

Japan shows displeasure over 'comfort women' monument in U.S.

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TOKYO (Kyodo) — The Japanese government has expressed its displeasure to U.S. officials over a plan to unveil in California next week a monument dedicated to Korean “comfort women” forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during World War II, Japan-U.S. diplomatic sources said Wednesday.

Japan has called the envisioned move by the U.S.-South Korean civic group to erect the monument on a public lot at a park in Glendale as going against its views on the comfort women issue and urged local officials to take appropriate measures, the sources said.

Japan has repeatedly claimed the issue was settled by a Japan-South Korea treaty in 1965 that normalized diplomatic ties and has provided compensation through a private fund. But the former comfort women have continued to call for official compensation.

The sources said the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles conveyed displeasure to officials of the city of Glendale and the Glendale City Council through such means as letters.

The city council has approved putting up the monument which news reports say is likely to be a replica of a statue set up in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul in December 2011.

That statue, which shows a teenage Korean girl in traditional clothing, had reignited attention on the issue of comfort women, which is a euphemistic term for sex slaves, and prompted Japan to protest and call for the statue's removal.

Japan initially hesitated about whether to make its displeasure known to the United States amid worries it may seen by the country and the international community as overreacting and not remorseful of its wartime past, a Japanese government source said.

“Japan does not want to make the comfort women a diplomatic issue,” a government official said, adding, “We’re not seeking the monument’s removal.”

Foreign Ministry Press Secretary Kuni Sato said at a news conference Wednesday that Japan has made utmost efforts to address the issue by creating a fund to compensate the victims.

The private fund, the Asian Women's Fund, was created in 1995 but some former comfort women have rejected the money.

The women and their supporters criticized the fund as an attempt by the Japanese government to skirt responsibility for state redress. The fund was disbanded in 2007.

In a statement by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono in 1993, Japan acknowledged and apologized for the forced recruitment of women into sexual servitude.

Compensation for comfort women remains one of the longstanding, thorny historical issues related to Japan's 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

Kyodo News, July 25, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130725p2g00m0dm033000c.html>

San Francisco hits sex-slave remarks; Hashimoto defiant

OSAKA — Osaka Mayor and Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party) co-leader Toru Hashimoto remained defiant Wednesday in the face of a fresh round of domestic and international criticism over his comments that Japan's wartime "comfort women" system of sex slavery was necessary at the time.

On Tuesday, the 11-member San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the city's legislative branch, unanimously adopted a resolution demanding Hashimoto retract his comments and calling on San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee, in his capacity as mayor of Osaka's sister city, to send the petition to Hashimoto and the Osaka Municipal Assembly. The resolution will also be sent to U.S. President Barack Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry and members of Congress.

"The board of supervisors strongly condemns the attitude and statements of Hashimoto justifying the state-sponsored 'comfort women' system, which forced hundreds of thousands of Asian women into sexual servitude for the Japanese military, and denying the historical veracity of such atrocities committed against women and girls in countries occupied by Japan throughout East and Southeast Asia."

The board "urges Hashimoto to publicly retract his statements and apologize to the survivors of the Japanese government-sponsored 'comfort women' system of forced sexual slavery," the resolution says.

It also criticizes Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Cabinet for their own views on the matter.

"Amnesty International . . . attacked Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who became prime minister on Dec. 26, 2012, and nine future members of his Cabinet, when they jointly signed an advertisement in the Nov. 4, 2012, New Jersey Star Ledger that 'denied (that the) Japanese Imperial Army forced women into military sexual slavery during World War II,' " it states.

The San Francisco resolution came a day after Nippon Ishin co-leader Shintaro Ishihara blasted Hashimoto, not for the content of his comfort women remarks, which Ishihara basically shares, but for the political damage to the party the comments have done. Some media polls show Nippon Ishin's approval rate at less than 2 percent.

In an interview with Kyodo on Tuesday, Ishihara said the controversy was causing great trouble for

the party and suggested Hashimoto might be finished as a politician.

But on Wednesday, Hashimoto indicated he would not retract his comments.

Nippon Ishin's platform for the Upper House election is also defiant, saying that, "as for the so-called 'comfort women' issue, we need to clarify the historic facts and protect the dignity and honor of Japan and Japanese citizens."

"I don't think my comments were a mistake, and I will continue to explain them to voters," Hashimoto told reporters in Osaka.

Eric Johnston, *Japan Times* Staff Writer, June 20, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/06/20/national/san-francisco-hits-sex-slave-remarks-hashimoto-defiant/#.Ucejd9hjbRY>

San Francisco rebuffs Osaka mayor's visit over 'comfort women' remark

OSAKA (Kyodo) — The city of San Francisco sent a letter to Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto in May seeking to stop a planned visit amid the furor caused by his controversial remarks on Japan's wartime system of military brothels, Osaka city officials said Monday.

Even after his remarks drew flak at home and abroad, Hashimoto was still keen on pushing ahead with his scheduled trip to San Francisco and New York. But the letter indicates that the U.S. officials' hostile stance pushed him to cancel his trip.

The letter was sent by a senior San Francisco city official who served as liaison over Hashimoto's trip. It was received by Osaka City on May 22 and translated immediately for the mayor but not made public.

The letter stated that it was the position of the San Francisco city office that it could not block the mayor from coming to the United States in a private capacity, but would not treat the matter as an official visit or as a courtesy call.

Expecting protestors everywhere he went, the letter said the city would have to shoulder heavy security costs and noted his trip could hurt Osaka City's image.

Warning that the people of San Francisco did not welcome the Osaka mayor's U.S. trip, the letter concluded by saying that it would be desirable to postpone the trip considering security and Osaka's economic development.

The letter said its contents reflect the personal view of the senior city official, but sources familiar with the matter believe the gesture was done out of consideration for the sister city ties between Osaka and San Francisco which date back more than 50 years.

Hashimoto, who co-heads the opposition Japan Restoration Party, planned to visit San Francisco and New York from June 10 to 16 to meet with U.S. officials as part of efforts to deepen city-level exchanges.

Hashimoto subsequently said he decided to cancel the trip due to the burden on the people he planned to visit.

Kyodo News, June 11, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130611p2g00m0dm040000c.html>

Diary written by Korean worker at comfort stations in Burma, Singapore found

SEOUL — A diary written by a Korean man working at wartime brothels in Burma (current Myanmar) and Singapore during World War II has recently been found, a discovery that could shed light on the truth behind the role of the Imperial Japanese Army in controversial comfort stations for Japanese soldiers.

The Korean man took part in the “4th comfort corps” that left Busan Port on the Korean Peninsula in 1942. He returned home in late 1944. His diary is the first of its kind found in Japan, South Korea and elsewhere. On the issue of so-called “comfort women” for the Imperial Japanese Army during the war, many of the testimonies were made several decades after the end of the war. The diary written by the Korean man — a third person who had actually witnessed wartime brothels — is important material to pave the way for cool-headed discussions on the thorny issue.

The diary was discovered by Ahn Byong Jik, professor emeritus at Seoul University, who specializes in modern Korean economic history and is knowledgeable about the comfort women issue. A museum in the suburbs of Seoul found a diary and other materials at a second-hand bookshop about 10 years ago. Ahn found the diary while combing through the materials. Kyoto University professor Kazuo Hori and Kobe University professor Kan Kimura are currently translating the diary into Japanese.

The diary was written by the man from Kyongsang-namdo on the western part of the Korean Peninsula while working at the wartime brothels from 1943 to 1944. It was written in Chinese characters, katakana and Korean alphabets.

The man was born in 1905 and died in 1979. His diary written from 1922 to 1957 can be seen today. Nevertheless, the part of his diary which covered eight years during which the man could have been engaged in recruiting comfort women has not been found.

In the diary, the man wrote on July 10, 1943, “At this time last year, I boarded a ship at Busan Wharf and took a first step on the southbound trip.” On April 6, 1944, he wrote, “When a comfort squad left Busan two years ago, Mr. Tsumura who came as the head of the fourth comfort corps was working (in a market).”

A research report compiled in November 1945 by U.S. soldiers who questioned managers of comfort stations caught in Burma says that 703 comfort women and about 90 business operators left Busan Port on July 10, 1942. The accuracy of his diary is backed up by the fact that the date of their departure is the same.

Ahn says, “It is certain that the records compiled by the U.S. military refer to the fourth comfort corps. The existence of comfort corps suggests that comfort women were conscripted as part of

systematic wartime mobilization.” As opposed to the view generally held in South Korea that comfort women were forcibly conscripted by Japanese military and police, Ahn says, “Comfort women were recruited by business operators in Korea, and there was no need for the military to abduct them.”

In the diary, the man touched on relationships between comfort stations, comfort women and the military. He wrote on July 19, 1943, “Two comfort stations that belong to a flying corps were handed over to the logistics command.” On July 29, 1943, he wrote, “I’ve heard that Haruyo and Hiroko who had left (a comfort station) to have conjugal relations (with their husbands) returned to Kinseikan as comfort women again.”

The Korean man also wrote in his diary on Aug. 13, 1943, “Comfort women went to see a movie, saying that the railway corps will run a movie.” He wrote on Oct. 27, 1944, “I was asked by a comfort woman to remit 600 yen, so I withdrew her deposit and sent it from a central post office.”

The issue of so-called “comfort women” became a major social issue after a group of South Korean women demanded the governments of Japan and South Korea shed light on the truth, apologize and compensate them in 1990. The Japanese government acknowledged in August 1993 that the then Imperial Japanese Army had been involved either directly or indirectly in setting up comfort stations and transporting comfort women.

In his statement issued at that time, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono offered an apology on behalf of the government, saying, “Undeniably, this was an act, with the involvement of the military authorities of the day, that severely injured the honor and dignity of many women.”

But in 2007, the first Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe endorsed its written reply to the Diet which read, “There are no descriptions seen in the materials discovered by the government that directly show so-called abductions by the military or by the authorities.”

Mainichi Simbun, August 7, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130807p2a00m0na020000c.html>

Japan not to review stance on ‘comfort women’: gov’t spokesman

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Japan will not review its stance on the “comfort women” issue, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said Tuesday, rejecting for now a move suggested by Shinzo Abe before he became prime minister.

Suga’s remarks came amid criticism not only in Asia but also the United States of Tokyo’s stance on Japan’s wartime conduct, with former U.S. Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer saying last week that reviewing Japan’s 1993 statement on the issue of sexual slavery would damage Japanese interests in the United States.

The statement, issued by then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono, acknowledged the Japanese military’s responsibility for forced recruitment of women into sexual servitude and apologized to the victims.

Saying the Abe government does not wish to turn the controversy over the matter into a political or

diplomatic issue, Suga told a news conference that Tokyo “has not said it would consider a review.”

At a separate news conference, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said Abe shares the views expressed in a 1995 statement issued by then Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama that apologized for Japan’s wartime aggression in Asia.

“At a certain period during the previous great war, Japan caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations,” Kishida said.

“The Japanese government has accepted the facts of history in a spirit of humility, expressed once again our feelings of deep remorse and our heartfelt apology, and expressed our feelings of profound mourning for all victims, both at home and abroad, of the previous great war. And Prime Minister Abe shares the same view,” he added.

Kishida said the Abe government intends to double its efforts to carefully explain its stance on history to the international community.

China and South Korea have sharply reacted to Abe’s recent remarks on Japan’s wartime aggression. Abe suggested last month that the definition of the word “invasion” varies from country to country, and that his Cabinet has not necessarily inherited the so-called Murayama statement in its entirety.

Kyodo News, May 7, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130507p2g00m0dm078000c.html>

Japan pulls back on denials of WWII sex slavery

TOKYO (AP) — Japan has acknowledged that it conducted only a limited investigation before claiming there was no official evidence that its imperial troops coerced Asian women into sexual slavery before and during World War II.

A parliamentary statement signed Tuesday by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe acknowledged a document produced by a postwar international military tribunal containing a Japanese soldier’s testimony about abducting Chinese women as military sex slaves.

That evidence was not included in Japan’s only investigation of the issue, in 1991-1993. Tuesday’s parliamentary statement said documents showing forcible sex slavery may still exist.

Abe has acknowledged so-called “comfort women” existed but denied they were coerced into prostitution, citing a lack of official evidence. He stated that view as prime minister in 2007, and reiterated it in February after he regained power.

AP, May 7, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130508p2g00m0dm104000c.html>

