

PROBLEMS OF U.S. MILITARY BASES IN OKINAWA

February 2000
Japanese Communist Party

Until the outbreak of the Second World War, Okinawa was a peaceful island, without even Japanese military forces stationed there. Relating to military service, there was only a conscription office with a commander and a few staff members. Without military bases, the people of Okinawa lived in peace and had friendly relations with their Asian neighbors.

It was only in 1944 when Japan's defeat in WWII became imminent and the Japanese government decided to make Okinawa the place for final "decisive battles," that military forces were stationed there on a full scale. With the defeat of Japan, the stationing of military forces in Okinawa should have been put to an end.

However, the present Okinawa is so overcrowded with U.S. military bases and facilities that it is said, "The bases are not in Okinawa. Okinawa is among military bases." Stepping onto Okinawa, you will realize that this description is not an exaggeration. Eleven percent of the land area of Okinawa Prefecture is occupied by U.S. bases. This figure goes up to 20 percent on the Okinawa mainland. In the island prefec-

ture of 1.3 million people, 27,000 U.S. troops are stationed. Nowhere in Europe can you find a country with such a province or a state.

Moreover, these U.S. bases in Okinawa are situated right in the midst of very populated areas. For example, Kadena Air Base takes up 83 percent of the land area of Kadena Town, forcing more than ten thousand residents to live in the remaining 17 percent of the land. The town residents' houses, schools, hospitals and other facilities are squeezed in the small areas within only several hundred meters of the runways of the base. Such a situation is not limited to Kadena. In addition to Kadena, there are 3 towns and villages (Kin Town, Chatan Town and Ginoza Village) over 50 percent of whose land is taken by the U.S. bases. And there are 5 more municipalities where more than 30 percent of their land is taken (Yomitan Village, Higashi Village, Okinawa City, Ie Village and Ginowan City).

How has Okinawa been brought to such a situation? What kind of problems do the people of Okinawa have as a result? We earnestly want all of you to know the answers to these questions.

I. Origin and History of U.S. Military Bases in Okinawa

From WWII to the Peace Treaty

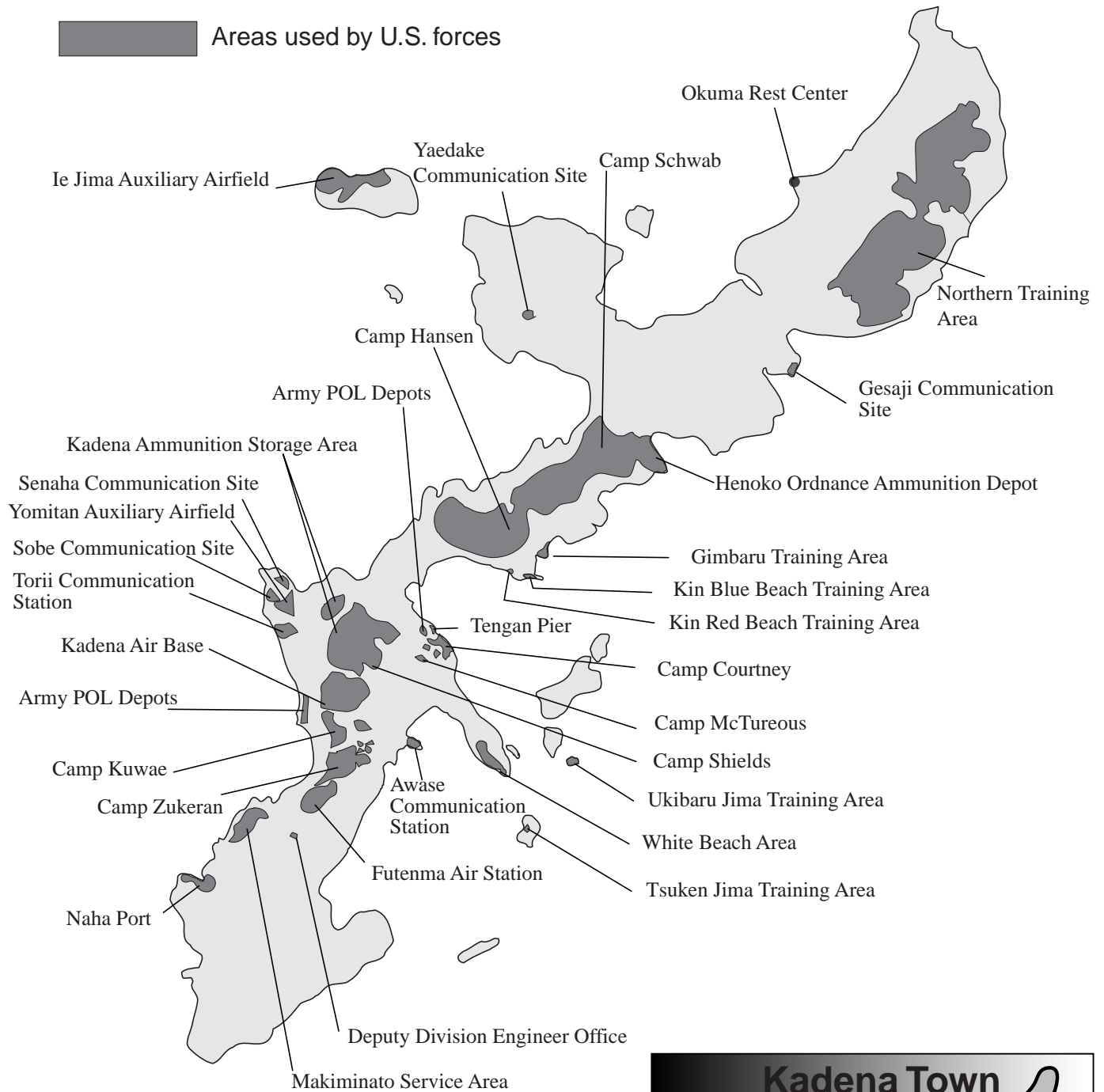
With the stationing of the Japanese Army in 1944, Okinawa became the only place in Japan during WWII where a ground battle was fought, involving noncombatants. The battle, which lasted for 80 days from the end of March 1945, was named "Iron Storm" from the enormous amount of naval gun fire during

the period. The intensity and severity of the battle was beyond words. More than 10,000 U.S. soldiers and about 90,000 Japanese troops were killed in the battle. Notable in this battle was the extraordinary large number of noncombatants victimized. More than one hundred thousand people — nearly one-third of the prefectural population — were killed.

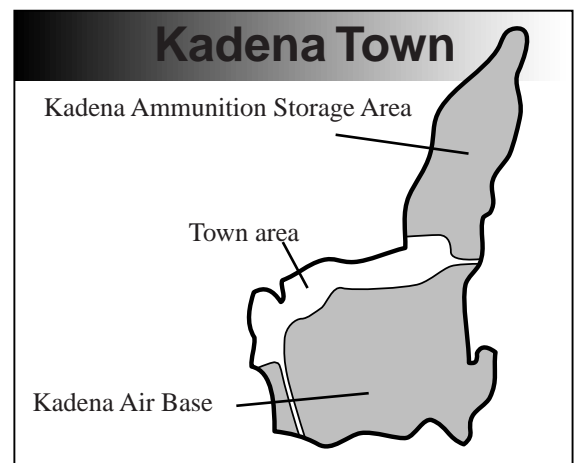
The U.S. Military forces, in occupying Okinawa,

U.S. Military Bases in Okinawa

(source: "U.S. Military Bases in Okinawa", Okinawa Prefectural Government, 1998)



The U.S. bases take up 83% of the land area of Kadena Town.



sent surviving citizens to concentration camps they set up in different parts of the prefecture, which continued beyond August 1945, after the war against Japan ended.

During the period from the end of 1945 to 1947, the citizens were released from the concentration camps. Coming back home, they were astonished to find vast areas of U.S. military bases stretching before their eyes. Their old homes and farms were bulldozed flat and they were not allowed to step onto their own land, which was surrounded by barbed wire. In Chatan Town, there used to be a Japanese army airfield. Requisition of the airfield was not enough for the U.S. military — they took as much as 40 times the land around the old airfield to build the present Kadena base. The townspeople of Chatan were allowed to live only on the worst land, such as slopes and valleys. Total farming land area shrunk to less than one percent compared with the prewar days, and even the remaining farms were devastated by the war. Not a few people who had lost their lands and houses were forced to immigrate to South America or other distant places.

Chatan was not the only example. During the same

period, in many different parts of Okinawa, a total of 18,000 hectares, about eight percent of the total land area of the prefecture, was requisitioned by the U.S. in a similar manner. Some “40,000 landowners lost their land and 12,000 households were forced to leave their residences” (document of the Ryukyu government at the time), and yet no compensation whatsoever was paid to any of them.

International law (The Hague Convention) prohibits the confiscation of private property even during war. Even if the requisition is conducted out of military necessity, payment for the loss is obligatory. What was done to the people of Okinawa by the U.S. — detaining them after the war ended; requisitioning their land while they were away; refusing to pay for their property — was a clear violation of international law, for which no justification can be made.

From the Peace Treaty to the Reversion of Administrative Rights

After the war, the Okinawan people started to work on what little farmland was saved from the U.S. requisition, and going through great pains, they managed



Okinawan people in a concentration camp standing in a queue for food (source: “Message from Okinawa”, Okinawa Prefectural Government, 1996)

to restore their land and make it arable again. They believed that they could retrieve their old land after the signing of a peace treaty.

However, the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty signed between Japan and the Allies allowed the U.S. to continue its occupation and rule of Okinawa. It was followed by further requisition of people's land on a larger scale, which was to impose more burdens and suffering on the people of Okinawa.

On Iejima Island, a new round of land confiscation started in 1953. The U.S. Forces pressed the people on the island to hand over their land, encouraging them to immigrate to South America or threatening them by sending their officers to the people's homes. Since the end of the war, Iejima farmers had worked arduously on their devastated farmland now devoid of trees on it and restored about half of their prewar production. For the farmers, further requisition of their land was too much to take.

The farmers were resolved to oppose the plan. In 1955, seeing that persuading the farmers would be impossible, the U.S. military decided to resort to strong measures. On the same beach where they launched the landing operation exactly 10 years before, the U.S. military unloaded 300 armed troops and vehicles, and surrounded the village. Unarmed, the villagers sat on their land, believing that "U.S. soldiers will understand our sentiment, if they are humans". But the U.S. military turned deaf ears to the people's plea. They bulldozed 13 houses, burned them, and confiscated their land. At one house, a sick child was in bed with the measles and a mother entreated the soldiers to postpone the action. However, U.S. soldiers went into the house with their shoes on, and as soon as they loaded the family and their belongings to a truck, they demolished the house. In this way, some 63 percent of the land area of Iejima Island was requisitioned by the U.S. military.

Iejima was not a peculiar example. In Oroku Village, 350 U.S. soldiers, armed with machine guns and carbines, and leading 15 armored vehicles and more

than 10 automatic cannons, suppressed the farmers offering resistance and confiscated their land, thrusting a "contract" at them, which said that the land shall belong to the U.S.A., including the surface, underground and air rights. Consequently, the land was taken away from the people even on a larger scale during this period than the immediate post-war period. Thus, the vast U.S. military bases as seen today were established.

From the reversion to Japan of Okinawa's administrative rights to the present

In 1972, twenty-seven years after the end of WWII the administrative rights over Okinawa were returned to Japan. The prefecture's people did not doubt at all that they could enter their own lands over the fences of the bases and get them back.

The Okinawan people's desire was again betrayed. In the past 28 years since the reversion of Okinawa, the percentage of Okinawa's land returned to the owners has been only 15 percent of the total base area while in the mainland Japan it was 60 percent. This is a compelling evidence to show that there has been almost no change in the circumstances of the bases in Okinawa.

What underlies this situation is the fact that the Japanese government assured the U.S. that Okinawa's U.S. base functions would not decline after the reversion.

In order to fulfill its promise to the U.S., the Japanese government enacted a specific law to allow the U.S. to continue using the lands that were taken by the U.S. military by force under its occupation of Japan. As soon as the law expired, the government enacted another law. Being enacted amid frequent visits to Japan by the U.S. secretaries of state and defense, the law brought about a system to allow the U.S. to continue using the lands indefinitely in neglect of the opposition of land owners. Was Okinawa returned to Japan in any sense? Isn't it still under the occupation of the U.S.? This is the frank view of the prefecture's people.

II. Consequences of the U.S. Military Bases in Okinawa

Why has the U.S. clung to constructing and maintaining military bases in Okinawa? Are they necessary for the defense of Japan? Absolutely, no. The U.S. recognizes Okinawa as a vital foothold for their operations in the Asia-Pacific region, which is clearly stated

in many unclassified U.S. government documents.

Eloquent evidence of this is the massive presence of the U.S. Marines in Okinawa, whose mission is overseas expedition. What is deployed in Okinawa is one of three U.S. Marine Divisions. Okinawa is the

only place outside the United States that hosts the Marine Corps on a division scale. A total of 17,000 Marines are stationed there. In the 1990s, the U.S. organized Marine Expeditionary Units with greater mobility. Of seven such units around the world, the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in Okinawa is the only unit deployed on the ground.

The fundamental duty of these troops is to do operations widely in the Asia-Pacific region. In 1982, Secretary of State Caspar Weinberger stated: "The Marines in Okinawa are not assigned to the defense of Japan." He also said that the U.S. operation areas were the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean. This statement astonished the Japanese people. As Admiral Joseph W. Preuher, who at the time was the Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command said in the U.S. Senate Services Committee in March 1996, the Marine Corps and other U.S. forces "are ideally positioned to respond to contingencies in the Western Pacific," indicating that Okinawa is essential for U.S. strategy in the Western Pacific. The 7th Fleet goes into action with the Marine Corps stationed in Okinawa. (Yokosuka is used as the home port of a U.S. aircraft carrier. It is the only port outside the United States that hosts a U.S. aircraft carrier.) Even in the home page of the 7th Fleet, there is a clear mention that the mission coverage extends a wide range from the whole region of the west Pacific through the Indian Ocean to the East Coast of Africa.

Okinawa had been the largest nuclear base in Asia until the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972. The U.S. had a free hand to carry out sorties in the Vietnam War and so on. At the time of reversion, the governments of Japan and the U.S. concluded secret agreements to allow the U.S. to bring nuclear weapons into Okinawa and make attacks from the bases freely in an emergency. Thus, Okinawa has been consistently made a strategic stronghold for the U.S. to make sorties abroad, and the presence of such troops has been a cause of a plight of the prefecture's people.

(1) Damage from U.S. Bases Located in Densely Populated Areas

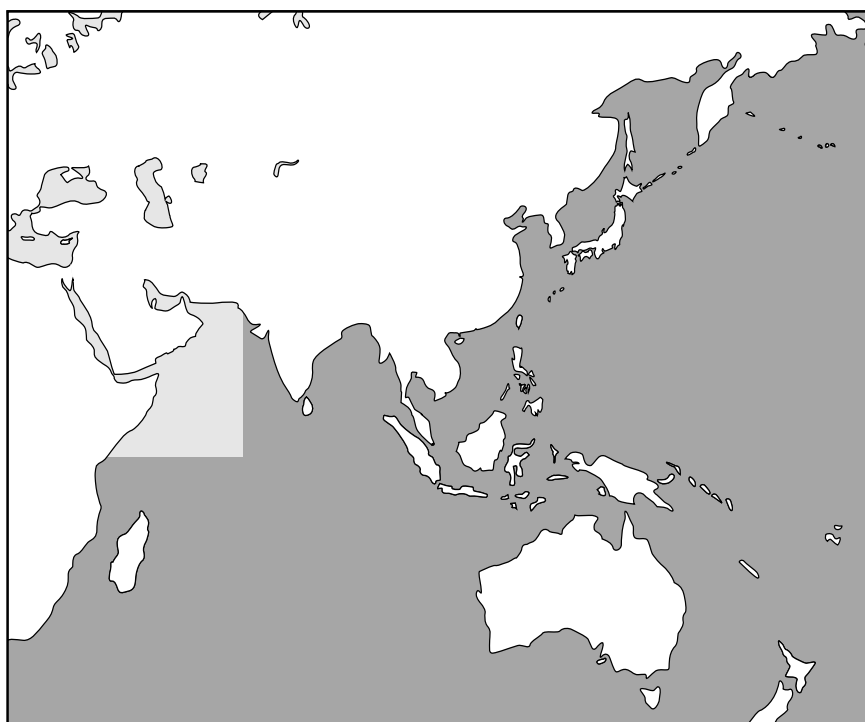
Terrifying accidents involving U.S. Forces

That large U.S. bases are being located in areas crowded with houses, schools and hospitals has caused damage peculiar to Okinawa.

First, the fear of possible accidents always haunts residents around the bases. Last April, a helicopter from the Futenma base crashed on the coast in an area where an electric power plant was located. Last June, a Harrier attacker from Kadena base failed to take off and went up in flames. In Okinawa, such accidents are almost daily happenings. It is a matter of course that accidents involving armed forces take place in any country. In case of Okinawa, as there are schools and houses only several hundred meters away from runways, a false step can lead to a big disaster.

Let's take up an accident caused by parachuting exercises conducted at Yomitan and Iejima Island. In 1965, when a parachuting exercise was underway at the Yomitan airfield, a trailer falling from a transport plane was about to hit a nearby house directly. Becoming aware of the danger, a fifth-grade primary school girl warned her family of the danger and rushed out of the house. Hitting an electric light pole, the trailer turned

U.S. 7th Fleet's Operation Area



operation area

source: <http://www.c7f.navy.mil>



Kadena Air Base is in a densely populated area.

around and hit the girl. She was dead by the time she arrived at a hospital.

The crash of jet planes has also been tragic. In 1959, a U.S. jet plane from Kadena Air Base crashed on a primary school and went up in flames. Seventeen houses and a community center surrounding the school were also burned down. Classrooms turned into hell with the cries of students who were trying to rush out of the flames. In the accident scene which was still smoking, 11 charred bodies of children were found. Six people neighboring the school were also killed and those injured either slightly or seriously totaled 210.

Even now the parachuting exercises continue and crashes and the burning of jet planes take place so often. The residents around the bases are always exposed to the danger of a possible disaster. Some schools have conducted fire drills on the assumption of a crash of U.S. planes. We don't think U.S. soldiers would deliberately head for houses or schools. The neighborhood of the bases, however, have been getting more crowded with more houses and schools due to a population increase. If an accident happens, the efforts of a U.S. soldier to look for room to avoid a disaster would be in vain in such populated areas around the bases.

Crimes by U.S. soldiers

In September 1995, a school girl was abducted and raped by three U.S. soldiers. The Okinawa prefectural police demanded that the suspects be handed over to Japan, but the U.S. Forces refused to do so. This incident roused the anger of the prefecture's people and rallies were held in October with 92,000 people participating from across the prefecture. They strongly demanded the eradication of crimes by U.S. soldiers, the revision of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), and the realignment and reduction of the bases.

The crime did not happen by accident. That is why the suppressed anger of the prefecture's people exploded. Just after Okinawa was returned to Japan, a woman was raped and killed (in Ginowan City in 1972); a young man who was allowed to enter the training site to mow the grass was run after and was shot in the arm deliberately by U.S. soldiers with an illuminating bomb and was severely wounded (on Iejima Island in 1974). In the year when the rape of the school girl occurred, a woman was beaten to death by a U.S. soldier who broke into her room in an apartment building in Ginowan City. Even after that, crimes and accidents involving U.S. soldiers have often taken place, as represented



Military plane taking off from Kadena

by the killing of a mother and her two children in a car accident and the hit-and-run case of a high school girl.

The number of criminal offenses by U.S. soldiers that have occurred since the reversion of Okinawa in 1972 is about 5,000. Of them, atrocious crimes such as a murder, robbery and rape account for more than 10 percent. This figure represents only the number of cases the Okinawa prefectural police dealt with. There are quite a few cases that are not reflected in the statistics, such as the ones where offenders were not identified or the injured have decided not to confront the perpetrators.

According to a survey published in the October 7-8, 1995 issue of the *Dayton Daily News*, a U.S. newspaper, the U.S. bases in Japan came to the top in the world in terms of the number of sexual crimes by U.S. Navy servicemen and the Marines. Seventy percent of the U.S. Navy and the Marine Corps stationed in Japan is concentrated in Okinawa, thereby many crimes occur there. The Okinawan people are forced to live under the danger of possible crimes by U.S. soldiers even on their way to and from schools and at home. In some school, teachers instruct students to avoid roads near the bases even if they are shortcuts.

Noise pollution by U.S. bases

According to Okinawa Prefecture, about 470,000 prefectural people, or 37 percent of Okinawa's population, are disturbed by the noise of military activities at U.S. bases. Generally speaking, noise pollution can be eased to a certain degree by soundproofing houses. However, in residential areas only several hundred meters away from runways, noise pollution is so bad that soundproofing does not work.

In areas near U.S. air fields, day begins with the military jets' engines screaming. School classes are disturbed by such noises. At Yara Primary School which is located 800 meters from the runways of the Kadena Air Base, noises (uninterrupted for more than 5 seconds) were recorded on average ten times in an hour-long lesson in January 1996. Residents around U.S. bases cannot get quiet night's sleep. Research in an area near the U.S. Futenma Air Station in June 1995 shows that noises were generated 2,244 times during month, and of these, 595 times (26 percent) were between 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. the following day.

In March 1999, Okinawa Prefecture's research commission made up mainly of medical doctors, published the final report on its four-year research on the



The Okinawan people are disturbed by noises from U.S. military aircraft. (Ginowan City)

impact of aircraft noises on the health of residents. The sampling was the most extensive ever taken in this kind of scientific research. The medical as well as scientific research established such noise effects as increasing behavioral aberration among infants, low-weight births, and impaired hearing. It is safe to conclude that these problems are closely related to the fact that U.S. bases are located in densely populated areas in Okinawa.

Factors hindering regional economic development

Okinawa's regional economic development is being hampered by U.S. military bases that are located in the central part of Okinawa's towns.

The U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station occupies a fourth of the total area of Ginowan City, and on top of this, it is right in the center of the city. Roads, waterworks and sewerage systems have to make a detour to avoid the air station. It is a major obstacle to improving the city's infrastructure. In addition, to avoid inconvenience to U.S. aircraft approaching the air station, the height of buildings is restricted near the base, and thus redevelopment, which Ginowan City wants to undertake, cannot be carried out. In some cases, a newly-built apartment house has been demolished just because it was identified as obstructing U.S. aircraft

flights.

Chatan Town hosts vast U.S. bases such as Kadena Air Base, Camp Kuwae, or Camp Zukeran, which occupy 56 percent of the town's area. This makes it difficult for the town to build public facilities simply because of lack of space. In some cases, the town's primary schools and kindergartens had to be built in neighboring Okinawa City. If U.S. base sites are all returned to Chatan Town, they can be used for sites of public facilities and housing units. Since this has not been the case, the town had no choice but to acquire the necessary land through the reclamation of water areas at enormous expense.

The railroads Okinawa had until the end of World War II were destroyed during the Battle of Okinawa. After the War, the U.S. Forces expropriated and closed them in order to construct military bases. The existence of U.S. military bases has been a stumbling block to laying railroad tracks connecting the North and the South. As a result, Okinawa still is without railway services.

In some areas of Onna Village and Kin Town, the source of water supply is right in U.S. military bases. In these areas, the town has to seek permission from the U.S. Forces even for cleaning of the water source.



A huge quantity of jet fuel spilled and leaked into a river. (January 1989)

(2) Problems Arising from U.S. Forces Being Given Vested Prerogatives

U.S. controls air traffic in Okinawa's air space

In Okinawa's air space there are 16 training areas of 92,000 square kilometers exclusively reserved for the U.S. Forces, which are 40 times the land area of Okinawa Prefecture. In addition, in the air space of Okinawa's main island up to an altitude of 6,000 meters, air traffic is controlled by the U.S. Forces. Not only airplanes using the U.S. military bases, but commercial flights entering Naha Airport are required to seek permission from U.S. Kadena Air Base. No country in the world but Japan surrenders its air traffic control to foreign military forces.

Worse still, this air traffic control gives the military priority. Commercial flights using Naha Airport have to fly at an altitude of 300 meters for dozens of kilometers, to avoid getting in the way of approaches of U.S. military aircraft landing and taking off at Kadena Air Base. Normally, civil airports are equipped with backup radar systems to be used in the event the radar breaks down. But Kadena Air Base does not have any backup radar systems because the U.S. military air-

craft can take off and land by visual flight in case the radar breaks down. In November 1999 when the radar broke down, commercial aircraft were controlled without radar for more than a day.

Environmental pollution irreproachable

The U.S. Forces are given exclusive rights to administer their military bases, where Japan's domestic laws are not applied, neither are U.S. laws applied to the U.S. Forces in Japan. There is no means to protect Okinawa's valuable natural environment from being destroyed.

In Camp Hansen, for example, U.S. forces carry out live-fire exercises regularly, often causing fires at the impact areas. As a result, the mountains around impact areas have lost their greenery, with the face of the mountains being laid bare mercilessly. Several times in the past large quantities of red clay flowed out of the mountains into Kin Bay, with large quantities of mud accumulating to pollute the coral reef.

Pollution with toxic PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) is also serious. In the past, trunks containing PCB were found piled up out in the open in Kadena Air Base. The Onna Communication Site was returned in 1995. PCB was detected at the base site. Although PCB-polluted soil was removed into containers, no one knows

when this sludge weighing 20 tons will be disposed of. Part of the Kadena Ammunition Storage Area was returned in June 1999, but the landowner had not been informed until the day the base site was returned that toxic substances such as hexavalent chromium and lead in excess of environmental standards had been detected.

The U.S. Forces Northern Training Area is a treasury of rare animals and plants such as *noguchigera* (pryer's woodpecker) and *yanbaruina* (Okinawa rail). But neither the government nor the relevant municipalities have the right to inspect the U.S. military area, and there is no way of knowing if the natural resources are properly protected.

U.S. soldiers are protected even when committing crimes

An important thing about U.S. soldiers committing crimes is that they are protected by prerogatives.

In dealing with crimes committed by U.S. soldiers and accidents involving U.S. soldiers on official duty in Japan and Europe, the U.S. as the country sending the forces has primary jurisdiction under the Status of Forces Agreement. The pilots who cut the cables of the ropeway during their low-altitude flying exercises

in Italy were thus tried by court-martial in accordance with such an agreement.

The situation in Japan is very different. More than 45,000 crimes and accidents involving U.S. soldiers on duty have occurred, causing 512 deaths. But none of them have been tried by court-martial. Even when local police try to hold U.S. soldiers responsible for a violation of traffic regulations, the U.S. Forces would use this arrangement to avoid losing time and deliver a certification stating that they were "on duty." This is what happens even today.

In case crimes are committed by U.S. soldiers not on official duty, it is common in all countries that the primary jurisdiction belongs to the host country, and that in special cases there is a mechanism for the host country to abandon its jurisdiction. But Japan abandons its jurisdiction more often than other host countries. Recent data from international comparison of such instances are not available now, but a telegram the U.S. ambassador to Japan sent to his government in 1957 pointed out that Japan exercises its jurisdiction in three percent compared to the worldwide average in similar circumstances of 28 percent.

III. What Okinawa People Want

A peaceful Okinawa without military bases

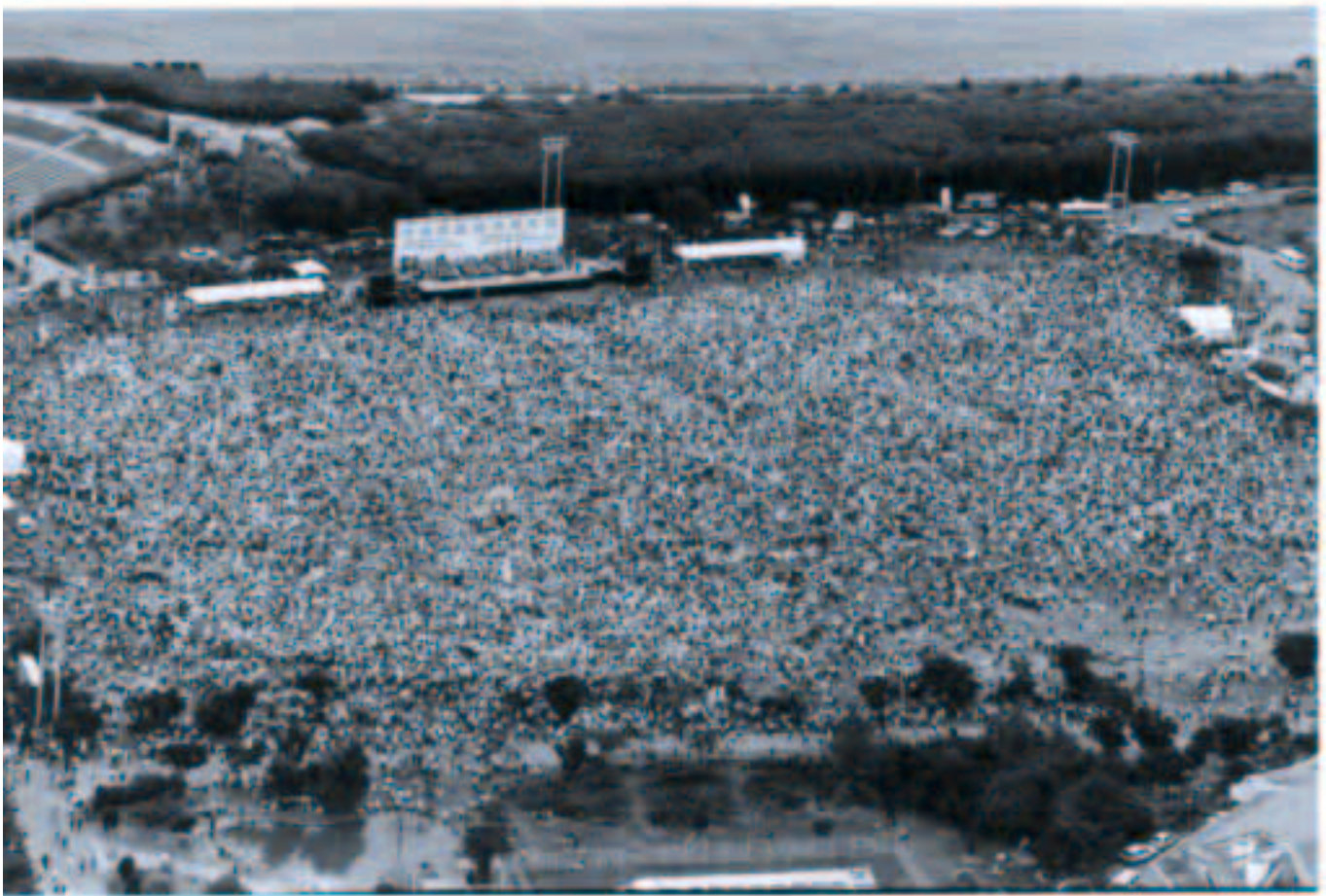
The 1995 rape of an Okinawa girl by U.S. military personnel prompted a sharp increase in the number of Okinawan people calling for the reduction and removal of U.S. military bases in Okinawa and the review of prerogatives that the U.S. Forces in Japan enjoy. The October 1995 Okinawa Prefectural Rally adopted a resolution expressing the sense of the Okinawa people demanding an immediate revision of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that gives prerogatives to U.S. soldiers who commit crimes, and the promotion of reduction and realignment of U.S. bases in Okinawa. In September 1996 the Okinawa people had a referendum on the review of SOFA and the reduction and realignment of U.S. bases in Okinawa. Nearly 60 percent of the prefecture's people voted and 91.26 percent were in favor of a review of SOFA and the reduction and realignment of U.S. bases.

In 1996, backed by this wish of the Okinawa people, the Okinawa Prefectural Government drew up

an Action Program for the return of U.S. bases in Okinawa. It calls for the return of U.S. bases in three stages to achieve an Okinawa free of military bases by the year 2015. Based on the consensus of the Okinawa people, the Program was designed to realize both the return of U.S. bases and local economic and social development by using the land to be returned by the U.S. Forces.

But the United States remains adherent to maintaining U.S. Forces in Okinawa against the will of the prefecture's people. The U.S. insists that Japan should build a new military base in another place in Okinawa as a substitute for the base to be returned to Japan. The U.S. also refuses to revise SOFA.

The Okinawan people underwent indescribable suffering in the 1945 Battle of Okinawa (toward the end of World War II). For 55 years since the end of the War they have been burdened by U.S. military bases. We surely have to put an end to this state of affairs. The Japanese Communist Party in solidarity with the people of Okinawa is striving to realize their demands.



“Give us back a quiet and peaceful Okinawa.” Over 85,000 people rallied on October 21, 1995, protesting the rape of a school girl by U.S. soldiers.

We oppose a new base for use into the 21st century

The Action Program drawn up by Okinawa called for the return of the U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station as a first action concerning U.S. bases on the island. Since Futenma Air Station is located in the midst of a densely populated area, accidents are likely to occur and take lives.

But the U.S. and Japanese governments are planning to construct a new military base by exploiting the call of the Okinawan people for the removal of the U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station. They want to construct a more useful and powerful military base than Futenma Air Station by means of “relocating” it to an area near U.S. Camp Schwab in Nago City.

The aim of the plan is to replace the 50-year-old aging Futenma Air Station with a state-of-the-art military base where the Osprey, a new military aircraft, can be deployed as a replacement for helicopters. A 1996 U.S. Department of Defense report stresses that the Osprey “is necessary to conduct...forcible-entry operations”

and “allows Marines to strike rapidly at objectives located deep inland.” They want to deploy the Osprey because its cruising speed is twice as fast, its payloads three times as much and its flying range is five to ten times their present helicopters. The Osprey would allow the U.S. Forces to deploy troops directly from Okinawa to the Taiwan Straits and to the Korean Peninsula. It can also conduct horizontal flight like fixed wing aircraft, as well as vertical landing and take-off like helicopters. Because of these capabilities the Osprey makes terrible noises and does greater damage to runways when it takes off and lands. This is why the U.S. wants to deploy the Osprey in a state-of-the-art base instead of the aged Futenma Air Station.

The plan is closely linked with the U.S. attempt to keep its bases in Okinawa almost permanently. The “DoD Operational Requirements and Concept of Operations for MCAS Futenma Relocation, Okinawa, Japan (final draft)” clearly states, “The SBF (sea-based facilities of the new military base) and all associated structures shall be designed for a 40 year operational



Coral reef off Henoko. The area is a possible site for a planned U.S. base.

life with a 200 year fatigue life.” The U.S. plans to construct a military base that can be used well into the 21st century.

Many Okinawan people are seriously concerned that the construction of a military base here will have irrecoverable consequences on the environment. The area planned for a new base is in a natural conservation area designated by Okinawa Prefecture. The area, where a diverse ecosystem is maintained, such as coral reefs, tideland and sea weed grounds, is given highest priority for conservation. The sea area is the northern habitable limit of dugongs, an internationally protected animal. There is a growing concern that the construction of a military base will make it impossible for them to live. In northern woods near the site for a new military base, more than 1,300 various species, including 66 that live only in this area, are confirmed to live. If U.S. military aircraft fly over the site, it surely will

have serious effects on the lives of many endangered species that live here.

People in Nago City have already expressed opposition to the construction of a military base in the referendum. Despite the opposition, the Japanese and U.S. governments are trying by all means to construct a military base in this area. The Summit meeting will be held in July when the relocation plan of the Futenma Air Station is at its crucial stage.

The Japanese Communist Party is committed to abrogating the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and building a peaceful Japan without U.S. military bases. But we believe that the suffering of the Okinawa people must be immediately ended even before the Security Treaty is ended. We hope that the world’s people will come to know Okinawa’s situation, and its desire to be free from its predicament.

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