COMBINED CHIEFS OF STAFF

BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN V.I.R. BOMBING OF JAPAN

Memorandum by the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff

The British Chiefs of Staff have now sent us the attached message for communication to the United States Chiefs of Staff.
ENCLOSURE

MESSAGE FROM THE BRITISH CHIEFS OF STAFF
TO THE UNITED STATES CHIEFS OF STAFF

1. We have been examining in detail the problem of developing a base for the British very long range (VLR) bomber force in the Cagayan River area, which is the only base area proposed to us. This is a very expensive constructional undertaking, particularly in regard to port development, and is of limited military value on account of distance from Japan.

2. During the recent visit to Washington of Air Vice-Marshal Lloyd, the Force Commander Designate, an alternative proposal that the British VLR force should be based on and operated from the island of Miyako Jima in the Ryukyus was mentioned. The proposal was that the British should construct the base and that the United States strategical air forces should share in the facilities provided, operating from our airfields. We are in process of examining this alternative proposal but it is already evident that both from the operational point of view and from that of construction it is an incomparably better proposition.

3. We are examining all possible methods of developing this base in order that our first squadrons could be operational by 1st December and we are also examining the problems of personnel and cargo shipping which may form a bottleneck.

4. If the administrative problems can be surmounted and the island can be allotted to us after capture, we would propose to withdraw from France as early as possible a first contingent of some 5,000 engineers for opening up the port and preparing the way for airfield construction. We have immediately available an airfield constructional force of 3,000 personnel which could be despatched from this country on 14th May.
If this force could be got ashore before the arrival of the British port constructional personnel and could commence preparatory work, the target programme could be improved. We would be most grateful if you would consider all possibilities of getting this preliminary force ashore.

5. Can you confirm, in the light of the above, your intention to capture Miyako Jima, and that you will allot it to us for development as an air base instead of the Cagayan Valley?

6. From the point of view of planning the ultimate development, it is most important that a small British reconnaissance party consisting mainly of engineers should arrive on the island as soon as is practicable after the assault. We would therefore be grateful for your agreement in principle to this and would propose to decide the date and method of despatch of this party on further information from you.