Nagoya mayor denies Nanking Massacre occurred

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Nagoya Mayor Takashi Kawamura told a delegation from Nanjing, China, that he doubted there was a massacre in the city in 1937, prompting an immediate rebuttal from the Chinese government.

Kawamura told his Chinese visitors on Feb. 20: "While there was general combat, I do not believe there was anything like the Nanking Incident."

He told the delegation led by Nanjing City Standing Committee member Liu Zhiwei, who had been paying a courtesy call because Nagoya and Nanjing are sister cities, that his father had been stationed in Nanjing, then known as Nanking, in 1945.

He said his father had been treated well by local Chinese: "If there had been a major incident, I don't think the Chinese could have been so kind to Japanese.”

According to Nagoya city officials, Liu replied: "I want to emphasize that Nanjing residents learn history not for the purpose of hatred, but for the purpose of peace."

Hong Lei, a spokesman for China’s Foreign Ministry, said later in the day: "We cannot agree with such a view because there is undeniable evidence about the Nanking Massacre."

He added: "I hope Japanese officials will learn the lessons of history in order to push forward sound development of the bilateral relationship."

Kawamura, who also told a meeting of the Nagoya city assembly in September 2009 that there was no incident, proposed to the Chinese delegation that a debate about the Nanking Incident could be held in Nanjing.

"I only said one viewpoint, and I am hoping for further discussions," he said.

Past comments by Japanese politicians denying what is known as the 1937 Nanking Massacre, in which tens of thousands of Chinese died, have led to strong criticism from Beijing.