

Okinawa & US Bases 68 years after end of WWII battle

Thursday 18 July 2013, by [AOKI Mizuho](#), [JOHNSTON Eric](#), [Kyodo News](#), [Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Date first published: 3 July 2013).

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Okinawa marks 68th anniversary of end of WWII battle

NAHA (Kyodo) — Okinawa marked the 68th anniversary Sunday of the end of the Battle of Okinawa, a World War II ground battle that claimed more than 200,000 lives, with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledging to ease the concentration of U.S. bases there.

A memorial service for the war dead was held at the Peace Memorial Park in the city of Itoman, the site of the final stage of the battle, with about 5,800 people including residents and government officials attending.

“I will do all I can to reduce the burden on Okinawa,” Abe said in his speech at the ceremony, while Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima again urged the Japanese and the U.S. government to move the Futenma base out of the prefecture and “drastically revise as soon as possible” the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement, which gives special treatment to U.S. troops in Japan.

Antipathy toward U.S. bases has risen in Okinawa since the deployment in October last year of the crash-prone MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft at Futenma Air Station.

A government-sponsored ceremony held on April 28 in Tokyo commemorating the day Japan recovered its sovereignty in 1952 after its defeat in World War II also angered Okinawa people, as the southernmost island prefecture remained under U.S. control for another 20 years.

Abe told reporters after the ceremony that he will make “more efforts” to eventually move the Futenma base out of Okinawa in the future.

Under an agreement between Tokyo and Washington, the Futenma base is to be relocated from the crowded city of Ginowan to the less-populated Henoko coastal area in Nago city within the prefecture.

Other attendees included Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera and U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos, marking the first attendance by a U.S. ambassador since

Walter Mondale in 1995.

It was also the first time for the foreign and defense ministers to attend the ceremony, at a time Abe's government has made little progress in easing Okinawa's burden of hosting U.S. bases.

This year, names of 62 war dead were newly inscribed on the Cornerstone of Peace in the park, bringing the total to 241,227, regardless of nationality and military or civilian status.

The Battle of Okinawa started in the spring of 1945, when U.S. forces landed on the main islands of Okinawa and surrounding remote islands. Some 94,000 civilians, about a quarter of the residents in the prefecture, died in the three-month battle between Japanese and U.S. troops. The total death toll exceeded 200,000, including Americans.

Kyodo News, June 23, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130623p2g00m0dm011000c.html>

39 percent of Okinawans who lived through WWII battle likely traumatized: survey

NAHA — Around 39 percent of Okinawans who lived through the Battle of Okinawa 68 years ago are likely suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), according to a survey by Okinawan researchers.

The research group included six psychiatrists and health specialists, and was led by Fujiko Toyama, a former professor at the Okinawa Prefectural College of Nursing. In conducting the survey, the team made attempts to interview 401 people aged 75 and over between April 2012 and February 2013. Fifty-three of those people were male, and the rest were female. The interviewers received useable answers from 359 people.

A total of 141 respondents were judged as likely to have PTSD. Among these, 57.9 percent answered that they had witnessed a loved one put in harm's way during the battle. One woman in her 80s said she "lost consciousness for a week" after being buried alive when blowback from an explosion destroyed a bunker while she was inside. She complained that since the U.S. Marines' vertical takeoff and landing transport Osprey craft were deployed in October last year, she has been frequently remembering the war.

Mainichi Shimbun, June 22, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130622p2a00m0na010000c.html>

Okinawan authorities unearth barrels at onetime U.S. military facility — Finds raise toxic chemical suspicions at ex-Kadena site

The Okinawa Defense Bureau and the city of Okinawa uncovered seven more barrels Tuesday at a former U.S. military installation in the prefecture that may have been used to hold toxic chemicals

during the Vietnam War, stoking concern among residents.

Prior to Tuesday's findings, the city had dug up 19 barrels from the same site in mid-June.

The barrels found Tuesday had been buried about 1 meter deep in a soccer ground adjacent to the Kadena Air Base that had been part of the installation until 1987, the Defense Ministry said.

The barrels had white stripes around their rims and bore "Dow Chemical" markings, a city official said. The Dow Chemical Co. was one of the main developers of Agent White and other herbicides. Some decayed barrels were also marked "30 gallons," the official added.

The ministry and the city plan by month's end to complete a study of soil samples and the barrels, checking for any trace of toxic chemicals, a ministry official said. The ministry said it is also considering digging across a wider area to determine if more barrels are buried in the area.

Jon Mitchell, a contributor to *The Japan Times* who has been investigating the Agent Orange issue in Okinawa, said that although the position of the white stripes on the barrels seems to suggest they're not Agent White, there is a strong possibility they could be other toxic chemicals.

"Usually, these herbicides' stripes were around the middle of barrels. But, from the photographs, it seems to be at the top. So that does seem to suggest it's not Agent White," Mitchell said.

Agent White is commonly known to be contained in larger barrels than the 30-gallon (114-liter) drums found at the soccer ground, he said, adding, however, there is also evidence suggesting Dow may have used smaller barrels to send defoliant to Vietnam.

"Even if this is not Agent White, then there is a strong chance that it is another type of dangerous chemical," Mitchell said. "So it's important that the barrels are checked and also a wider area is checked. There might be more, much deeper around the area."

The Defense Ministry has asked the U.S. military to confirm what the site was used for when it was part of the Kadena base, but had not received an answer as of Wednesday.

"(The U.S. military) said it doesn't have detailed documents about it. So we haven't received an answer. But we will continue to seek an answer," the official said.

Mitchell urged the U.S. military to be forthright.

"This is an example of American military pollution," Mitchell said. "This is a soccer ground. This is where children play. It's time the American government took Okinawa residents' worries seriously. They need to cooperate fully with the investigation and come clean about the issue."

In January, a story by Mitchell in *The Japan Times* shed light on a September 1971 report produced by the U.S. Army's Fort Detrick in Maryland, the Pentagon's main center for biochemical weapons research.

It summarized the military's usage of chemicals during the Vietnam War, and among the locations cited is a reference to "Herbicide stockpiles elsewhere in PACOM-U.S. (Pacific Command) government restricted materials Thailand and Okinawa (Kadena)."

Mizuho Aoki, *Japan Times* Staff Writer, July 3, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/03/national/finds-raise-toxic-chemical-suspicions-at-ex-kadena-site/#.UdtahqxjBRY>

Tainted soil detected at ex-U.S. land in Okinawa

More soil contamination from fossil fuel has been found on land formerly occupied by a U.S. military facility in Okinawa and there are fears the contaminants have spread via groundwater, according to an inspection report of the local defense bureau obtained Saturday.

Contamination by what appeared to be jet fuel and gasoline was found in the northern part of Camp Kuwae, according to the Okinawa Defense Bureau's report for this year. Some of the land used by the base was handed back to Japan in 2003.

Under the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement, the United States has no obligation to clean up environmental contamination or provide compensation when returning base land.

The report says groundwater caused the contaminants to spread over a "wide area," and the level of fumes exceeded the limit set by the bureau and a local government in 19 of 20 soil samples taken from the 38-hectare site.

Of those samples, six contained more oil residues than allowed under local regulations. Such oils are believed to be nonvolatile gas oil and lubricant oil, the report says.

The bureau said it plans to conduct a more detailed inspection.

Kyodo News, June 22, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/06/22/national/tainted-soil-detected-at-ex-u-s-land-in-okinawa/#.UcevZNhjbRY>

Okinawa pitches Futenma "dispersal" — SDF bases, airports from Kyushu to Hokkaido proposed as relocation sites instead of Henoko

OSAKA — Okinawa contacted the office of the U.S. secretary of defense earlier this week with proposals to relocate the contingent at U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to other parts of Japan outside the prefecture, saying there are 35 commercial airports and military facilities, from Kyushu to Hokkaido, that could serve as candidate sites.

In a letter and 27-page PowerPoint presentation sent to Mark Lippert, recently appointed chief of staff to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel, the Okinawa government says it's making the proposals to avoid a disaster, in reference to the strong local opposition to replacing the Futenma base with a planned new airstrip on the Henoko coast of Nago.

The letter was written by Yukie Yoshikawa, a fellow at the Regional Security Division, Executive Office of the Governor, Okinawa Prefecture, on behalf of Susumu Matayoshi, head of the Executive Office.

"I fear there is a very good reason to believe the U.S.-Japan alliance is the Titanic simply headed toward an iceberg, and I believe our warning must be heard at the top level before it's too late." As you know, the Futenma issue has been a long-standing problem for both the United States and Japan. (Okinawa) sincerely wants to see it solved in a reasonable and sustainable way, for all parties, including the locals," the letter reads, calling for a meeting in Washington between Matayoshi and Lippert to discuss the proposals.

Okinawa has been researching possible alternative sites, and came up with a plan based, it said, on open sources in the U.S., including a U.S. Navy report that described the operational requirements of the same types of aircraft stationed at Futenma, including the MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor transports and fixed-wing aircraft.

Taking into account issues ranging from the number of residents around the facilities to runway lengths, the availability of essential utilities, and accommodations for the marines and new construction needs, Okinawa said it found 35 possible relocation sites outside the prefecture.

The proposals suggest particular attention be given to Self-Defense Forces bases in Kyushu and northern Japan as candidate relocation sites, noting stationing the marines on SDF bases would enhance interoperability.

"Kyushu has airports and (SDF) bases closer to the Taiwan Strait and the Korean Peninsula than Henoko, and relocating there would make strategic sense. The marines would be better prepared for a Korean Peninsula contingency if located in northern Japan, which shares a similar climate," the PowerPoint proposal reads.

Okinawa suggests the marines at Futenma, which is in the city of Ginowan, could be "dispersed" to several locations throughout Japan. Or instead of moving the marines in one stage, such as the current plan to relocate them and their aircraft to Henoko farther north on Okinawa Island, a temporary relocation site could be arranged, while a final site was prepared.

"Relocation at multiple stages would allow quick removal of danger (while) giving enough time to prepare for (construction of) the final relocation site(s)," the Okinawan government said.

The proposals lack logistical details, like what arrangements would be made for the dependants who live with the marines.

In March, Tokyo applied for Nakaima's permission to begin work to fill in offshore areas at Henoko to accommodate the runways at the planned new airstrip. Although a local fisheries co-op gave its OK for the project, all 41 local governments in Okinawa, the prefectural assembly and the Okinawa chapter of the Liberal Democratic Party voiced opposition to the current Henoko plan, placing Nakaima in a bind.

"If Gov. Nakaima were to authorize the petition, he would instantly lose his political say, creating political chaos, with many small groups but no significant leaders to represent the local voice, which means both (the governments of) Japan and the U.S. would lose their counterpart in Okinawa," Yoshikawa told Lippert.

"There are also people who are willing to lie down at the construction site in front of a bulldozer. Then, (Japan) has two options: either stop there and simply wait for . . . a U.S. military aircraft (to crash at Futenma), or start construction despite casualties," she wrote.

"If (Nakaima) were to deny the (reclamation) petition, the government of Japan would either appeal to the courts, or pass a bill to allow the prime minister to authorize the land-fill on his behalf,

(something that probably depends) on the results of the Upper House election in late July. If construction is decided, you will get the same results as above," she said.

In a phone interview with *The Japan Times*, Yoshikawa said Okinawa had not yet heard from anyone in Washington about the proposals, but noted Hagel will probably reply through Tokyo.

U.S. officials say the Okinawa proposals to disperse the marines to either commercial airports or SDF bases is unworkable for political and logistical reasons. In the late 1990s, the U.S. looked into relocating the Futenma operations to mainland SDF bases, but noted while there were many logistical pluses, there were high legal and political hurdles.

Eric Johnston, *Japan Times* Staff Writer, June 14, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/06/14/national/okinawa-pitches-futenma-dispersal/#.UcD0rNjuLRY>

Okinawa assembly adopts resolution protesting fighter jet crash

NAHA, Japan (Kyodo) — The Okinawa prefectural assembly unanimously passed a resolution Thursday protesting the crash of a U.S. Air Force F-15 fighter jet in waters off the main island in the southern prefecture in May.

Members of the assembly visited the U.S. Kadena Air Base later in the day and handed the resolution to Maj. Christopher Anderson, head of the Public Affairs Office of the 18th Wing of the U.S. base.

"This recent incident has impacted those in the fisheries industry and the rest of the citizens in the prefecture with great concern and fear," the resolution says, urging suspension of training using F-15s until the cause of the crash is determined and preventive measures for similar accidents are taken.

The F-15 from the U.S. Kadena Air Base crashed into the Pacific Ocean about 60 kilometers off the village of Kunigami in the northern part of Okinawa Island during a training flight on May 28, but the pilot ejected safely.

The site of the crash was surrounded by rich fishing grounds and "(the accident) could have directly affected fishermen operating in the area and triggered a terrible tragedy," the resolution says.

The resolution also terms the U.S. military's resumption of drills involving F-15s "truly regrettable," as they resumed two days after the incident, despite local calls to ground the fighter jets until the cause of the crash was determined.

The U.S. Air Force told the assembly members it had conducted inspections on about 50 F-15s by a total of 2,000 personnel following the crash, according to prefectural assembly member Seiryō Arakaki. The U.S. military did not give any detailed explanation on the cause of the incident but said it will come up with a report on the crash investigation in 30 to 90 days, Arakaki added.

The assembly also adopted a separate resolution protesting against recent remarks by Osaka Mayor

Toru Hashimoto urging U.S. forces to use Japan's legal adult entertainment industry to prevent the recurrence of sex offenses in Okinawa.

Such remarks that upset the people of Okinawa are "totally inexcusable," the resolution says.

Kyodo News, June 06, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130606p2g00m0dm101000c.html>

Okinawa rally a call for existence without bases

GINOWAN, OKINAWA PREF. — Residents and supporters held a rally Sunday to call for a peaceful Okinawa free of military bases 41 years after the prefecture reverted to Japanese rule.

Despite heavy rain, about 3,500 people turned out for the rally in a park in Ginowan, organizers said. It adopted a declaration clarifying opposition to any strengthening and expansion of U.S. military bases in Okinawa and elsewhere in Japan.

Shiko Sakiyama, leader of an Okinawa peace movement center, one of the organizers, said, "The 41 years since Okinawa's return to Japan has been a history of struggle to regain humanity." Even today, (Okinawa) people's lives are being damaged by the roar (of warplanes) and incidents and accidents involving U.S. servicemen. Let's promote our peaceful movement," Sakiyama said.

After Japan's defeat in World War II in 1945, Okinawa remained under U.S. control until 1972. The prefecture marked the 41st anniversary of its reversion to Japan on Wednesday, but still hosts the bulk of American bases in Japan.

Kim Bok Dong, 87, a South Korean who was a former "comfort woman" for Imperial Japanese Army troops, addressed the rally as a guest speaker.

Looking back on the terrible experience of being taken by force to work as a wartime sex slave, Kim said: "If Japan made a mistake in the past, the current government needs to resolve the issue. Let's try to eliminate war."

Kim is scheduled to hold a meeting Friday with Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, coleader of Nippon Ishin No Kai (Japan Restoration Party), who has come under a barrage of criticism for saying the comfort woman system was necessary at that time.

Speaking of the local situation in which U.S. bases are located around neighborhoods, Megumi Miyamoto, a 33-year-old part-timer from Tokyo who took part in the rally, said, "It's like war or a nuclear power plant is very close to us." Local residents are being at risk. We all should work to change the unfortunate society," she said.

In the run-up to Sunday's rally, peace marches were held this month in Okinawa's main island and the islands of Miyakojima and Ishigakijima, involving about 5,000 participants. They staged demonstrations around such facilities as the U.S. Air Force's Kadena base.

Jiji Press, May 21, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/21/national/okinawa-rally-a-call-for-existence-without-bas>

Activists in Okinawa begin march for peace

NAGO, Okinawa — Activists in Okinawa Prefecture have begun this year's three-pronged "5/15 peace march" commemorating the day in 1972 when the Okinawa islands were returned to Japan from the United States.

Hiroji Yamashiro, secretary-general of the Okinawa Peace Action Center, one of the event organizers, spoke before the start of a march setting out from the coast of Nago's Henoko district, where the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma is due to be relocated under an agreement between Tokyo and Washington.

"In Tokyo, the movement to change the Constitution for the worse continues. We want to show how we, who experienced war and a long period of U.S. military rule, are burning with determination never to allow that," he said.

Participants shouted phrases such as, "No new base at Henoko" and, "Protect the peaceful Constitution" as they set out. They began on May 17, two days after the anniversary of the May 15, 1972 reversion of Okinawa, with around 400 people in the march starting out from Nago. According to event organizers, around 1,200 people are participating in the event's three marches, which will be followed by a gathering of several thousand people on May 19 when the participants arrive at their destination in Ginowan, where Futenma base is situated.

Mainichi Shimbun, May 17, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130517p2a00m0na003000c.html>

U.S. Marines expect to stay in Okinawa's Futenma base 10-15 more yrs

WASHINGTON (Kyodo) — The U.S. Marine Corps expects to use the Futenma Air Station in Japan's southwestern island prefecture of Okinawa for at least another 10 to 15 years, a top Marine officer told a Senate hearing on Thursday amid a stalemate over the base's contentious relocation plan.

"We will be at Futenma for probably the next 10 to 15 years," said Maj. Gen. James Kessler, commander of the Marine Corps Installations Command, indicating that the land used for the base in a populous residential area may be returned to Japan as late as in fiscal 2027 against the bilaterally agreed time frame of "fiscal 2022 or later."

Japan and the United States plan to relocate the Marine base from the crowded city of Ginowan in Okinawa to the less-populated Henoko coastal area in Nago city within the prefecture amid strong opposition from local people who want the base moved out of the prefecture.

In April, the two governments outlined the time frame for the relocation as part of a new agreement

for the return of facilities and areas used by U.S. forces on Okinawa, but it fell short of being a firm deadline.

Kessler also pitched for the need to continue support for aging facilities at Futenma to “maintain a level of safety and operational capability” for the next 10 to 15 years.

Kyodo News, May 10, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130510p2g00m0dm054000c.html>

LDP headquarters, Okinawa chapter at odds over relocation of Futenma base

A tug-of-war is continuing between the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) headquarters and its Okinawa prefectural chapter over the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.

In its manifesto for the upcoming House of Councillors election, the LDP headquarters will pledge to build a substitute facility for the base off the Henoko district of Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, as agreed on between Tokyo and Washington. The party headquarters will urge the prefectural chapter to incorporate the plan in its own campaign pledge.

However, the chapter is set to promise voters it will stick by a demand to shift the base out of the southernmost prefecture, where U.S. bases in Japan are concentrated.

LDP Secretary-General Shigeru Ishiba and Policy Research Council Chairwoman Sanae Takaichi will visit Okinawa from next week in a desperate effort to persuade the chapter to accept the relocation of the base within the prefecture. However, there is no prospect that the two entities will reach any compromise.

In its campaign pledge for the Dec. 16, 2012 House of Representatives election, the LDP headquarters, which promised to seek to relocate the Futenma base to Nago, allowed its prefectural chapter to call for relocation out of Okinawa. At the time, the LDP was an opposition party.

The Abe Cabinet attaches particular importance to the Japan-U.S. alliance. A top government official commented, “It’s intolerable for the ruling party headquarters and the local chapter to remain at odds over security, which is at the core of Japan’s national policy.”

Some members of the LDP Okinawa chapter are in favor of the proposed relocation to Nago, including lower house member Kozaburo Nishime.

Still, the majority of members of the chapter are demanding that the base be moved out of the prefecture. Okinawa Prefectural Assembly member Masatoshi Onaga, who heads the chapter, stuck to the chapter’s demand during a meeting with Ishiba at the LDP’s headquarters in Tokyo last month.

Ishiba has admitted there is no prospect that the LDP headquarters and the Okinawa prefectural chapter will reach an agreement on the issue in the foreseeable future.

“There is no clear prospect for settlement of the issue,” he told a news conference on May 10.

Mainichi Shimbun, May 11, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130511p2a00m0na014000c.html>
