

Letter from Hyogo Council Against A & H Bombs, Kobe, Japan

VANA received a letter from The Hyogo Council Against A & H bombs in Kobe, Japan asking for endorsement of their stand in denying nuclear armed ships entry to their port.

Dear Friends,

20 February 2003

On 18 March, we will be celebrating the 28th anniversary of the nuclear-free "Kobe Hoshiki," a local government procedure banning nuclear weapons from the Port of Kobe. Last year's anniversary meeting received 120 messages from abroad, which was most encouraging for the citizens of Kobe, as well as the 300 participants at the meeting.

It would encourage us greatly if you were to send messages as we celebrate this year's anniversary.

As many of you know, the Port of Kobe insists that any warship entering the port must submit non-nuclear certification, that the ship is not carrying nuclear weapons. This is called "Kobe Hoshiki," or Nuclear-free Kobe formula. U.S. warships have been refused entry to the port for the past 28 years because of their policy not to confirm or deny the presence of nuclear weapons on board their ships. However, before the Kobe Hoshiki, 432 U.S. warships entered the port between 1960 and 1974.

As the U.S. rushes to war against Iraq despite massive anti-war protests all over the world, we are very alarmed about the possible use of nuclear weapons by the U.S. Now is the time for all of us to stand up and say no to war, no to the use of nuclear weapons. But Japan's Koizumi Cabinet has expressed its willingness to help the U.S. and this help is regarded as top priority. The government has already dispatched warships of Japan's Self Defense Forces, including the Aegis-class destroyer, to the Indian Ocean 14 times. In addition, the government is contriving to enact contingency legislation to give even more support to the U.S.

If this legislation becomes law, all ports and harbours in Japan will be at the disposal of the U.S. Last year we were successful in preventing this law from going ahead. This year the Ordinary Diet session has already started and we are working hard to stop it again.

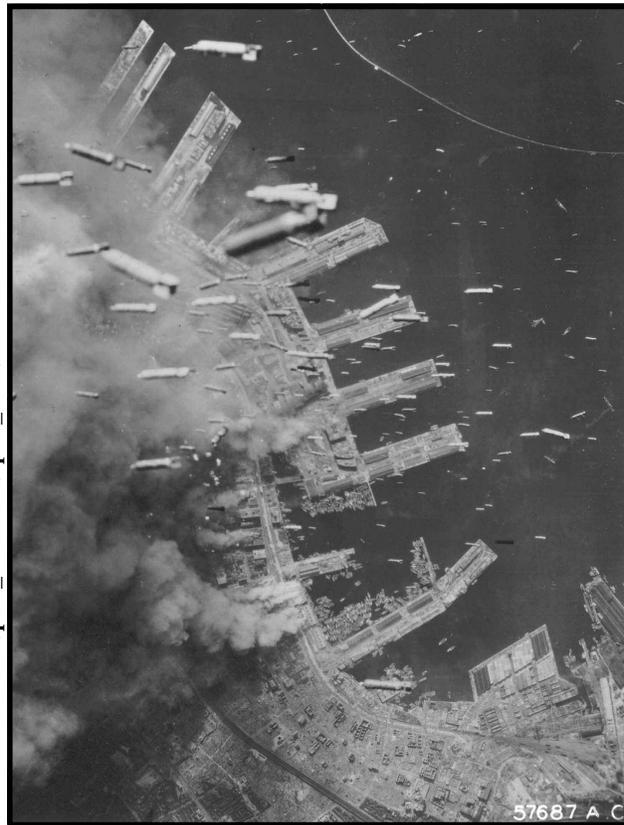
Strongly encouraged by your messages of support, we are making the utmost effort to spread Kobe Hoshiki to all ports and harbours in Japan in spite of much pressure from the U.S. to abandon our nuclear-free stand. The Kobe Hoshiki was mentioned as a shining example and a model to be followed by all states at the NGO's Millennium Forum at the UN in May 2000. This means that the attack on the Kobe Hoshiki is considered an attack on world opinion which seeks peace and nuclear disarmament.

Please send us a message of solidarity and encouragement for this year's meeting.

We shall work together with you to achieve peace in the 21st century. Let's make our voice heard against war, against the use of nuclear weapons.

With warmest regards, solidarity and support to your every effort for peace.

Shushi Kajimoto, General Secretary
Hyogo Council Against A & H Bombs,
Chamoto bldg. 6-7-6 Motomachi-dori,
Chuo-ku Kobe 650-0022 Japan.



Citizens of the Japanese port city of Kobe know all too well the horrible effects of war. This photo shows hundreds of bombs descending upon their city, on March 5, 1945.

Reply from VANA

Dear Mr. Shushi Kajimoto:

Many thanks for your letter of 20 February 2003 regarding your 18 March meeting to celebrate the 28th anniversary of the nuclear-free Kobe Formula, whereby your city has insisted that any ship entering your port must submit certification that it is not carrying nuclear weapons. This is an admirable record.

We note that your staunch opposition to visits by nuclear armed ships is now under pressure from the Koizumi Cabinet, whose plans to enact contingency legislation will put all ports and harbours in Japan at the disposal of the U.S. We strongly oppose this legislation.

Our organization has always opposed visits to Canadian ports by warships whose captains will "neither confirm nor deny" whether their ships carry nuclear weapons. We will therefore circulate a copy of this letter widely to peace organizations in Canada

On behalf of Veterans Against Nuclear Arms in Canada, please accept a strong renewal of the full support, solidarity and encouragement in maintaining the Kobe Formula, which we sent to you last year.

Yours truly,

David Morgan

National President, VANA.