

# Chronological: Japan-Hawaii Economic Council 27th General Meeting

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# Dan Inouye

U.S. SENATOR FROM HAWAII



JAPAN - HAWAII  
ECONOMIC COUNCIL  
27th GENERAL MEETING  
August 2, 1998  
Manele Bay Hotel, Lanai

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However, if I may note that about three years ago, the present Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska and I traveled to the capitols of most of the important Asian countries in the Pacific Rim. This low profiled and unpublicized trip was made at the suggestion of the Department of Defense. This trip was taken after the U.S. Pacific Fleet and our Armed Forces, at the suggestion of the government of the Philippines, vacated Subic Bay and Clark Air Base. The subject that we discussed with the senior leaders of these nations related to whether our military presence in Asia was desirable. We visited the capitals of Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Vietnam, China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. And in every case, the response was "please do not leave." The clear message was that our military presence was necessary to maintain political, military and economic stability. Having said that, may I now proceed to an area that I have been asked to touch upon... the attitude of Congress and the foreign policy of the United States as they relate to our relationship with Asian countries, and more particularly, with Japan.

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Secondly, over the years, I have sadly noted that many of my colleagues in the House and Senate have very little, if any, appreciation and knowledge of Asian history. This should not come as a big surprise. In fact, most scholars would suggest that Americans are generally not too keen about history. A few years ago, a poll was taken among high school seniors, and it was noted that the majority of the seniors did not know the significance of December 7, 1941. On the other hand, in reading the accounts of the recent return of Hong Kong to China, I noted articles suggesting that the majority of the people of Hong Kong were knowledgeable about the Opium Wars. This is an event that more often than not, is disregarded in American history books. I found that, as a general rule, Asians have longer memories than Americans.

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As to the economic policy in Japan, I am certain it is no secret that I know very little, if any, about this subject. However, as one who has followed the activities of post World War II Japan, I note that the Japanese have been extremely pragmatic and sufficiently disciplined to cope with, and overcome economic problems that have confronted them during the past five decades. One cannot help but look upon with amazement and respect for any people who can, after experiencing devastating defeat, emerge as a major economic power of the world in -- automobile production, shipping, banking, electronics, telecommunications, etc.

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**Secondly, over the years, I have sadly noted that many of my colleagues in the House and Senate have very little, if any, appreciation and knowledge of Asian history. This should not come as a big surprise. In fact, most scholars would suggest that Americans are generally not too keen about history. A few years ago, a poll was taken among high school seniors, and it was noted that the majority of the seniors did not know the significance of December 7, 1941. On the other hand, in reading the accounts of the recent return of Hong Kong to China, I noted articles suggesting that the majority of**



**the people of Hong Kong were knowledgeable about the Opium Wars. This is an event that more often than not, is disregarded in American history books. I found that, as a general rule, Asians have longer memories than Americans.**

**Recently, during a special journey to Pyongyang, followed by a visit to Seoul, one of the interesting aspects of our discussions with their contemporary parliamentary leaders was the occasional mention of the Japanese invasion of Korea by the forces of Hideyoshi. That invasion occurred more than 400 hundred years ago. But, for some of the political leaders, it is still fresh in their memories. They recalled the demand of Hideyoshi that his troops cut off the ears of Koreans, and send them back to Japan to prove to Hideyoshi that they were militarily active and successful. Incidentally, these ears are buried in Kyoto, and prominently marked, so that visitors would know what is buried under this mound. The Koreans do not look upon this as an act of friendship. And obviously, if they recall Hideyoshi, then as expected they most certainly recall the occupation of Korea by the Japanese during the period preceding the end of World War II. I was reminded of the women who were forced into prostitution. I was reminded by our hosts of the men who were sent to places like Sakahlin Island to work in Japanese mines. And today, still find themselves abandoned there.**

**One of the reasons cited by Southeast Asian leaders for the importance of American military presence was the fear that without our military presence, the Japanese might be tempted to rebuild their military and possibly become a major nuclear power nation. One can argue that, that assessment is pure nonsense. But, I can assure you that these discussions were carried out in great earnestness. I cite these little vignettes to suggest that I am convinced that our military presence in Asia is absolutely necessary during this period of our history to ensure that stability exists, and to permit all of these nations to develop and prosper in a peaceful manner.**

**At this present time, our official U.S. policy is to encourage the reunification of North and South Korea. Most of my colleagues in the Congress are not aware that if one was to carry on private discussions with the leaders of China and Japan, one would soon get the impression that they do not support reunification. They are very much concerned with the impact that immediate reunification would have in the fragile balance that now exist between China, Japan and the Koreas. I am certain that I need not be more graphic than that.**

**I am aware that the Japanese government has demonstrated its support of our military presence in Asia in a way that is quite different from that of our European allies. Today, even during this painful economic crisis, the Japanese government continues to underwrite the cost of our military presence in and around Japan. The Japanese government pays for all the military infrastructure and the construction of housing, airbases, and office buildings for our military. It also underwrites the cost of the employment of Japanese nationals in various activities such as, the commissary and the PX.**

**When the people of Okinawa were unhappy with certain U.S. military activities such as, the artillery firing on the island, the Japanese government offered a firing range at the base of the sacred Mt. Fuji.**

**Those of us who have been called upon to make decisions on military matters in the Congress have noted Japan's spirit of cooperation. This arrangement has made it less expensive for our tax payers to keep our military in Japan than to have them based on American soil.**

**As to the economic policy in Japan, I am certain it is no secret that I know very little, if any, about this subject. However, as one who has followed the activities of post World War II Japan, I note that the Japanese have been extremely pragmatic and sufficiently disciplined to cope with, and overcome economic problems that have confronted them during the past five decades. One cannot help but look upon with amazement and respect for any people who can, after experiencing devastating defeat, emerge as a major economic power of the world in -- automobile production, shipping, banking, electronics, telecommunications, etc.**

**Therefore, I feel confident that the crisis of this moment will, in a relatively short time, be another historic footnote. With each crisis, I have noted that the Japanese have emerged wiser and economically stronger. For example, when the Japanese government heard the loud and harsh criticism about the imbalance of Japanese automobiles sold in the United States as compared with American automobiles sold in Japan, it immediately began calling upon leaders of industry to establish manufacturing plants in the United States. Today, we are constantly reminded by television and radio that certain models and parts of Japanese automobiles are manufactured in the United States by American workers. I would think that after this crisis, despite the disappointment and pain, the Japanese government, working together with**

**the business leaders will resolve their financial problems and come forth, as they have done in the past, a bit wiser and stronger.**

**My concern of this moment is not the economic crisis in Asia. I am confident that the Asian countries will resolve these problems with, and, if necessary, without our help. My concern is, notwithstanding our present healthy economy, are we prepared to work with stronger Asian economies that will most certainly develop in the next decade? Do we know enough about Asia to deal properly with China? Are we prepared to give a helping hand to countries like Indonesia? Most Americans have no idea where the Malacca Straits are located, and nor are they aware of the importance of it. But, for those of us who know a little about the Malacca Straits -- we would want very much to have this important maritime lifeline in the hands of a friendly government.**

**In pondering over this question on whether the United States is prepared to deal with Asia, I would hope that our policy makers will begin to be a bit more pragmatic and depart from the present Eurocentric attitudes that are rather prevalent in the State Department and Department of Defense. I hope that my colleagues will understand that "the action" is in the Pacific. It is, at the least, equally important as the Atlantic. The problems and promises of the next century are in the Pacific. I will do my best to convince my colleagues of the importance of Asia, but it requires more than one member of Congress to bring this about.**

**Today, our relationship with Japan is a good one. But, I believe that in the next decade, it will be a challenging one. I hope we are prepared and will be able to meet this challenge.**