

No 2877

Def. Doc. No. 1400-J-6

Excerpt from Foreign Relations of the United States
Japan: 1931-1941 Vol. II

Page 499

Memorandum of a Conversation

[Washington,] July 5, 1941

The Secretary having directed that Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Ballantine endeavor to see the associates of the Japanese Ambassador, Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Ballantine ascertained that Mr. Wikawa was out of town, and, as Colonel Iwakuro does not speak English, after consulting Mr. Welles, made an appointment to see the Japanese Ambassador.

. . . .

Page 501

Mr. Hamilton said that a third point which he wished to bring up related to press reports to the effect that Japan was planning to acquire naval and air bases in French Indochina and Thailand to enable Japan to threaten the Burma Road, Singapore, and the Dutch East Indies. Mr. Hamilton read to the Ambassador a press clipping from the New York Times of this morning containing a press despatch from Shanghai on the subject (attached). He asked the Ambassador how does the Japanese Government expect to go forward with a peace settlement for the Pacific area while reports indicated that Japan is moving in exactly the opposite direction? Mr. Hamilton suggested that it would be advantageous at this juncture to have either a prompt denial or frank confirmation of those reports.

The Ambassador replied that the Japanese Government was faced with the necessity of preparing itself against possible eventualities. He observed that one had only to take up the paper to read suggestions by commentators in the United States on plans for the encirclement of Japan; that America was aiding Chiang Kai-shek in various ways, including the despatch of American pilots to Chungking; that American supplies were being sent to Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies; that there were visits of American squadrons to Australia which to a naval man like himself were of greater significance than mere courtesy visits; and that commentators were discussing the prospects of American aid to the Russian Far East and of the acquisition of American air bases in Siberia. He alluded also to the possibility of an executive order being issued stopping the shipment from the United States of petroleum products to Japan, and he remarked that, if Japan should thus be shut off from American sources of oil, Japan must obtain them elsewhere and that, under the circumstances, it was necessary for Japan to take appropriate preparatory measures.