

Former Japanese general reveals plans for war with China over Taiwan

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6 December 2023

In an interview on November 30 with *Nikkei Asia*, a retired Japanese general declared that should a military conflict break out with China over Taiwan, Japan would play a role similar to that of Poland in the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. The former general also declared that Tokyo should openly grant the US permission to station nuclear weapons in Japan, a highly provocative move that would only heighten tensions and the risk of a nuclear conflict with Beijing.

The statements by retired Lieutenant General Koichiro Bansho reveal not only that Tokyo is playing a central part in Washington's war drive against China, but that the two are actively conspiring to instigate a conflict over Taiwan in the same manner that the US and its European allies provoked the war in Ukraine. This means upending the status quo established by the "One China" policy, which has governed cross-strait relations between the mainland and Taiwan for decades.

Bansho is the former commander of Japan's Western Army, a section of the Ground Self-Defense Force. The Western Army oversees military operations Kyushu and in Okinawa Prefecture in southern Japan adjacent to the Chinese mainland. Bansho is also the new distinguished senior fellow at the Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA. While the organisation and its affiliate in Japan describe themselves as "non-partisan," they are in fact closely connected with the government in Tokyo and promote closer relations with Washington.

During the US-led war against Russia in Ukraine, the US and NATO have provided arms to the far-right Zelensky government in Kiev through Poland. In a war with China over Taiwan, according to Bansho, Japan would similarly funnel weapons and supplies from the US and its allies to the island. He stated, "The

Philippines will likely not take on such a role, and Australia or Hawaii are too far."

In making this declaration, Bansho is effectively stating that the US, Japan, and other members of the "international community" will not only go to war over Taiwan, but are actively seeking to provoke such a conflict with Beijing by challenging the "One China" policy.

This policy states that Taiwan is a part of China, with both the US and Japan formally adhering to it by only diplomatically recognising Beijing. Having ended relations with Taipei in 1979, Washington also implemented a policy of "strategic ambiguity," not guaranteeing military backing to Taiwan in the event of war. This was meant to deter any declaration of formal independence from Taipei while discouraging Beijing from retaking the island.

However, faced with China's economic rise, US imperialism is working to eliminate China as a competitor and carve up the country, beginning with Taiwan, thereby reducing the mainland to semi-colonial status to better exploit China's working class and resources. The promotion of war plans, therefore, will only embolden US and Japanese allies in Taiwan to push for independence, which Beijing has pledged not to allow. Should fighting break out, Washington would seize on it to launch its long-planned war on the Chinese mainland, fraudulently claiming it necessary to "defend" Taiwan.

As part of this agenda, both imperialist powers have stepped up their provocations in the region, carrying out war games and naval transits in the region on a now regular basis. Japan is also deepening its military relations with countries like South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia as part of US efforts to build a system of alliances to surround and threaten China.

If war were to break out, Tokyo would become an active participant despite any claims to the contrary. Bansho called on Japan to prepare to participate in a blockade of China by obstructing the latter's access to the Pacific Ocean at chokepoints in the Ryukyu Island chain, located in the East China Sea. He stated, "For instance, if mines were scattered in the waters, it would be a hassle to remove them. If anti-air defenses were deployed, it would be very difficult [for China] to establish air superiority."

Furthermore, both the US and Japan are increasingly militarising the Ryukyu Islands, which already hosts approximately 30,000 US soldiers on Okinawa. According to Bansho, "The US is planning to disperse ground-based midrange missiles, previously banned by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, across the first island chain, including Japan's southwest islands, to counter China, which is rapidly building up its nuclear force." The US withdrew from the INF treaty in 2019, specifically citing the need to target China.

As part of this, Bansho called on Japan to rethink its public assertion that it does not allow nuclear weapons into the country, which is considered one of Japan's "three non-nuclear principles." The other two pledge Tokyo to neither produce nor possess nuclear weapons.

He stated in regards to the missiles, "The US has not specified whether these are conventional missiles or nuclear missiles, and they do not need to." He added, "But for Japan to say 'please don't bring them' in the name of the three non-nuclear principles does not advance Japan's national interest."

This is not an off-the-cuff remark, but demonstrates that discussions on openly bringing US nuclear weapons into Japan are advancing. Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe publicly initiated the debate on the issue in February 2022. After that, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party began discussions on the matter, though it has largely been hidden from the public. Ultimately, it is a step towards Japan, the only country attacked with atomic bombs, acquiring its own nuclear weapons.

Tokyo made clear decades ago that is not constrained by the three non-nuclear principles. First outlined in 1967, they were never legally binding. A 1969 memorandum declassified by the US in 2017 confirmed that Tokyo officially gave consent to Washington to

bring nuclear weapons into Okinawa on a so-called "emergency basis."

The placement of nuclear weapons in the East China Sea would not lessen the danger of war or defend Taiwan or Japan, but seriously heighten the risk of a conflict breaking out. Washington's complete support for the genocide of Palestinians by Israel also demonstrates that no amount of destruction will give US imperialism pause.

Tokyo is also rapidly accelerating its agenda of remilitarisation falsely claiming it is necessary for "self-defense." This includes passing military legislation in 2015 allowing Japan's Self-Defense Forces to go to war alongside an ally and plans for the de facto doubling of its military budget by 2027. Japan is acquiring offensive weaponry, including cruise missiles, while also transforming its existing huge "helicopter carriers" into aircraft carriers capable of launching F-35 fighter jets.

All of these measures have long been considered banned under Article 9 of Japan's constitution, which explicitly states that Tokyo is barred from maintaining a military or waging war overseas. The claim that these measures are necessary for "self-defense" runs roughshod over Article 9 as well as the widespread anti-war sentiment within the Japanese population.



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