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BACKGROUND PAPER ON BONINS

TOPICS

1. United States Control of the Bonin Islands and Public Statements of Policy.
2. Economic Capabilities of the Islands with Relation to Repatriation.
3. American Military Bases in the Bonin and Volcano Islands.
4. Citizenship and Ancestry of the Islanders.
5. Significance of the Repatriation Issue in Japan.
6. Monetary Settlement as an Alternative to Repatriation.

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3. AMERICAN MILITARY BASES IN THE BONIN AND VOLCANO ISLANDS

The United States occupied the islands at the end of the Second World War. Prior to this the Japanese had maintained a large base on Chichi Jima, the largest island in the Bonin group and possessing the only good harbor. At one time during the war there were reportedly 25,000 Japanese troops stationed there. The Japanese covered the island with an impressive network of roads, built an elaborate system of tunnels, reservoirs, and caves (some were copper-lined and equipped with air-conditioning), and constructed fuel dumps and extensive buildings. When the United States Marines landed on Chichi Jima they destroyed some of the installations and quantities of supplies. Japan's accomplishments serve as a warning of what could be developed if these islands were to fall into unfriendly hands.

At present the United States has a small Naval detachment of 13 - three officers and ten enlisted men (all have families with them) - stationed on Chichi Jima. Their principal function seems to be to act as a military government and within their limited capabilities to maintain and improve the naval station. There is an excellent harbor which can accommodate large ships. Permanent installations seem to consist primarily of leftover Japanese installations - one damaged but usable seaplane ramp, fuel storage tanks, the headquarters building (a former Japanese weather station), the commanding officer's house (also a former Japanese Government building) - and some newly built cottages for the medical officer and the enlisted men. It seems apparent that this is primarily a "stand-by" base and not intended for active use at the present time.

The other island with United States military installations is Iwo Jima in the Volcano Islands where the Air Force has a base. Here there is an airfield (area - 5,056 acres) with hard-surface runway capable of handling C-124's, and with fuel storage and refueling facilities. The station complement is approximately 35 officers and 180 airmen.