

Okinawa Disagrees — A historic Turning Point in the Struggle for Peace and Dignity

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Contents

- [Sixtieth Year in the Sexagenar](#)
- [People Defeat Henoko Offshore](#)
- [Diversified Forms of Resistanc](#)
- [Alleviating the Burden of \(...\)](#)
- [A New Cut and Thrust](#)
- [Basic Agreement Made by \(...\)](#)

Okinawa in 2006 faces a crucial ordeal that calls for a new struggle as Japan has made a new commitment to the global U.S. strategy meting out a yet more cruel fate to Okinawans. This commitment goes not only against Japan's Peace Constitution but even against the existing U.S.-Japan Security Treaty that geographically delimits the scope of U.S. -Japan military cooperation.

In a U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee meeting that took place in Washington DC on May 1, 2006, four high-ranking Japanese and U.S. diplomatic and military leaders—Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs ASO Taro, Japanese Minister of State for Defense NUKAGA Fukushima, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, dubbed two-plus-two —agreed on measures realigning U.S. forces in Japan and the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF). This was to put into force recommendations contained in a protocol earlier signed by the two-plus-two on October 29, 2005, titled, "U.S.-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future." The Japanese Cabinet on May 30 2006 adopted a decision to implement "in a prompt and appropriate manner" what Japan had agreed on with the U.S.

The treatment of Okinawa in this series of arrangements is reminiscent of the historical incident called the Ryukyu annexation (Ryukyu Shobun) in which the Meiji government abolished the Ryukyu Kingdom and annexed it as a prefecture of Japan. It also reminds Okinawan citizens of the fact that toward the end of World War II, Japan sacrificed Okinawa in order to protect mainland Japan from U.S. military attacks. Today we, many Okinawan people, are deeply aware that we are at a critical turning point of our history. Late SHIMAO Toshio, a novelist, stated that when the Ryukyu archipelago was disturbed, it was an indication that a major transition was occurring in Japan's history. We are now witnessing such a moment. It is time for all Japanese people to reexamine and confront the Japan-U.S. Security system.

Sixtieth Year in the Sexagenary Cycle

Sixty years are regarded as one cycle in the traditional Eastern way of conceptualizing time. Each year is named after one of twelve earthly branches (j?ni shi): rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar. Combining these twelve earthly branches with ten heavenly stems (ji'kkan) makes sixty labels to represent the years. The ten heavenly stems consist of

five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Each element is further divided into two types based on the yang (positive)-yin (negative) principle: yang wood, yin wood, yang fire, yin fire, yang earth, yin earth, yang metal, yin metal, yang water, and yin water. The system is used not only for numbering the years, but also for naming the hours and directions.

After it emerged as a modern nation-state through the Meiji Restoration, Japan introduced the solar calendar following Christian (Western) countries, and the Eastern traditional calendar was declared obsolete. In everyday life, however, the duodecimal way of partitioning time is still prevalent as a custom. In Okinawa where people keep practicing folk customs, they celebrate twelve-year old girls and sixty-year old seniors who have repeated the twelve-year cycle five times. The sixtieth year of one's life is seen as the time when people restart life as a newly born person after having gone through various hardships and successfully completed one sixty-year cycle of life. Not only human life but also social history is frequently understood referring to the sixty-year cycle.

In the sexagenary cycle, World War II ended in 1945, the yin-wood-rooster year. The year 2005 corresponded to the yin-wood-rooster year or the sixtieth year since the grueling and bloody ground battle was fought in Okinawa. Sixty years after the end of World War II as well as the Battle of Okinawa were revisited in various manners.

Okinawan people learned a bitter lesson in the war: military forces do not protect the people. Battle stories repeatedly told by Okinawans who desire peace echo a deep grudge against Japanese military forces' terrible treatment of Okinawans: they were supposed to protect us Okinawans but ended up sacrificing us.

Okinawan people voluntarily participated in the war as the Japanese, and welcomed Japanese military troops that came into Okinawa because they believed that the Japanese military would defend them. In reality, however, the Japanese troops pushed women, children, and seniors out of bomb shelters and used the shelters to protect themselves. In some shelters resided in by both soldiers and people, soldiers murdered crying babies because they were afraid that their whereabouts would be known to U.S. forces. Japanese soldiers executed non-combatants who attempted to surrender and also civilians who were under the protection of U.S. forces. In 2005, more people than ever started telling their harsh war experiences because they strongly felt the necessity of passing down the experiences to new generations.

In the first half of the sixty postwar years, Okinawa was ruled by the U.S. military. Okinawa was made to serve as the hub of American military operations in the Korean and Vietnam Wars and was designated as a location to store nuclear and toxic gas weapons. Although Okinawa returned to Japan in the hope of getting free from that situation, in the latter half of the sixty years it continued to be used and abused as military bases by both the U.S. and Japanese governments. Still today, three-fourths of all U.S. military facilities in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa despite the fact that Okinawa constitutes only 0.6% of the Japanese territory and its population accounts for 1% of Japan's total population. From Okinawa, U.S. warplanes and soldiers—marines in particular—have been dispatched to "troubled areas" in the world, caused damage to people there, and have inflicted on them similar sufferings as those experienced by Okinawans. The sixtieth year after the end of the war marked a critical occasion to re-examine such Okinawan history.

People Defeat Henoko Offshore Base Project

On September 2, 2005, pipe-assembled scaffolds, which were constructed for sea bottom boring operations to build a new U.S. base off Henoko beach, were silently dismantled. This represented a victory of the Okinawan people fighting against the new base project. The anti-base movement won

the struggle by mobilizing an aggregate of 60,000 people for about 500 days since April 19, 2004. The participants engaged in nonviolent direct actions off and on the sea, such as sitting-in on Henoko beach and mounting atop the scaffolds to stop the construction work. Early in the morning on that day, the abhorrent obstacles disappeared out of the beautiful sea that shines in seven color gradations at sunset. Defeated by people's power, the Japanese government had to retreat from the Henoko offshore project.

But the retraction of the base project was not that innocent. On October 29, 2005, the government disclosed Okinawa's portion of the U.S. forces global realignment initiative the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed on. That agreement provided for the construction of a new U.S. base as the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) on Cape Henoko, close to the defunct offshore base site.

The purpose of realigning U.S. forces in Japan lies in strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance and achieving the two countries' "common strategic objectives" by integrating the SDF to U.S. military forces. Yet the Japanese government claims that the realignment plans are also aimed at reducing the military burden on Okinawa where U.S. military bases are concentrated. While saying so, the government on the other hand argues that Okinawa's position of deterrence has become more important than ever before. In other words, the Japanese government professes to be solving two contradictory propositions simultaneously: reducing the military burden on Okinawa and maintaining Okinawa's deterrence.

The U.S. government bluntly made it clear that the first priority of the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan was maintaining U.S. military deterrence and that reducing Okinawa's burden did not constitute its primary objective. The U.S. government also argues that Okinawan residents misperceive the realignment of U.S. forces as cuts in U.S. military facilities and practices in Okinawa. Nevertheless, the Japanese government carried out propaganda asserting that realigning the U.S. forces had as its major objective the alleviation of the military burden on Okinawa.

It is recalled that the fiftieth year after the end of World War II, or 1995, was another turning point for Okinawa's postwar history. In that year, the Okinawan people rose in a powerful action demanding that the Japanese and U.S. governments reduce and eventually remove U.S. military facilities in Okinawa. Ostensibly in response to this demand, U.S. President Bill Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister HASHIMOTO Ryutaro in 1996 agreed that Futenma Air Station, the base that posed more serious danger to local residents than any other U.S. military base in Okinawa, would be closed. But the two governments' intention behind the agreement was strengthening the Japan-U.S. alliance and maintaining U.S. military deterrence in post Cold War Asia. Constructing a new base under the guise of the FRF was a precondition for returning Futenma Air Station. The new base was to be built off the coast of Henoko, Nago City.

In the 1997 referendum, Nago city residents disapproved the plan to construct the proposed offshore base. In an opinion poll, 80 percent of residents in Okinawa opposed the construction plan. Okinawa Prefecture Governor OTA Masahide in 1998 refused to permit landfill of public waters for the base project. Faced by local people's opposition, the Japanese government went to great lengths to obtain "local consent" using all kinds of maneuvering.

This time, the Japanese government did not even bother to obtain "local consent." Over the heads of the Okinawan people, the Japanese government just made an agreement with the U.S. on locating the FRF on Cape Henoko and its surrounding waters already enclosed as Camp Schwab. The base is to have two runways set in V shape, and the planned L-shaped site is to protrude into the sea on two sides of the cape, into the Henoko reef on the southwest side and into Oura Bay on the northeastern side. Oura Bay is a rich, deepwater fishing ground, according to local fishing folks.

The Japanese government's version has it that the United States initially proposed to build a new airbase by reclaiming the shallow reef area of Henoko whereas Japan opposed reclamation and instead proposed that the FRF should be located inside Camp Schwab. Through negotiation, the sides came to a compromise and agreed on the current plan of a reverse L-shaped air station using the Camp Schwab site as well as the sea areas on both sides of the cape. It was reported in the media that the decision was made partly because both governments assumed that constructing the base inside an area fenced as U.S. military base would prevent anti-base activists from engaging in various actions to stop the construction. The governments also presumed that the plan would avoid accusation from environment protection activists because it requires less reclamation area than the defunct original offshore base plan. It was also pointed out that the new plan costs less than an offshore base that needs to reclaim a larger area.

Architect MAKISHI Yoshikazu, the late MIYAGI Etsujiro, a sociologist who was well-informed about issues regarding the United States and others had for some time been meticulously surveying U.S. military sources documents and on that basis exposed that the new air station construction in Henoko dated back to a U.S. Navy master plan made in 1966 when Okinawa was under U.S. occupation. They also compared the current "costal plan" of the FRF with the 1997 U.S. Department of Defense report entitled "Operational Requirement and Concept of Operations for MCAS Futenma Relocation, Okinawa, Japan, Final Draft" (Okinawa Prefecture Military Base Affairs Office). Makishi points out that the U.S. government has long sought to build a new base fully equipped with runways, an ammunition loading area, and a military port, and that the U.S. is simply implementing that plan this time in the name of FRF. Makishi argues that the plan is nothing of a sort of compromise, but the product of deliberate collaborative effort by the two governments.

In a deceptive stratagem to make it look still open to change, the Japanese government called the October 29 accord with the U.S. an interim report. Pending March 2006 when the government said it would be made final, the government would discuss the plan with affected communities so it would obtain the latter's consent. Yet, it was apparent that the framework of the construction plan would remain the same. Seeing through this plot, people in Okinawa immediately started protesting against the plan.

The Japanese government took similar methods in other areas of mainland Japan where U.S. military bases were located. According to the "interim report," the U.S. 1st Army headquarters and SDF Central Readiness Force Headquarters along with military helicopter operations were to be moved to Camp Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture. The "interim report" also provided that the U.S. carrier-borne aircraft unit would be shifted from Atsugi Base in Kanagawa Prefecture Iwakuni Base in Yamaguchi Prefecture while military helicopters would also be relocated from Futenma Air Station to Iwakuni. Also in all these cases, the Japanese government had made firm agreements with the U.S. government before any explanation was provided to municipal governments and local residents involved. Then a host of high ranking officials from the Defense Agency, Defense Facilities Administration Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Liberal Democratic Party began to descend on the affected local communities with carrots and sticks in an effort to "sincerely seek and obtain the understanding" of the local governments and residents.

Diversified Forms of Resistance

Expression of opposition and protest against the construction of the new base took various forms in Okinawa. The anti-base struggle that had stopped the offshore Henoko base construction was a struggle conducted by many people rallied around the core of local residents who shared a desire to pass natural environment inherited from their ancestors to next generations and were determined

not to allow their sea to be used for a murderous facility. In addition, the Japanese government held Okinawa Prefecture Governor Inamine and Nago City Mayor Kishimoto also “partly responsible” for the delay, and eventually the demise of the offshore base construction as these Okinawan leaders did not confront the anti-base struggle resolutely enough with the use of police forces.

In fact, neither Governor Inamine nor Nago Mayor KISHIMOTO wanted a new base built in Okinawa. In fall 1999 when they made “a tough choice” accepting the construction of the FRF, they placed various demands on the Japanese government. The governor requested that the offshore airstrip be put also to civilian use and that U.S. military use of the base be terminated in 15 years. Put simply, the governor declared that Okinawa would not provide any more permanent U.S. military bases, and the FRF should be converted to a civilian airport used for local development in the future. Mayor KISHIMOTO also placed seven requests such as conclusion of an agreement clarifying terms and conditions of the use of the new base in order to secure local residents’ safety. From the beginning, the Japanese government had no intention to negotiate with the United States on this issue. They, however, paid lip service to the governor’s 15-year tenure request. In a cabinet meeting at the end of 1999, the government adopted a decision that included a vague expression that the 15-year term might be considered depending on changes in international circumstances and U.S. military force-posturing plans. The requested civilian use of the base was mentioned in the FRF construction plan at that time.

The new base project decided over the heads of the local people would simply repudiate all these accords. Governor Inamine categorically refused to accept this about-face and expressed his strong opposition to the “on-coast base” plan. The governor declared that if the originally agreed civil-military offshore project was going to be built, no Replacement for the Futenma Air Station was acceptable within Okinawa Prefecture. Mayor KISHIMOTO also declared that local residents’ safety would not be secured if the “on-coast” plan were carried out, as the proposed base, being closer to residential areas, would expose local residents to noise pollution and danger from possible aircraft crashes. There are not a few Okinawans who are frustrated at the governor who merely insisted on the original “offshore base plan” and did not demand removing Futenma Air Station from Okinawa. Although Inamine’s argument was ambiguous, many local residents cheered the governor who kept expressing his adamant opposition against the “on-coast” plan in the face of Defense Agency Director NUKAGA and other national government and ruling party officials. The ruling party of Okinawa Prefectural Assembly once warned the governor not to aggravate his relation with the national government. Eventually, however, they joined in passing a resolution against constructing the FRF on the coast.

In the meantime, all thirteen local communities on the east coast of Nago City raised their voice against the new base construction plan. Six years ago, some local communities were silenced by local strongmen who supported the offshore base construction in exchange for financial aid for regional development.

Six northern municipal government heads and councils (including Nago City) also expressed their opposition to the plan. It should be remembered that earlier, lured by 100 billion yen in government financial assistance for regional development over 10 years, they had all supported the offshore base project. With this funding, they constructed large public buildings such as community halls, industrial development centers, and parks. Local fishery guilds in surrounding areas, for which reclaiming Oura Bay is a critical issue, passed resolutions opposing the new base construction plan. With the Okinawa Prefectural Fishery Guild, they visited the Naha Defense Facilities Administration Bureau (NDFAB) demanding retraction of the plan. Among the local fishery guilds opposing the new plan was the Henoko fishery guild that had approved the original base construction plan and cooperated with NDFAB’s drilling surveys. In return, they received financial compensation with which they built a fishery training center.

Anti-base movements were newly launched in Ginoza and Higashi Villages which will be affected by the new base plan. In Ginoza Village, the Matsuda district community located under the planned flight route of U.S. military airplanes took the lead in organizing the movement while the community in Takae district of Higashi Village where Osprey multi-mission helicopters will reportedly be assigned headed the movement of the whole village.

Alleviating the Burden of Bases on Okinawa?

What does the government mean by alleviation of the burden on Okinawa? The government says that the following are the steps:

(1)Returning the Futenma Air Station. But that is in exchange for a new base on the Henoko coast.

(2)Relocating 8,000 U.S. marines and their 9000 dependents to Guam. But Japan will provide \$6.09 billion or 59 % of the total \$10.2 billion relocation cost.

(3)Returning significant land areas south of Kadena Air Base.

(4)Relocating some of the functions and capabilities of Kadena and Futenma Air Bases to bases in mainland Japan. Possible sites for relocating military helicopters, combat aircraft, and tanker planes are Kagoshima, Miyazaki, Fukuoka, Yamaguchi, and Hokkaido.

Of these measures, relocating U.S. marine forces to Guam is strictly for the sake of redeploying U.S. military forces under their new military strategies. Yet the Japanese government claims that it is going to pay a colossal sum of tax money to reduce the military burden on Okinawa. The Japanese government is already paying generously for all kinds of costs of the U.S. forces stationed in Japan – costs of housing, recreational facilities, electricity, water service – in host-nation support (so-called “sympathy” budget). But now the government is paying in addition. On what ground, critics ask, must Japan be so subservient to the U.S. that it willingly meets U.S. military costs incurred outside of Japan?

In addition, “returning” military base areas in the central and southern parts of Okinawa Island has nothing to do with burden alleviation for Okinawa since that simply means re-concentrating their functions on the new base in Henoko in the north of the island.

People in Okinawa are gravely concerned about the projected joint use of military bases by the U.S. forces and the SDF. They still remember the horrendous treatment that they received from the Japanese military sixty years ago. Though somewhat watered down, negative sentiments toward the SDF are still prevalent in Okinawa. Yet since integration of the SDF into the U.S. forces is essential to the new realignment initiative, the U.S. and Japanese governments are anxious to create a situation where joint military training and exercises can be freely and easily done in Okinawa as well as in other prefectures of Japan.

So far agreed on are two major Okinawa-based joint military training programs to be launched in 2006:

- The Ground SDF troops are to engage in joint training with the U.S. troops at Camp Hansen.
- The Air SDF will conduct joint training in Kadena Air Field. The joint trainings started in 2006.

These plans are met by strong opposition from local residents. They have already suffered from roaring noises from military trainings and refuse to accept any further escalation of noise hazards.

A New Cut and Thrust

After the interim report was published in October 2005, the Japanese government and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) launched frantic efforts to have local governments and residents involved swallow the base reorganization plans. This operation, ostensibly intended to “persuade” the local governments into accepting the government plans, took the form of frequent visits to localities by top officials, Defense Agency Director NUKAGA among others, for “persuasion.” Visiting Okinawa in this intense operation were the top-leaders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Defense Facilities Administration Agency, Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories, and Chairperson of the LDP’s Okinawa Promotion Special Committee. Members of the Upper and Lower House Committees on Foreign Affairs, Security, Okinawa and Northern Issues also came to Okinawa for the same purpose. Furthermore, mainland Japan mayors, local assembly members, and employees of municipal governments designated in the report as relocation sites for the functions of Kadena and Futenma Air Bases visited Okinawa to inspect noise levels in areas near the bases and flight training hours.

For the people in Okinawa, the impression was inescapable that the Japanese government simply sent the high ranking governmental officials for the purpose of perpetuating Okinawa’s security burdens.

Okinawa was alerted by this series of new development. We, Okinawans, sensed that a major change was happening in Okinawa’s history. This sense created a new movement situation. The anti-base struggle that aborted the original offshore base construction had created solidarity among different civil movements, and diversified itself, confronting the issue from new angles.

Earlier, the 2004 U.S. military helicopter crash on Okinawa International University reminded us that Okinawa was still a military colony of the United States under the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement that practically guaranteed extraterritoriality to the U.S. forces. After the incident, scholars in various academic fields joined by students have begun anew to look into U.S. military base issues and launched what they called “Project Disagree,” a new movement against the U.S. military presence. This movement is spreading its influence.

Led by Professor Emeritus of the University of Ryukyu MIYAZATO Seigen, a scholar of international politics, a host of influential professionals who played a major role in rehabilitating Okinawa after the end of World War II, took a new initiative to create a broader unity of Okinawa people on the base issue. They gained support from fifteen leading intellectuals including writers, scholars, ex-judges, ex-vice governors, and ex-university presidents, personalities seen more or less as conservatives or moderates. On November 17, 2005 the Committee of 15 issued a joint statement against the Japanese and U.S. governments’ attitude of keeping military bases imposed on Okinawa against the strong local opposition. In the joint statement they demanded that the two governments uphold the following three policies.

(1)Relocation of Futenma Air Base out of Okinawa Prefecture

(2)No more new base construction in Okinawa

(3)Improvement of local residents’ living environment affected by noise from military aircraft and military exercises

The statement begins with this passage, “Okinawa now faces a crisis whose seriousness balances with the whole weight of the 60 postwar year history of ours.” This sense of crisis is now shared by a wide range of people in Okinawa. While the statement intends to turn this sense of crisis into an

island-wide anti-base movement, it is exactly this unity that the Japanese government is bent on destroying through splitting maneuvers.

On January 22, 2006, Nago City's mayoral election was held in the midst of the fierce debate over the new base issue. All three candidates opposed the new coastal base plan as proposed by the government. SHIMABUKURO Yoshikazu took the position of tolerating the new plan on condition that the government revised it while the two others unconditionally opposed the new base project. SHIMABUKURO won the election by garnering slightly more votes than the total votes cast for the other two anti-base candidates. SHIMABUKURO was backed by the incumbent Nago City Mayor KISHIMOTO, Okinawa Prefecture Governor Inamine, local business leaders, and the ruling parties of the national government. In this city, the anti-base forces had to retreat because of the government's checkbook offensive, but in this election campaign they succeeded considerably in gaining its lost ground, that is, to close to half of the electorate. But they could not beat SHIMABUKURO because they failed to come up with a unity candidate.

On March 5, 2006, a big rally was held in Ginowan Seaside Park near the Futenma base. This was an all-prefectural rally to oppose the coastal base plan and also the government's plan to make a special measures law that would deprive the Okinawa Governor of his/her powers and authority which could be used against base construction. This rally was preceded by intense preparatory activities. A number of anti-base organizations cooperated to place full-page advertisements in two local newspapers promoting this rally. Street leafleting continued every day in front of the Okinawa Prefecture government office. Sharing tremendous frustration and sense of crisis, approximately 35,000 people participated in the rally, displaying forcefulness reminiscent of the large mobilization in 1995 when the Okinawa angrily reacted to the raping of a school girl by three U.S. soldiers.

The difference between then and now is the diversification of Okinawa movement. Unlike the 1995 rally organized by large organizations, the 2006 March 5 rally was characterized by participation of a large number of small groups and many parents with children, who raised their voices in various original manners. There was certainly a resurgence, after ten years' time, of the Okinawan people's anger against the Japanese government. The anger was directed against the fact that the Japanese government was again forcing Okinawa to shoulder the heaviest burden of the American military presence. In fact, among those who attended the March 5 rally were many who came back to anti-base action after a long absence of ten years. Among them were villagers from Matsuda district of Ginoza Village. The whole community joined the rally, for the first time since 1995. Similarly, the residents of Takae district in Higashi Village and people from thirteen east coast districts in Nago City, who had experienced a split and stopped engaging in the anti-base movement, reunited and joined the rally.

In the rally, the new group "Project Disagree" occupied a corner where they staged satirical skits and spectacular performance criticizing the Yamato people (mainland Japanese) for condoning imposition of base burdens on Okinawa. They were also appealing for Okinawa independence.

The rally was intended to create the broadest possible unity of Okinawan society, transcending differences in views and positions, to make the Japanese government listen to Okinawa's anti-base voices. The title of the rally was carefully worded to enable the prefectural and municipal offices and elected officers to participate. Governor Inamine did not show up, however.

Basic Agreement Made by Nago City and Okinawa Prefecture

The new Nago City Mayor, who narrowly won the election over the opposition candidates, is seen as a traditional local boss-typed minor figure as opposed to the former Nago City Mayor KISHIMOTO

who was viewed as a tough negotiator by the national government and ruling party officials. Although the new mayor was against the coastal base plan on grounds that the original version would not guarantee local residents' security, he ended up being persuaded by the Defense Agency and accepting the plan after it was revised. The revised plan he was made to accept on April 7, however, was something that astonished everybody in Okinawa. The revised plan had two runways, instead of originally proposed one, arranged in a "V" shape, ostensibly to meet the residents' safety requirement. Aviation experts questioned the effectiveness and technical feasibility of the plan in which the two runways are purportedly used, one for departing and the other for arriving flights. Certainly the new plan will require more land and sea spaces than originally proposed and will have a larger negative impact on marine environment.

The Defense Agency did not hesitate to use any kind of dirty and unusual means to pressure Nago City into accepting this plan. To lay siege to Nago city, the agency concentrated on forcing the four surrounding village and municipality chiefs to swallow the plan. The agency threatened to terminate subsidies if they disagreed, on the other hand offering fabulous subsidies if they agreed. The municipal and village offices of Higashi Village, Kin Town, Ginoza Village, and Onna Village were finally brought to their knees. The four mayors and village chiefs appeared in a photo together with Defense Agency Director NUKAGA, all celebrating the making of the agreement. People in Okinawa felt profoundly humiliated at this scene. They felt this symbolized Okinawa's colonial status.

It was natural therefore that revolts occurred immediately against the agreement in the four affected towns and villages as well as in Nago City. The Ginoza Village council unanimously adopted a resolution to oppose the agreement demanding from the national and local governments its retraction. The heads of the four village and municipal offices who accepted the base plan are all facing strong protests from their respective communities.

Okinawa Governor Inamine, while he kept saying he was against the idea of a new base on the Camp Schwab coast, on April 11, reached agreement with Defense Agency Director Nukaga on a document called the basic confirmation notes regarding the U.S. military realignment in Okinawa. According to media reports, they agreed that they would "approach this issue, taking into consideration" the following four points: (1) removing dangers caused by the Futenma Air Station; (2) securing safety of local residents; (3) protecting natural environment; (4) feasibility of the new base construction plan.

Although it appeared that Governor Inamine had agreed to accept the new base project, the governor himself insisted that he had never agreed on the two-runway Camp Schwab-coast project as such. After the May 1st agreement made by the Japanese and U.S. governments, the governor proposed a new plan to build a heliport in the land part of Camp Schwab where Futenma helicopter operations were to be temporarily moved. But the Japanese government did not listen to his plan at all.

Arguing that local consent had been gained, the Japanese government approved the Henoko cape coastal base plan in a cabinet meeting on May 30. This cabinet decision, however, does not specify where and in what form the Futenma Replacement Facility is to be constructed, obviously taking into account Okinawa Prefecture's continued opposition. It should be remembered that the May 1st agreement with the United States unambiguously specified these details.

In the Okinawa City mayoral election held in April, TOMON Mitsuko, supported by all opposition parties, defeated the ruling coalition candidate and was elected Mayor of Okinawa City. This is an indication that people in Okinawa are now beginning to see through what is behind Governor INAMINE's evasive words and the Japanese government's acquiescence to them. They wonder if all this is not a farce staged by Inamine and the central government designed to dodge the Okinawan people's fierce opposition to the imposition of U.S. bases on them.

On May 15, 2006, the 34th anniversary of Okinawa's return to Japan, "Project Disagree" issued a statement titled "Realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, Japanese remilitarization, and the U.S. global defense posture review will never 'reduce Okinawa's burden.'" The situation surrounding the anti-base movement is severe. Yet we, Okinawan people, will abide by the following four principles including the three principles proposed by the Committee of 15 and will develop imaginative action to substantiate (2) to (4) of them:

(1) The present realignment initiatives of U.S. forces in Japan will never reduce the burden on Okinawa.

(2) The Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma should be closed immediately and unconditionally.

(3) We strongly oppose the plan to construct a new facility in the areas of Henoko Bay and Oura Bay to replace MCAS Futenma. We are determined to stop this plan.

(4) We do not recognize the use of military bases in Okinawa by the Japanese Self Defense Forces.

P.S.

* From Japonasia website. Translated by KAWAI Yuko.

* YUI Akiko was born in Shuri, Naha City in 1933. In 1951, came to Tokyo using a passport issued by the U.S. military authorities. In 1955, began working at the Tokyo office of the Okinawa Times, covering Tokyo. In 1990, moved back to Okinawa after 30 years to work in the head office. Reported on changes in Okinawa and women's activities. After working in Tokyo from 1983 to 1990, worked as a chief editor and editorialist from 1991 to 1992. In 1997, retired and became a free writer. From 1997 to 2002, acted as chair of the Unai Festival organizing committee. From 2003 to the present, has acted as joint representative of the Okinawa Network on the Hansen Disease Problem. Her works include Okinawan Women Today [Okinawa onnatachi ha ima] (co-authored), History of Women of Naha, "Flowers, footsteps of women" [Hana onna no ashiato], contemporary history, postwar history (co-authored), and other words on the contemporary history of Okinawans.