

Okinawa: Protests staged across Japan as gov't marks 1952 recovery of sovereignty

Tuesday 7 May 2013, by [HIRAKAWA Tetsuya](#), [JOHNSTON Eric](#), [Kyodo News](#), [Mainichi Shimbun](#), [MIE Ayako](#), [YOSHIDA Reiji](#) (Date first published: 29 April 2013).

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NAHA, Japan (Kyodo) — People gathered at rallies across Japan on Sunday to protest against the central government's commemoration of the day Japan recovered its sovereignty in 1952 after its defeat in World War II.

In Okinawa Prefecture, which was left under U.S. control for another 20 years, around 10,000 people gathered for a rally in a park in the city of Ginowan at the same time that the government-sponsored commemoration ceremony commenced in Tokyo.

A resolution adopted at the protest rally said, "The holding of the ceremony is totally unacceptable as it makes a mockery of the feelings of the people of Okinawa and cuts Okinawa off once again" from mainland Japan.

April 28 is the day the San Francisco Peace Treaty took effect, ending the post-World War II occupation of Japan by U.S.-led Allied Forces following Japan's surrender. But Okinawa remained under U.S. military control until it returned to Japan in 1972 and the day is widely regarded in the prefecture as a "day of insult."

Masako Ishimine, the head of the Okinawa bureau of the National Federation of Regional Women's Organizations, who made a speech at the rally, noted that U.S. military bases that occupy vast areas of the prefecture were constructed while Okinawa was under U.S. military control. She also said the military bases led to a spate of crimes and accidents involving U.S. military personnel that continue to the present day.

"As a citizen of the prefecture that experienced the Battle of Okinawa and was forced to endure the subsequent hardships, we shall protest adamantly against the government's ceremony," she said in her speech.

Even after its reversion, Okinawa, despite accounting for less than 1 percent of the country's land area, continues to host more than 70 percent of U.S. military forces in Japan, prompting locals to urge the bases to be moved out of the prefecture.

Koshin Iha, 69, who attended the rally in Okinawa, said his father's 10,000 square kilometers of

farmland in Chatan in central Okinawa was forcibly seized by U.S. soldiers in 1955 when the prefecture was under U.S. control.

Iha said the soldiers forced him and his father off the land at the point of a bayonet and the land remains in the hands of the U.S. military. "I wonder if sovereignty was really restored in Okinawa," he said.

The municipal government of Naha, Okinawa's capital, raised a navy blue flag at its headquarters to express Okinawa's sorrow and disappointment for being cut off from the mainland, its officials said. Mayor Takeshi Onaga said, "We have to clearly indicate our resolve (in such a manner) to convey the historical meaning (of the day) to younger people."

In Tokyo, around 400 people took to the streets near the Kasumigaseki government office district to protest against the ceremony, chanting "The government should listen to the voices of Okinawa," while in Osaka, about 140 people gathered at a symposium organized by citizens and scholars opposed to the ceremony.

In the city of Amami in the Amami islands in Kagoshima Prefecture, which remained under U.S. military control until 1953, a resolution protesting against the central government ceremony was adopted at a rally.

Kyodo News, April 29, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130429p2g00m0dm005000c.html>

Okinawans protest gov't celebration to mark return of Japan's sovereignty

GINOWAN, Okinawa — As the national government celebrated the April 28 anniversary of the return of Japan's sovereignty, Okinawans gathered in a protest, branding the anniversary a day of "insult" for them.

According to organizers, around 10,000 people gathered at the protest, held at an outdoor coastal theater. The seats were full and many participants were standing.

"The government's celebration is an insult to Okinawans, considering we had U.S. rule and the Battle of Okinawa forced upon us," said 74-year-old Katsuko Gushiken. She was an elementary school student when the Battle of Okinawa concluded in 1945, and her school was occupied by the U.S. military. The restoration of Japan's sovereignty after the signing of the San Francisco Peace Treaty got her hopes up for an improved situation, but when the U.S. bases on Okinawa didn't go away, she felt she had been "tricked," she says. Gushiken's home city of Nago, meanwhile, has been selected by the Japanese and U.S. governments as a relocation site for the Futenma air base.

"They always force bases on us. We have no sovereignty," she said.

Nago Mayor Susumu Inamine, speaking onstage at the protest, said, "Politicians should learn about history."

City resident Chosei Ota, 85, nodded in agreement as he listened. At age 16, Ota left Okinawa to receive pilot training. As he returned on a boat soon after the war ended, he saw that the only lights on in his city were coming from U.S. military facilities. He thought that if he waited a while longer

the U.S. troops would leave, but Okinawa was left out of the peace treaty that took effect on April 28, 1952.

“(Those in the national government) don’t notice that there are differences in how we look at our history. Does the government want to stir up Okinawa so that it secedes?” he asked.

There were young people at the protest as well. One of them, a 15-year-old high school girl, used to go to a junior high school near the Futenma air base, where vertical take-off-and-landing Ospreys have been deployed.

“Sometimes class was stopped because of the roar of U.S. aircraft. I don’t think an Okinawa where that happens has sovereignty,” she said.

Around the same time, at the celebration in Tokyo, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was saying, “We should endeavor to reflect on the difficulties that Okinawa has endured.”

However, Nago city council member Zenko Nakamura, who opposes the relocation of the Futenma air base to the Henoko district of Nago, said, “If he’s going to say people should reflect on Okinawa’s difficulties then he shouldn’t have held the celebration in the first place, and he should stop the relocation of Futenma to Henoko. His words conflict with his actions.”

Toshio Ikemiyagi, 73, who serves as head of a group of lawyers for people protesting noise pollution in the Okinawa town of Kadena, commented, “I even sense outright deception” in the prime minister’s words.

Mainichi Shimbun, April 29, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130429p2a00m0na013000c.html>

Ceremony marking return of Japanese sovereignty riles ex-Okinawa Gov. Inamine

NAHA — Former Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine has expressed anger at the government for disregarding Okinawa residents’ feelings when it went ahead with a ceremony to commemorate Japan’s restoration of sovereignty on April 28, 1952 — when Okinawa was put under U.S. administration.

“Neither the government, bureaucrats or media outlets in mainland Japan ever expected the ceremony would draw protests from Okinawa. It’s sad. Okinawa was disregarded again,” he said. April 28 is the “Day of Humiliation” for Okinawa residents.

Inamine, 79, saw a rally organized against the ceremony by opposition and neutral members of the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly, on TV at his home in Naha. He sympathized with the organizers but refrained from participating in the rally as a former governor because it was not a non-partisan gathering.

He recalled that he was filled with a sense of alienation 61 years ago when the San Francisco Peace Treaty went into force. At the time, he was staying at a relative’s home in Tokyo to take a university

entrance examination. He felt as if he had been isolated in the big city where people were excited at Japan's liberation from Allied occupation.

"I don't think these people were considerate to or sympathized with the Okinawa, Amami and Ogasawara islands, which were split from Japan at the time," Inamine said. Under the pact, Japan restored its sovereignty and returned to international society while Okinawa as well as the Amami Islands in Kagoshima Prefecture and the Ogasawara Islands in Tokyo were placed under U.S. rule.

Inamine had similar feelings while he was serving as Okinawa governor. He made a tough decision in 1999 to accept the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to the sea off the Henoko district of Nago, also in the prefecture.

However, Tokyo and Washington changed their plans to build a substitute facility for the Futenma base in a coastal area in Henoko that is closer to residential areas. He retired as governor in 2006 while both the Japanese and U.S. governments were still discussing the plan.

"The majority of people on the mainland think, 'Although the Japan-U.S. alliance is necessary, we don't want to host U.S. bases. Okinawans, please host the U.S. bases for us.' Okinawa's anger is directed not only at the U.S. military and the Japanese government but also the Japanese public, which has formed such public opinion," the former governor said.

Inamine is worried about the emergence of prominent figures publicly calling for Okinawa's independence from Japan while there is no prospect that the southernmost prefecture could be economically self-reliant.

"I guess such opinions reflect Okinawa's fear that problems involving bases in Okinawa couldn't be solved unless they went that far," he lamented.

Okinawa Prefecture is home to 73.8 percent of military facilities in Japan used exclusively by the U.S. forces.

Agreements reached by Tokyo and Washington earlier in April on specific measures to reduce the U.S. forces' burden on Okinawa would reduce the ratio by only 0.7 percentage points.

The central government went ahead with the ceremony to commemorate the anniversary of Japan's restoration of sovereignty despite stiff opposition from Okinawa.

"The magma (of anger) could gush out again. People's emotions occasionally overwhelm their reason," Inamine said, in a warning to mainland Japan.

Tetsuya Hirakawa, Kyushu News Department, *Mainichi Shimbun*

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130430p2a00m0na007000c.html>

Gov't to forgo ceremony commemorating Okinawa's reversion to Japan

The government has decided to forgo a ceremony to commemorate the reversion of Okinawa from U.S. occupation to Japanese rule in 1972, which had been mulled for May 15 this year.

The decision comes on the heels of Okinawa Prefecture's protest against the central government's

plan to hold a ceremony on April 28 to commemorate the anniversary of Japan's restoration of sovereignty under the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1952. Okinawa residents regard April 28 as a day of humiliation after being placed under U.S. occupation. While the central government had considered holding the Okinawa reversion ceremony on May 15 this year after the April 28 ceremony, it subsequently decided the plan would not gain understanding from Okinawa.

At a press conference on April 24, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said, "The government has held the ceremony for Okinawa at each juncture. As it was held last year, we will make a decision (about this year) in view of the circumstances."

The Okinawa reversion ceremony has been held once every five or 10 years. Last year, the central government and the Okinawa Prefectural Government jointly held a ceremony to mark the 40th anniversary of Okinawa's reversion to Japan, which was attended by then Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda.

Kyodo News, April 25, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130425p2a00m0na006000c.html>

Okinawa: Nakaima snubs 'day of disgrace' Sovereignty celebration hit by protests

The government on Sunday held its first formal celebration of the day when the San Francisco Peace Treaty ended the allied Occupation, aggravating residents of Okinawa, which was abandoned by the mainland and left under U.S. control until 1972.

The ceremony marking the 1952 enforcement of the treaty, which was signed in 1951, was held at Kensei Kinenkan Hall in Chiyoda Ward, Tokyo. It was attended by Emperor Akihito, Empress Michiko and some 300 VIPs, mainly lawmakers, bureaucrats, Supreme Court justices and prefectural officials.

Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima snubbed his invitation to the event and instead sent Vice Gov. Kurayoshi Takara in his place.

"I would like to commemorate today as an important milestone to remember the path that Japan walked on," Abe told those gathered for the event, which triggered protests in both the capital and in Okinawa Prefecture.

Politicians in Abe's conservative Liberal Democratic Party apparently organized the event to make the most of the date in 1952 when Japan was formally released from U.S. control to bolster nationalist sentiment favoring their legal agenda. On April 28 last year, the party unveiled a draft proposal to rewrite the Constitution.

During campaigning for the general election last December, the LDP pledged to organize the ceremony to woo the nation's more nationalistic and conservative voters.

But the party was caught off guard by the negative reaction from Okinawa, highlighting the huge gap in historical perspective between the mainland and the people of Okinawa.

Acknowledging the anger, Abe used a portion of his speech to emphasize that Japan should never forget the hardships endured by the Okinawans, who suffered severely from the fierce shelling and

ground battles in the closing days of the Pacific War and remained under U.S. occupation until 1972.

"I'd like to encourage people, in particular younger generations, to deeply empathize with the hardships the people of Okinawa went through," Abe said.

After the ceremony, Okinawa Vice Gov. Takara told reporters that Abe's perspective on the prefecture differed from the actual experience of the people, but commended him for "confronting Okinawa-related issues" and said he could "accept and understand" the speech, according to Kyodo News. Takara didn't elaborate.

Takara also said that Nakaima declined to attend the sovereignty ceremony "because of the complex sentiments" of the Okinawan people, Kyodo News reported.

Citizens' groups held rallies in Okinawa and Tokyo to protest the sovereignty ceremony, which honors a day that most Okinawans regard as a day of disgrace, not celebration.

About 200 people gathered at a hall in the Hibiya district for a rally organized by an antimilitary group of landowners resisting U.S. bases in Okinawa.

"April 28 is considered the day when Japan, with the San Francisco Peace Treaty, recovered its independence while keeping Okinawa in the prison of the U.S. military," said Norio Motomura, an activist from Okinawa.

The central government "sold off Okinawa to the U.S. military" with the peace treaty, Motomura said, adding the central government has ignored "the public will" of Okinawans calling for the removal of the U.S. military.

Participants then marched from Hibiya Park to the Shinbashi district.

Reiji Yoshida and Ayako Mie, *Japan Times* Staff Writers, April 28, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/28/national/sovereignty-celebration-hit-by-protests/#.UYR6fUpOj1U>

Okinawa and Japan Restoration Party: Hashimoto eyes tieup with Okinawa group favoring Futenma base plan

OSAKA — Toru Hashimoto, mayor of Osaka and coleader of Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party), traveled to Okinawa on Tuesday for a three-day visit, during which he is expected to sign a policy agreement with a local political group that supports relocation of the Futenma military base within the prefecture.

Hashimoto will meet with former Diet member Mikio Shimoji, who heads Sozo (the Political Group of Okinawan Revolution). On Wednesday, Hashimoto and Shimoji are expected to agree to a policy of relocating Futenma to the Henoko coastal area in the city of Nago in a move apparently boosting the two sides' cooperation as they move toward the Upper House election.

Nippon Ishin does not have an Okinawa branch and in last December's Lower House election, its candidates lost all four seats. Shimoji, formerly of Kokumin Shinto (People's New Party), also lost his

seat and is expected to run in the Upper House election. His party wants to cooperate with Hashimoto, although in what capacity remains to be decided.

"If Sozo seeks our support, we'll respond," Osaka Prefecture Gov. Ichiro Matsui told reporters in Osaka late last week.

Shimoji has over the years advocated alternatives to the current Henoko plan. In 2010, while with Kokumin Shinto, he made two proposals involving base-related construction in Okinawa, including integrating Futenma with nearby Kadena Air Base.

He was criticized in Okinawa as more interested in the profits of local and mainland construction companies than in a realistic solution to the base issue. Shimoji is a former vice president at Daiyone, Okinawa's second largest construction company, which was founded by his father.

Hashimoto, on the other hand, has offered contradictory solutions to the Futenma issue. In 2009, while Osaka governor, he said that if approached by the central government he would discuss relocating Futenma to Kansai International Airport. He later switched his position, saying that because Kansai and Itami airport' management was going to be integrated, the situation had changed.

As head of Nippon Ishin, Hashimoto has become a strong supporter of the Henoko relocation plan.

"There is no other option (besides Henoko) for a replacement facility," Hashimoto said at a Nippon Ishin convention in March.

Eric Johnston, *Japan Times* Staff Writer, April 30, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/30/national/hashimoto-eyes-tieup-with-okinawa-group-favoring-futenma-base-plan/#.UYTJ9kpOj1U>

Okinawa: Nakaima rips signing of Taiwan fishery accord

Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima has slammed the fisheries accord Japan signed with Taiwan and urged that it be reviewed because it could hurt the prefecture's economy.

"I feel extreme indignation" about the agreement, which was signed without regard for the wishes of Okinawa's local fishery industries, Nakaima said in a meeting with Ichita Yamamoto, state minister in charge of issues related to Okinawa.

Yamamoto said he took the request for a review seriously and would convey it to Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida.

Tokyo and Taipei signed the accord earlier this month to allow fishing boats from Taiwan to operate in part of Japan's exclusive economic zone around the Senkaku Islands.

But residents in Okinawa have voiced concerns that the pact could cause the prefecture's catches of tuna and other fish to shrink and cause conflicts with Taiwanese fisheries operators.

Government sources said Tokyo compromised during the fisheries talks mainly to prevent Taiwan

from forming a united front with China against Japan over the Senkakus dispute.

Kyodo News, April 26, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/26/national/nakaima-rips-signing-of-taiwan-fishery-agreement/#.UYRpdUpOj1U>

Okinawa assembly protests at Japan's fishery accord with Taiwan

TOKYO (Kyodo) — The Okinawa prefectural assembly lodged a protest with the central government Monday over the signing of a fishery accord with Taiwan that could hurt the local economy.

Some members of the assembly visited Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato in Tokyo to hand over a letter of protest, which was unanimously adopted last week by the assembly.

Japan and Taiwan signed the accord earlier this month to allow fishing boats from Taiwan to operate in part of Japan's exclusive economic zone around the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

Tensions have been growing over the islets controlled by Japan but also claimed by China and Taiwan. While Beijing had called for cooperation with Taipei in the dispute, the fishing agreement was widely considered as a concession by Tokyo in an attempt to prevent the two rivals from being united against it.

Protesters in Okinawa have criticized Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for ignoring the interests of the local fisheries industry in the waters well known as good ground for tuna.

"We will protect (the interests of) local fishermen in future rule-settings," Kato told the visiting assemblymen. After the meeting, assembly member Akira Uehara quoted Kato as saying the central government may have failed to sufficiently consider the feelings of people in Okinawa.

Also Monday, the city assembly of Ishigaki, Okinawa, passed in a unanimous vote its own letter of protest. The islands, called Diaoyu in China, are administered by the city.

Kyodo News, April 22, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130422p2g00m0dm073000c.html>

Former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage: Futenma "Japan's responsibility" — Move falls under an agreed but long-stalled plan

WASHINGTON — The replacement of U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa is "now the responsibility of the government of Japan" under the terms of a long-stalled agreement, according to former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage.

Stating his position in a recent interview, Armitage also acknowledged that alternative solutions such as moving the Futenma operations to the U.S. mainland or Hawaii “could happen.”

Meanwhile, on heightened tensions between Japan and China, Armitage said that although he believes the possibility of conflict is low, the risk of an accident is higher and both sides need to maintain “excellent communications” between not only top leaders but also their respective ground-level commanders over the disputed Senkaku Islands, known by the Chinese as Diaoyu, to keep hostilities from erupting.

Armitage, who together with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye released the third Armitage-Nye report on the U.S.-Japan alliance last August, expressed frustration over how the issue of replacing Futenma with a new airstrip in Henoko, also in Okinawa, dominates bilateral relations. He described Futenma as a “smaller issue” when compared with the “big issues” that matter to all Japanese and many Americans, such as overall relations, and Japan’s place in the world.

“As far as I understand, when Mr. (Shinzo) Abe came here, he told Mr. (Barack) Obama that he would do his best, that Henoko still remained the best plan,” Armitage said, referring to Prime Minister Abe’s summit with the U.S. president in Washington in February. “So as far as I’m concerned, it’s now the responsibility of the Japanese government.” “I want to concentrate on big issues — China, Taiwan, North Korea,” Armitage added. “And, most importantly, by the way, in my view, the rejuvenation of Japan.”

Japan and the United States agreed in 2006 to close the Futenma base in the densely populated city of Ginowan after its replacement is operational on the Henoko coast of Nago, by 2014. But in 2011 they withdrew the deadline as the replacement plan remained stalled, largely due to opposition from local residents demanding that Futenma not be replaced with a facility in Okinawa.

Armitage also voiced his opposition when asked about calls for a revision of the Status of Forces Agreement, which governs the handling of U.S. military personnel in Japan, in light of repeated offenses involving members of the U.S. armed forces. He indicated that operational improvements will be adequate.

“I’m opposed to ever opening the Status of Forces Agreement, because they would have to be passed by the U.S. Senate and nothing but mischief could happen,” he said.

“We’ve turned over much more rapidly to Japanese authorities people who have caused trouble, even recently having two sailors who were convicted of a rape,” Armitage said. “So I think we have found ways, without renegotiating the SOFA, to make it more appealing to Japan and more transparent to Japan. So that’s the direction I want to go in.”

He also noted that for a long time after the end of World War II, the U.S. presence in Okinawa was welcomed. But after the islands’ reversion to Japan in 1972, “both because Okinawa got more crowded and because there were tensions between the (Japanese) central government and Okinawa, the American expression is, to some extent we became the “meat” in a sandwich,” Armitage said of the difficulties faced by the United States over its military presence in Okinawa.

Armitage acknowledged there had been frustration among U.S. policymakers over Japan’s domestic political chaos, which has seen six prime ministers in as many years. Now, with Abe’s return to office finally providing hope of an administration having some stability, “most in the United States feel quite good about that,” he said.

On Abe’s push for revising the pacifist Constitution, Armitage reiterated that it will be for Japan itself to decide whether to change the supreme law or whether to amend the government’s

interpretation of it, but that in his view, “the Article 9 prohibition is an impediment to (U.S.-Japan) alliance cooperation.”

The government currently interprets the war-renouncing Article 9 as prohibiting Japan from exercising the right to collective self-defense.

Armitage, who described Abe as a “friend for a long time,” is also supportive of the prime minister on the issue of restarting the use of nuclear energy in Japan, despite the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant that started in 2011.

“My belief is Japan’s nuclear reactors are the safest in the world,” he said while acknowledging the antinuclear feelings here. “Who in the whole world could think of a 9-scale earthquake and 33-foot-high (10-meter) wall of water? That’s the reason Fukushima became a disaster, not because the reactor design was unsafe.

“It is impossible for me to see how Japan can recover, unless Japan uses nuclear energy,” Armitage added. “I think (this) is the only way for Japan to rediscover their manufacturing prowess and to come out of the “lost decade,” if you will, almost two decades.”

With regard to critics in Japan who complain that the government blindly follows policies presented in the Armitage-Nye report, the former deputy secretary of state said, “(I) would welcome anyone in Japan standing up and having their own report, and I would welcome what advice they had for the United States, in their report.” There are plenty in the United States who are critical of Dr. Nye and me. They say that we’re pushing Japan in a way that Japan doesn’t want to go,” he added. “My answer is simple: Then have Japan stand up and say that.” As for his view of his own role in U.S.-Japan relations, Armitage said, “Though I have many Japanese friends, I do not do what I do because I love Japan; I do it because I love the United States. I know what’s in my country’s interest.

Kyodo News, April 17, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/17/national/armitage-futenma-japans-responsibility/#.UXULOkpOj1U>

Osprey aircraft from Okinawa to join exercise in South Korea

SEOUL (Kyodo) — Osprey aircraft will be sent from a U.S. Marine Corps on Japan’s Okinawa Island to South Korea next week to participate in a joint U.S.-South Korea military exercise, a U.S. military official said Thursday.

The official said the MV-22 Ospreys, which can take off and land like a helicopter and cruise like an airplane, will take part in a landing exercise set to take place in the southeastern city of Pohang on April 26.

It will be the first time for Ospreys to take part in the annual Foal Eagle exercise, though two Ospreys participated in an air show held at an airbase near Seoul in October last year.

This year’s Foal Exercise, which is being held amid North Korea’s continuing threats of nuclear war, began March 1 and will last through April. It has so far included training flights by nuclear-capable

B-2 and B-52 bombers.

Kyodo News, April 18, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130418p2g00m0dm076000c.html>
