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MACARTHUR DOCUMENT REPORTS IMPERIAL JAPANESE MILITARY'S "SANCTION" OF COMFORT WOMEN BROTHELS

By Dennis Halpin

An August 1, 2013 editorial in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Japan's largest circulation daily, carried the title "Comfort Women Allegations Distort Japanese History."¹ The greatest distortion here is the amnesia of an influential portion of Japanese society in addressing World War II history. Whatever moral high ground Imperial Japan sought to maintain regarding its motivation for war was lost forever on September 27, 1940 when its representative signed the [Tripartite Pact](#) in Berlin. Tokyo thus joined the German Nazis and Italian Fascists in the original "Axis of Evil." Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso's recent statement that Tokyo could learn from Nazi Germany with regard to constitutional reform² only underscores this lack of comprehension over the moral significance of the most horrendous conflagration of the twentieth century and Japan's shared role in it.

A document was provided to then-U.S. House International Relations Committee Chairman Henry Hyde in 2006 which outlines "the sexual slavery" of the comfort women system. This report dated November 15, 1945 and "published for the information of all concerned by command of General MacArthur" provides details of Imperial Japanese military involvement in Korea, Burma and transit points in-between in the comfort women system. The report—"Amenities in the Japanese Armed Forces"—was declassified on March 6, 1992. This report refutes the claims of right-wing circles in Japan that the comfort women system was an entirely private enterprise without official involvement by the Japanese military. One of the report's conclusions is that "**the establishment of brothels under strict regulation is sanctioned by military authorities in any areas where there are large numbers of troops.**"³

Chairman Hyde had hesitated to challenge a major U.S. ally—Japan—regarding what was reported in the draft comfort women resolution as a gross human rights violation. Hyde had received a personal phone call from a very ill Illinois Democratic Member Lane Evans (who like Hyde was retiring from the House at the end of 2006)

asking that Hyde, in the spirit of a now largely absent bipartisanship, do a last favor for him by conducting a Committee markup of Evans' comfort women resolution. Similar resolutions had languished in previous sessions of Congress.

Chairman Hyde said he needed proof before acting on Evans' request and the Bush Administration sent over this declassified document which Chairman Hyde viewed as "the smoking gun" on the comfort women issue. On September 13, 2006, in the waning days of the 109th Congress, Hyde conducted the markup of H. Res. 759, the first official consideration by a U.S. Congressional body of the comfort women issue. Then-Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert, lobbied by former Republican House Minority Leader Bob Michel on behalf of the Japanese Government, declined to bring the Committee-reported resolution to the House Floor and it died with the 109th Congress.

The Democrats took the House majority in 2007 and quickly moved on the comfort women issue. Congressman Mike Honda introduced an updated version of the Evans resolution to the 110th Congress on January 31, 2007. Then-Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment Subcommittee Chairman Eni Faleomavaega conducted the first-ever Congressional hearing on the comfort women issue, with two Korean witnesses and one ethnic Dutch witness from Australia on February 15. Future President of the Republic of Korea Park Geun-hye was in the audience for that hearing. Human rights icon and then-House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Lantos brought it up for Committee markup in June, and Speaker Pelosi moved it to the Floor where it passed by voice vote on July 30, 2007.⁴ The rest is history.

The report in question, issued by General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Forces, states:

(1) A prisoner of war, a civilian brothel-owner, captured with his wife and twenty army prostitutes

near Waingmaw (Burma) on 10 August 1944, stated: “Prisoner of war, his wife and sister-in-law had made some money as restaurant keepers in Keijo (Seoul), Korea, but their trade declining, they looked for an opportunity to make more money and applied to the Army Headquarters in Keijo for permission to take ‘comfort girls’ from Korea to Burma. According to prisoner of war, **the suggestion originated from Army Headquarters** and was passed to a number of similar Japanese ‘business men’ in Korea.”

Prisoner of war purchased 22 Korean girls, paying their families 300 to 1000 yen according to the personality, looks and age of the girl. These 22 girls were of ages from 19 to 31. They became the sole property of prisoner of war and the Army made no profits from them. Headquarters Korean Army gave him a letter addressed to **all military headquarters of the Japanese army**, requesting them **to furnish any assistance he might require, transport, rations, medical attention, etc....** prisoner of war and his wife, with their 22 girls, embarked at Fusan (Pusan) on 10 July 1942... **Free passage tickets were provided by Army headquarters**, but prisoner of war paid for meals during the voyage.⁵

The report documents that the ship from Fusan “called at Formosa (Taiwan), where 22 girls bound for Singapore were taken on board.” Once they arrived in Burma, the **“Prisoner of war’s group was attached to the 114 Infantry Regiment.”** They encountered “21 Chinese girls who had been purchased in Canton (Guangzhou)” and “Japanese girls.” The report indicates that **“the passage and medical treatment was provided by Army authorities;”** the food was purchased by the brothel owner **“with the assistance of Army supply depots.”** The report also notes the presence of Japanese military police (Kempeitai, Imperial Japan’s equivalent of its German ally’s secret service) inside the comfort women brothels:

During their visits to the brothels, troops rarely discussed military subjects, preferring to escape from their normal military surroundings. Prisoner

of war said he had never had a chance to overhear any interesting military secrets, and considered this due to **the presence of military police**, and that the men were afraid to talk freely.⁶

This account of the provision of transportation by Japanese military authorities indicates that Imperial Japan was guilty of human trafficking. Furthermore, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, an advocate of “women’s rights are human rights” during her 1995 appearance at the Beijing United Nations 4th World Conference on Women, referred to comfort women as “enforced sex slaves” at a closed-door State Department briefing in the summer of 2012.

The report cited above was compiled by the Army Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. It was a joint Australian-U.S. intelligence agency which served as a centralized allied intelligence unit for the translation of intercepted Japanese communications, interrogations, and negotiations in the Pacific Theater of Operations between September 1942 and December 1945. In this case, the military intelligence officers’ recorded interviews with captured prisoners of war involved in the comfort women system in wartime Burma contradicts the claim made in the June 14, 2007 *Washington Post* advertisement sponsored by the right-wing Japanese organization, The Society for the Dissemination of Historic Fact, that “no historic document has ever been found by historians or research organizations that positively demonstrates that women were forced against their will into prostitution by the Japanese army.”

Would the *Yomiuri Shimbun* continue to claim “a distorted view of historical facts” despite documentation issued under the authority of the Gaijin Shogun Douglas MacArthur himself? Would the paper still assert that this all involved “false information,” given Henry Hyde’s “smoking gun” comment? And would it still call sexual slavery “an exaggerated phrase” in light of the statement made by one of the leading women’s rights advocates in the world today, Hillary Rodham Clinton herself? MacArthur, Hyde and Clinton represent a very formidable trio.

(Endnotes)

¹ “Comfort women allegations distort Japanese history,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 1, 2013.

² Jethro Mullen, “Japanese government minister’s Nazi remarks cause furor,” CNN International, August 2, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/02/world/asia/japan-politician-nazi-comment>.

³ Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS), Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), “Amenities in the Japanese Armed Forces,” Research Report 120, November 15, 1945, p. 127. (Emphasis added.)

⁴ H.Res. 121, 110th Congress, July 30, 2007.

⁵ ATIS, p. 17. (Emphasis added.)

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18. (Emphasis added.)

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