

Japan: Exclusion of nonnuclear principles from Prime Minister Abe's Hiroshima speech causes stir

Friday 7 August 2015, by [YOSHIDA Reiji](#) (Date first published: 6 August 2015).

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's failure to include a pledge to observe the country's three nonnuclear principles in the annual memorial speech on Thursday remembering the victims of the Hiroshima atomic bomb attack is causing speculation the exclusion may be political.

In 2014 and 2013, Abe himself reconfirmed the pledge repeated by past prime ministers to "firmly maintain" the principles — of not possessing, producing or permitting nuclear weapons on Japanese territory — in the annual speech in the city that was devastated by an atomic bomb dropped by a U.S. plane on Aug. 6, 1945.

After the speech on Thursday, senior government officials downplayed the exclusion, pointing out the prime minister in the same speech emphasized his determination to make every effort to abolish nuclear weapons around the world. "(Maintaining) the three nonnuclear principles is a matter of course. It's unshaken," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga during a daily news conference.

Even if Abe didn't have any political intention, as Suga alleged, the exclusion of the phrase was probably ill-timed politically.

A day earlier, Defense Minister Gen Nakatani generated controversy by saying the government's security bills could theoretically allow Japan to transport weapons for foreign or multinational force overseas, including nuclear weapons. Nakatani said, in reality, Japan would never carry out such a mission because the country firmly maintains the three nonnuclear principles.

But opposition lawmakers pointed out the principles are not enshrined in a law and the security bills do not exclude the transport of weapons of mass destruction for foreign militaries.

The three nonnuclear principles, first outlined by then Prime Minister Eisaku Sato in 1967, were endorsed in a resolution by the Diet in a 1971.

Successive mayors of Nagasaki, a city that was attacked by the U.S. on Aug. 9, 1945, with an atomic bomb, have called on the central government to legislate the principles into a law since 1986 in their annual memorial speeches honoring the victims.

When asked during Thursday's news conference if the principles should be enshrined into law, Suga deflected the question, saying they have been thoroughly observed.

Abe was also criticized for the speech he gave at the 2014 ceremony in Hiroshima. The text of that speech was virtually identical to the one he gave in 2013.

“Last year, (Abe’s speech) was criticized as a copy-and-paste job,” said a high-ranking government official. “If this year’s speech had been the same, he would have been criticized again.” Hiroshima was the first city attacked using a nuclear weapon.

The massive explosion and radiation generated by the bomb killed an estimated 140,000 people by the end of 1945

REIJI YOSHIDA

P.S.

* “Exclusion of nonnuclear principles from Abe’s Hiroshima speech causes stir”. [The Japan Times](#), 06/08/2015.