made the confirmation in a report.

"We cannot clearly state that there was no nuclear introduction (to Japan)," Okada told a press conference after receiving the panel report.

He added, however, he believed nuclear arms had not been introduced since 1991, when U.S. President George H.W. Bush announced the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons from U.S. ships and submarines, and said he believed such introduction would not happen in the future.

Okada also said Japan will maintain its three non-nuclear principles.

The minister, meanwhile, said former Japanese prime ministers and foreign ministers should be blamed for the concealment, and expressed his hope that the panel's report would help rebuild public confidence in Japan's diplomacy.

The other two pacts allowed the United States to use its military facilities on Japanese soil in the event of trouble in the United States without prior consultation, and one detailed the distribution of the cost burden between the two nations during the handover of Okinawa in 1972.

The panel investigating the secret pacts concluded that it was "undesirable" that a large portion of the nation's history is made up from overseas records because of the secrecy

practiced by previous governments.

It also said that some key documents appeared to have gone missing over the years, amid media reports that an internal order had been given in the past to discard them.

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