

Okinawa Past and Present: around the sovereignty and US bases issue

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Okinawa governor to skip state sovereignty ceremony

NAHA OKINAWA PREF. — Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima will not attend a government-sponsored ceremony to celebrate the 61st anniversary of the country's restoration of sovereignty after its defeat in World War II, officials said Wednesday.

Instead, Okinawa Vice Gov. Kurayoshi Takara will be sent to the ceremony set for April 28.

Nakaima's decision to skip the ceremony was due to the Okinawa public's strong opposition to the event, sources said.

The governor said in a statement that he wants the central government to understand the opinions of the Okinawa public.

The decision was a tough one for the governor, Takara told reporters.

Takara added that he will attend the ceremony by taking into account the feelings of Okinawa residents, and as a Japanese citizen.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters in Tokyo that he was informed that the Okinawa vice governor will attend the ceremony.

The central government will conduct the ceremony in consideration of the feelings of the people in Okinawa, Suga said.

Okinawans oppose the event marking the effectuation of the San Francisco Peace Treaty on April 28, 1952. Although Japan regained its sovereignty, Okinawa stayed separated from the rest of Japan under U.S. control.

Jiji Press, April 12, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/12/national/okinawa-governor-to-skip-state-sovereignty-ceremony/#.UWpvfErS-gM>

Okinawa opposition politicians to protest sovereignty restoration event

NAHA, OKINAWA PREF. — Members of the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly who belong to opposition political groups are planning to stage a protest rally when the central government holds a ceremony later this month to mark the restoration of Japan's sovereignty in 1952.

"We are hardly in a mood to celebrate because April 28 is the day Okinawa citizens were severed from Japan," assembly member Satoru Nakasone, who is organizing the protest, said Tuesday.

Nakasone said he wants the people of Okinawa to make their voices heard through the rally.

April 28, 1952, is the day the San Francisco Peace Treaty took effect, officially ending the Allied Occupation of Japan. Okinawa, however, remained under U.S. control until it was returned to Japan in 1972.

The protest rally is to start in a park in Ginowan at 11 a.m. to coincide with the sovereignty restoration event in Tokyo, where the administration led by the Liberal Democratic Party will hold center stage.

The rally in Okinawa will involve political groups other than the LDP and its coalition partner, New Komeito.

Last Friday, the Okinawa assembly passed a unanimous resolution to oppose the government-sponsored ceremony, calling April 28 "a day of ignominy for the Okinawa people." The LDP members in the assembly walked out when the vote was held.

The assembly groups who support the protest will ask all assembly members to attend, but it remains to be seen how many Okinawa politicians will do so.

Such gatherings in Okinawa over the years have frequently turned into scenes of massive protests over the security policies of the Japanese and U.S. governments.

Kyodo News, April 3, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/04/03/national/okinawa-opposition-politicians-to-protest-sovereignty-restoration-event/#.UWPQ5vJUpWF>

Okinawa: Gov't steps up efforts to secure Okinawa's acceptance of Futenma plan

NAHA, Japan (Kyodo) — The government stepped up efforts Wednesday to win Okinawa's approval of the planned relocation of a U.S. military base within the island, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga meeting with local leaders and offering aid for local economic development.

But Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima again rejected the plan in a meeting with Suga, reiterating his demand that the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station be moved outside the prefecture.

Suga suggested the central government will proceed with the plan while easing the burden on Okinawa as much as possible.

Under an agreement with the United States, Tokyo plans to relocate the air base from its current location in the city of Ginowan to the less populated Henoko coastal area, despite opposition from people in Okinawa, which has long hosted the bulk of U.S. forces in Japan.

"It will take time to relocate (the base) to Henoko. That's why I'm saying it is better to move it outside the prefecture," Nakaima told Suga at a hotel in the city of Naha.

Suga, the top government spokesman, told reporters after the meeting that the government will listen to Okinawa carefully, but added, "We will make progress on what we need to do."

His visit to Okinawa, the first since Prime Minister Shinzo Abe launched his Cabinet in December, came after the central government asked the Okinawa governor last month to allow land reclamation at the relocation site following assessment of the environmental impact.

Whether Nakaima will approve the reclamation is the focus of attention. But on Wednesday he only said reaching any conclusion will "take significant time."

Suga conveyed to Nakaima the government's intention to support economic development in the island prefecture. The government is considering early construction of a second runway at Naha airport, among other steps.

It has also been negotiating with the United States to return to Okinawa part of the land that the U.S. military uses for its facilities, in accordance with progress on the Futenma relocation plan.

During the meeting, Nakaima asked Suga to make clear the schedule for such a return of land, while Suga said the government is "making every effort."

Nakaima said he has yet to decide whether to attend a ceremony on April 28 planned by the government to commemorate the day Japan recovered its sovereignty under the 1952 San Francisco Peace Treaty following its defeat in World War II.

The date is widely regarded in Okinawa as “a day of insult” as the prefecture remained under U.S. control until its reversion to Japan in 1972.

Kyodo News, April 4, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130404p2g00m0dm014000c.html>

Futenma base land eyed for return to Japan control in FY 2022 or later

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Japan and the United States outlined on Friday a new time frame for relocating the U.S. Marine Corps’ Futenma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture, saying that land used for the base can be returned in “fiscal 2022 or later.”

Moving the Marine base out of the densely populated city of Ginowan on the main island of Okinawa and returning its land to Japanese control will be contingent, however, on the relocation of Futenma’s airfield and flight functions elsewhere in the prefecture.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced the schedule along with the time frame for returning some of the land south of the U.S. Kadena Air Base used by U.S. forces on the island, a move designed to reduce the impact of the U.S. military presence on communities in Okinawa.

The plan envisions returning during the fiscal year that began this month “or later” a small portion of the land south of the U.S. Air Force base made eligible for “immediate return” under a bilateral agreement in April 2012.

The April 2012 agreement stipulated that parts of Camp Zukeran and the Makiminato Service Area are to be returned immediately upon completion of necessary procedures. Most such parts can be returned in fiscal 2014 or later, according to the new plan.

Most of the land used for the Makiminato Service Area in Urasoe, whose early return is sought by local officials, can be returned to Japanese control in fiscal 2025 or later under the plan.

Nearly 90 percent of the land totaling more than 570 hectares for the two facilities and three U.S. military areas south of Kadena Air Base can be returned once replacement facilities are provided in Okinawa or as Marines relocate outside Japan.

The three areas are Camp Kuwae, the Naha port and Kuwae Tank Farm No. 1.

The plan also gives a time frame for the return of all the facilities and areas in question and where they will be relocated. Japan and the United States will consider reviewing the plan every three years.

Returning the land used for the Futenma Air Station to Japan is contingent on the base’s relocation to a coastal area of Nago, another city on the main Okinawa island, under an agreement between Japan and the United States. But local opposition to the proposed relocation, which will involve land reclamation, remains strong.

Japan and the United States agreed in 2006 to relocate the Futenma base to Nago by 2014, but in 2011 they withdrew the deadline as the relocation plan remained stalled. They had said all along it

would take eight to 10 years to implement the relocation from the time land reclamation begins.

Under the April 2012 bilateral agreement, the process of returning the facilities and areas south of the U.S. air base was delinked from progress on relocating the air station.

A plan detailing return and relocation steps for the facilities and areas in Okinawa was to be drawn up by the end of last year.

Kyodo News, April 5, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130405p2g00m0dm055000c.html>

Japan, U.S. reach deal on Okinawa land return

TOKYO (AP) — Japan and the U.S. said Friday that they have agreed on plans for returning to Japan land near Kadena Air Base on the southern island of Okinawa that is now used by U.S. troops, in an effort to balance local concerns with support for the countries' military alliance.

A statement issued by both sides characterized the plan as a realignment and consolidation of U.S. forces in Okinawa.

"Recognizing the strong desires of Okinawa residents, this consolidation plan is to be implemented as soon as possible while ensuring operational capability, including training capability, throughout the process," it said.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos announced the agreement Friday.

"This is a very important event for reducing the impact of our bases in Okinawa, but at the same time maintaining the long-term sustainability of our bases and our ability to achieve peace and security in the region and the defense of Japan," Roos said.

The plans call for eventually returning more than 570 hectares (1,400 acres) of land near Kadena. The various facilities and land are being returned to Japan as replacement locations become available and troops are transferred out of Japan.

It also includes separate timetables and arrangements for relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in the Okinawan city of Ginowan beginning in fiscal 2022. The original plan for relocating Futenma to another location, Nago, by 2014 was put off due to local opposition.

U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the agreement marked an important step in America's efforts to maintain an "effective U.S. force presence in the region while reducing our footprint on the island of Okinawa."

"Now more than ever it is essential that the United States maintain a geographically distributed and sustainable force throughout Asia that can provide for the protection of Japan and our other allies, and U.S. interests," Hagel said in a statement.

An earlier agreement called for setting detailed plans by late 2012 for returning facilities and land to

Okinawa. But progress was slowed by funding cuts that delayed relocating troops and facilities to Guam and families of U.S. service members to South Korea.

AP, April 06, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130406p2g00m0dm004000c.html>

Onodera seeks cooperation on Okinawa U.S. facility reversion plan

NAHA, Japan (Kyodo) — Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera sought support Saturday from Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima for a plan to return a number of U.S. military facilities in Okinawa to Japanese control.

“I believe the plan will contribute to further developing Okinawa,” Onodera said in his talks with Nakaima in Naha, Okinawa Prefecture.

Nakaima responded, “I hope the government will continue making efforts so the facilities and areas (used by U.S. forces on the main island of Okinawa) will actually be returned.”

Their meeting was held after Japan and the United States agreed Friday that land south of the U.S. Kadena Air Base should be returned between the current fiscal year and fiscal 2028, or later.

The land occupied by the controversial U.S. Marine Corps’ Futenma Air Station could be returned in fiscal 2022 or later.

Onodera visited Okinawa to explain the new bilateral agreement to Nakaima.

Nakaima told reporters after the meeting he still expects Tokyo and Washington to transfer the Futenma base outside Okinawa, saying, “I have no intention of changing my stance.”

Kyodo News, April 06, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130406p2g00m0dm038000c.html>

Okinawa: Abe exploiting chink in base opposition?

Henoko ploy for reclamation gets boost from fishing co-op

OSAKA — The government’s formal request last week for Okinawa’s permission to allow land reclamation work to start for the new airfield that would replace the U.S. Futenma base was a calculated move that came amid signs that local political opposition might be softening.

But with all 41 Okinawa cities, towns and villages, the prefectural assembly and the prefectural chapter of the Liberal Democratic Party officially opposed to building a new base in Okinawa to

replace U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima is now caught between the stepped-up demands of Tokyo and those in the prefecture who fear the consequences of not agreeing to the new base, and base foes, who are expected to increase their opposition in the days and weeks ahead.

The Friday announcement by the Okinawa Defense Bureau that it would seek permission to fill in offshore areas along the Henoko coast in Nago comes after nearly a month of political signals that the long-entrenched opposition to the base might be weakening. Earlier this month, the Nago fishermen's cooperative voted overwhelmingly to agree with the central government's formal request to begin reclamation work for the new base, whose planned runways would extend offshore.

The agreement was an important first step toward breaking local opposition over the base. It came after years of behind-the-scenes negotiations between the fishermen's group, the Defense bureau, and local LDP or LDP-supported politicians who quietly favored the base.

No formal agreement between the fishermen and the central government has yet been signed. That will not happen until, and unless, an agreement on how much money will be offered as compensation for lost fishing grounds is first reached. How much money might be required to win the co-op's agreement is unknown.

In the early 1990s, the central and Kansai regional governments paid about ¥60 billion to fishing cooperatives in Osaka, Hyogo and Wakayama prefectures for the basic rights to build the man-made island for Kansai airport. Aichi Prefecture paid about ¥7.1 billion to two local fishermen's unions for the rights to the fishing grounds where Chubu airport now sits.

Legally, Tokyo does not need to have a signed agreement from the co-op before formally applying to Nakaima to reclaim the land. But having such an agreement puts great political pressure on local politicians, including Nago Mayor Susumu Inamine, who opposes the base. Inamine was particularly upset by the co-op's decision.

"Is it alright to accept the base simply after seeing a one-time payment?" asked Inamine after the fishing co-op's nod.

In mid-March, in a controversial election decided by lottery after both candidates got exactly the same number of votes, Munekatsu Kayo, 60, was elected head of the Henoko district. He won after antibase voters threw their support behind him and said he would respect the decision of Inamine and the town assembly, both opponents to the new base.

But Kayo also indicated another survey of local opinion would be conducted in May, and he would be open to discussions if the results showed the majority of Henoko residents favored the new base. Such recent developments in Henoko encouraged the central government to step up its public pressure.

"The Henoko ward chief has agreed and the Nago fishermen's union has agreed (to the reclamation)," Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera said Sunday.

But to gain the governor's approval, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will first have to win over the Okinawa prefectural chapter of the LDP. On Sunday, it said it will continue to call for closing Futenma, which is in the crowded city of Ginowan, and moving its flight operations outside Okinawa when it meets in early April.

"The position of the prefectural chapter on relocating Futenma outside of Okinawa will not change," Secretary General Moriyuki Teruya told Okinawa media.

Nakaima has said it could take up to 10 months for him to decide whether to allow the reclamation work to go ahead. By then, the results of the Upper House election in July and the Nago mayoral election in January will be known, and the latter is expected to be especially intense. Although Nakaima now says building the Henoko airstrip is impossible, he has indicated in the past that he might accept if there was local agreement.

Eric Johnston, *Japan Times* Staff Writer, March 25, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/03/25/national/abe-exploiting-chink-in-base-opposition/#.UWlruPJUpWE>

New high school texts say Japanese Imperial Army ordered WWII Okinawa suicides

The mass suicides of civilians is one of the darkest chapters of the bloody Battle of Okinawa in 1945, and for the first time since World War II some of Japan's high school history textbooks will say these deaths were ordered directly by the former Japanese Imperial Army.

References to "orders from Japanese soldiers" and civilians being "forced by the military" regarding mass suicides cleared the academic 2012 Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology new textbook content review, released on March 26.

The inclusion of such phrases has long been controversial. In the academic 2006 textbook review, some evaluators took issue with a phrase stating that "there was army coercion" of suicides, and publishers revised or deleted the passage from their texts.

Okinawan residents and other groups protested the move, and the education ministry shifted its policy. At the end of 2007, an application was made to revise the texts and the ministry approved content stating that the Imperial Army "was involved" in the suicides, or that Okinawans were "pushed" to kill themselves. Until now, however, the ministry had never approved content clearly stating the Imperial Army was directly responsible for the suicides.

This time, however, there is no question. Publisher Shimizu Shoin Co.'s two submissions included the passages, "Orders from Japanese soldiers led to Okinawans committing group suicide," and, "The army caused many tragedies in Okinawa, killing local civilians and forcing them to commit mass suicide." The ministry did not raise any objections.

According to the education ministry, "The evaluators understood the word 'orders' to mean soldiers ordered people to assemble at a memorial to Japan's war dead, not to kill themselves." On the term "force," the ministry stated, "If the conditions of the army's involvement and other factors are considered together, it cannot really be said that using the term would cause a misinterpretation (of history)."

On the about-face from the 2006 textbook review, one publishing company editor told the *Mainichi*, "The evaluation process has been going on since spring last year, meaning evaluators really did their work under the former Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)-led government. Perhaps there was some consideration for Okinawa in play."

The new history texts also give more space to Okinawa overall than previous versions, and the mass civilian suicides are mentioned in eight out of the nine sets of texts evaluate

Mainichi Shimbun, March 27, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130327p2a00m0na014000c.html>

Okinawa receives land-reclamation application for Nago base site

NAHA, OKINAWA PREF. — The Okinawa Prefectural Government formally received on Friday the central government's application to reclaim land in preparation for replacing the U.S. Futenma military base in Ginowan with a new facility in Nago.

Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima, who has the authority to approve or reject the application, will have the final say after studying the documents for eight to 10 months.

The bureau's filing of the application marked a milestone in the central government's effort to push forward its accord with the United States to build the base.

The prefecture will probably start the long process of assessing the documents next month. The process includes allowing concerned parties to give their opinions over a three-week period, Okinawa officials said.

Kyodo News, March 30, 2013

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/03/30/national/okinawa-receives-land-reclamation-application-for-nago-base-site/#.UWNb9_JUpWE

Timeline seen for Futenma land reversion — Accelerated plan to shrink U.S. footprint in Okinawa nears

Tokyo and Washington plan to stipulate that the site of a contentious U.S. Marine Corps base in Okinawa be returned to Japan's control within nine years and that the handover of five other facilities and areas leased to the U.S. military in the prefecture be hastened, government sources said.

The two sides want to craft a plan, possibly in the first half of April, to return facilities and land south of U.S. Kadena Air Base in an effort to reduce the concentration of U.S. facilities and troops in Okinawa.

The five sites are Camp Zukeran, the Makiminato Service Area, Camp Kuwae, part of the port of Naha and Kuwae Tank Farm No. 1.

In 2006, Japan and the United States agreed to move U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma from

the crowded city of Ginowan to a less populated coastal district of Nago by 2014. But the plan has made little headway amid fierce local opposition to keeping the base inside the prefecture.

In 2011, Tokyo and Washington decided to drop the previous deadline of 2014 and instead committed to completing the relocation "at the earliest possible date."

On Friday, Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera told a news conference that "Futenma will be included" in the planned land handover.

A senior ministry official argued the plan would send a critical signal, saying, "It's important that the government shows its stance to prevent Futenma from remaining (in Ginowan) as a way to gain approval from Okinawa (for the relocation)."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters in Tokyo on Saturday that Japan and the United States "are energetically negotiating" the return of the five facilities and areas "so we can reach agreement on it, including a schedule."

But he declined to elaborate on whether the two countries will be able to specify a time frame for the return, saying only, "All issues are under negotiation."

Under a bilateral agreement reached last April, the facilities and areas south of the Kadena base will be returned to Japan to ease the impact of U.S. forces on Okinawa. At the time, this process was delinked from progress on the Futenma base's stalled relocation.

Kyodo News, March 30, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/03/30/national/timeline-seen-for-futenma-land-reversion/#.UWNlNfjUpWE>

Another 12 Ospreys headed to Japan in July, bound for Futenma

Japan and the United States are arranging to ship a second batch of 12 MV-22 Osprey aircraft in July, likely to a Marine Corps base in the Chugoku region before their deployment in Okinawa, sources close to bilateral relations revealed Saturday.

As with the first group of 12 tilt-rotor MV-22s that arrived last year, the new aircraft are likely to be stationed temporarily at U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Yamaguchi Prefecture, and then transported to the U.S. Futenma base on Okinawa Island after undergoing test flights and maintenance, the sources said.

Tokyo and Washington will expedite talks on when to move the hybrid transport planes to U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in the city of Ginowan. The Marine Corps plans to deploy a total of 24 Ospreys at the facility by 2014 to replace aging CH-46 Sea Knight transport helicopters.

The U.S. government proposed shipping the second batch directly to Okinawa but Tokyo expressed reluctance, fearing the move would further roil local sentiment against the deployment, according to the sources.

Washington then agreed to first send the Ospreys to the Iwakuni base, they said. Like the first batch,

the aircraft are expected to be shipped from California.

Kyodo News, March 31, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/03/31/national/another-12-ospreys-headed-to-japan-in-july-bound-for-futenma/#.UWNmzPJUpWE>

Abe seeks Okinawa land-reclamation approval to relocate U.S. base

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government submitted Friday an application to Okinawa authorities for approval to reclaim land for the relocation of a U.S. military base, despite strong local opposition.

But whether Abe's government can move forward with the relocation anytime soon remains uncertain, as Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima, as well as many other local leaders and residents, are staunchly against the relocation within the southernmost prefecture, which for many decades has hosted the bulk of U.S. forces in Japan under a bilateral security accord.

Nakaima has the authority to approve or reject the land reclamation. The governor is expected to take about a year to decide how to respond the central government's request, after officially accepting it possibly early next week, a prefectural government official told Kyodo News.

"The relocation within the prefecture is effectively impossible," Nakaima told reporters in Okinawa. "I still believe that the best solution is to relocate the base out of the prefecture."

In making the decision, Nakaima is expected to take account of next January's Nago mayoral election.

Incumbent Nago Mayor Susumu Inamine, who is also against the relocation to Henoko, said he feels nothing but "resentment."

"It is not only my feeling but the feelings of all Okinawa that we will not let (a base) be built on sea or on land" in Okinawa, Inamine said.

Kyodo News, March 22, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130322p2g00m0dm079000c.html>

Okinawa residents angered over nat'l plan to celebrate independence restoration day

NAHA — Okinawa residents have protested to the central government over its plan to hold a ceremony to commemorate the April 28 anniversary of Japan's restoration of independence after the war, as they regard the day as one of humiliation after being placed under U.S. occupation.

Abe has announced that he is considering a government-sponsored ceremony on April 28 to commemorate the San Francisco Peace Treaty coming into force on April 28, 1952, under which Japan regained independence.

The LDP incorporated its pledge to hold a ceremony to celebrate Japan's restoration of sovereignty on April 28 in its policy pledges for last year's lower house election.

However, in Okinawa it is seen as a "day of humiliation" because the prefecture was separated from Japan along with the Amami Islands in Kagoshima Prefecture and placed under U.S. occupation under the treaty.

The Amami Islands were returned to Japan's sovereignty on Dec. 25, 1953, and Okinawa's reversion came on May 15, 1972.

Teruo Hiyane, professor emeritus at the University of the Ryukyus, urged the central government to keep in mind Okinawa's humiliation if it celebrates the April 28 restoration of Japan's independence.

"Okinawa residents were sacrificed greatly in the Battle of Okinawa, and separated from Japan on that day. It's the starting point of the history of Okinawa's post-war plight. It's only natural that Okinawan people don't feel like celebrating the day," Hiyane said. "If the government were to hold a commemorative ceremony, it should also tell the general public about Okinawa's history."

In the third lawsuit against noise pollution from the U.S. Kadena Air Base, a group of residents launched their suit on April 28 two years ago.

"On that day, it was decided to permanently place U.S. bases in Okinawa, and we still suffer from it. Our view of April 28 is the polar opposite to the mainland's view," said Shinchi Taira, secretary-general of the group of plaintiffs.

Chihiro Uchimura, 68, the second daughter of the late Naha Mayor Kamejiro Senaga, expressed her anger at the government's plan, which she thinks will only upset Okinawa residents who have been forced to shoulder the heavy burden of hosting U.S. bases.

"It's impossible for Okinawa residents, who think they have been victimized by mainland Japan because U.S. forces deployed Osprey aircraft in Okinawa, to understand the idea of celebrating April 28," she said. Senaga, who also served as a Japanese Communist Party member of the lower house, has been regarded as a symbol of center-left forces in post-war Okinawa.

Kantoku Teruya, a Social Democratic Party member of the lower house, is also furious about the national government's move.

"I was surprised. It's absurd, and never tolerable," said Teruya, who was born as a prisoner of war camp in Saipan and returned to Okinawa with his family after the end of the war.

"Prime Minister Abe said during the campaign for the lower house election (in December last year) that he would restore Japan. However, it has become clear that what he calls Japan doesn't include Okinawa. It highlights structured discrimination against Okinawa," he said.

Mainichi Shimbun, March 08, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130308p2a00m0na014000c.html>

Relocating U.S. Futenma base outside Okinawa difficult: Abe

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Monday it is difficult to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma air base outside Okinawa Prefecture, despite strong calls from local residents, citing a tough security environment surrounding Japan.

"Units of U.S. Marines need to stay together," he said. "I have to say that it would be an infeasible policy to separate the Futenma unit and move it outside the prefecture."

Abe, who last month met with leaders in Okinawa to seek their understanding of the central government's position, also attributed his stance to "provocations against (Japan's) sovereignty as well as its land, sea and airspace," an apparent reference to Chinese military assertiveness in the midst of a bilateral territorial dispute over a group of islands in the East China Sea.

The "deterrence" effect provided by U.S. Marines stationed in Japan's southern island prefecture is "indispensable for security in our country and peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific area," Abe added, in a comment that also came at a time when North Korea has increased its nuclear and missile technology ambitions.

Referring to North Korea's announcement Monday through its ruling party's official mouthpiece that it had scrapped the armistice that ended the 1950-1953 Korean War, Abe said, "It is a provocation. The situation does not allow optimism."

The government is expected to ask permission from the Okinawa governor to reclaim land at the envisioned relocation site as early as this month, even as Okinawa residents want the base relocated outside the prefecture, which has long hosted the bulk of U.S. forces in Japan.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters that the government will stick to the agreement with United States. But the top government spokesman added, "We will proceed while seeking as much understating from people in Okinawa as possible."

Kyodo News, March 11, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130311p2g00m0dm065000c.html>

Nago mayor starts policy speech with antibase stand

NAHA, OKINAWA PREF. — The mayor of Nago, the proposed Okinawa site of an airbase to replace U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, reiterated his resolve Monday to block the project.

Susumu Inamine said this in his fiscal 2013 policy speech before the city's assembly, "I pledge to remain adamantly opposed to (the base relocation plan) until the Japanese and U.S. governments give up," referring to the planned transfer of the Futenma flight operations, now at the base in the

crowded Okinawa city of Ginowan, to Nago's Henoko coast.

Inamine said it is important for Okinawa residents to "remain united and stand up against" the base replacement. The mayor also said he plans to visit the United States with other municipality leaders from the prefecture to convey their strong opposition to the Futenma replacement.

In late January, the heads of all 41 municipalities in Okinawa, including Inamine, directly urged Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to drop the Japan-U.S. plan to build the new airstrip at Henoko.

The state may file a land-fill application with Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima to start work on the replacement base, whose runways would extend offshore.

Kyodo News, March 5, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/03/05/national/nago-mayor-starts-policy-speech-with-antibase-stand/#.UTVOuTfA55s>

Gov't seeks consent from Okinawa fishery coop. to base relocation

TOKYO (Kyodo) — The government sought the consent Tuesday of a fisheries cooperative in Japan's southernmost prefecture of Okinawa to land reclamation to be undertaken as part of work to relocate a U.S. air base, the defense ministry said.

The cooperative in the city of Nago has fishery rights for the Henoko coastal area, a planned relocation site of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station currently located in Ginowan in the prefecture.

The move comes as the central government plans to submit an application to the Okinawa prefectural government by the end of March for land reclamation to relocate the Futenma base, according to a government source.

The cooperative's consent, while not required for the government's relocation plan, would be needed before starting reclamation work if Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima decided to approve it.

Kyodo News, February 26, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130226p2g00m0dm067000c.html>

Nago fishing co-op OKs base fill

The head of a fishermen's cooperative in Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, said its members will agree to landfill work necessary for the planned relocation of the Futenma military base to the city's Henoko coastal area.

"We are unable to fish freely in the planned landfill site. I believe 99 percent of our members will agree to the work as they want the issue to be settled soon," Hiroshi Kohagura told reporters in Tokyo on Tuesday after the Defense Ministry submitted to the cooperative a document asking for an agreement to the landfill plan.

The agreement of the association, which has fishing rights for the surrounding ocean area in Henoko, is required if Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima is to give the green light to the landfill work.

Kohagura said he plans to discuss the matter among co-op executives to reach a consensus in March. Then, at a special general meeting, he hopes to obtain consent from members to leave the decision to the executives.

Meanwhile, Nago Mayor Susumu Inamine issued a statement saying the central government's application for the landfill work is "totally unacceptable."

Ginowan Mayor Atsushi Sakima said at a news conference Tuesday that Futenma must be moved out of his city. The central government has to promote efforts to relocate the base, he said, adding that the best place for it is out of the prefecture.

The Defense Ministry's request for the fishing cooperative's agreement is designed to pave the way for the central government's application to the Okinawa governor for a landfill permit. The central government plans to ask for his approval in March.

Jiji Press, February 28, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/02/28/national/nago-fishing-co-op-oks-base-fill/#.UTFX7TfA55s>

Okinawans monitoring noise from Ospreys

GINOZA, OKINAWA PREF. — People living in the village of Ginoza in Okinawa have started measuring noise levels emanating from the U.S. military's MV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft.

After collecting data, Ginoza officials will ask the central government to take steps to reduce noise pollution and also ask the U.S. forces to change the current flight routes for the Ospreys, which are conducting drills around the northern Okinawa village, home to U.S. Marine Corps Camp Hansen.

Since the Ospreys were deployed to Okinawa last October, the village has confirmed that the aircraft passed overhead on at least 38 days. The noise pollution generated by the vertical takeoff and landing transport planes during their low-altitude flights has become a serious problem for the residents.

With the cooperation of some of the residents, the local assembly plans to install noise-measuring devices at nine places around the village.

It recently handed out its first acoustimeter to Tadanobu Izumi, 82, who lives in the Shirohara district. His home is just 300 meters from Camp Hansen's helicopter takeoff and landing zone.

"The Ospreys barely clear my rooftop and the loud noise makes the house shake," he said.

Up to 98.9 decibels were registered at a house in Ginoza in late January, said Takeshi Tokashiki, an associate professor at the University of the Ryukyus.

Tokashiki said this level of noise is as loud as what is heard underneath elevated railway tracks when a train passes.

Many Okinawans have argued the Ospreys do not abide by flight rules agreed on by the Japanese and U.S. governments, such as no flights over schools or densely populated areas.

Last October and November, officials of the prefecture and 27 municipalities recorded a total of 318 Osprey flights that violated the rules.

Jiji Press, February 19, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/02/19/national/okinawans-monitoring-noise-from-ospreys/#.USVixvKLJ5s>

Rare Okinawa plants transplanted due to helipad projects perish: papers

Over 60 percent of rare plant species, including endangered ones, that were transplanted due to the construction of U.S. military helicopter landing and takeoff sites in Okinawa have died, documents showed Sunday.

Construction of the landing zones for Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft is under way in the U.S. military's Northern Training Area on northern Okinawa Island.

The construction commenced in 2007 under a U.S.-Japan agreement on the return of part of the land used for the training area in exchange for the new helicopter zones. The government's Okinawa Defense Bureau plans to build 75-meter-diameter helipads at six locations in four districts of the training area.

According to bureau reports obtained under the freedom of information law, in one of the four districts, the bureau transplanted 11 plants of rare species in July 2007 but by September 2011, seven of them, or 64 percent, had died.

Of 41 plants transplanted to a different location between 2007 and 2008, only one had died as of November 2011, but the number in good condition had declined to 12 from 26 as of last June.

The names of the plants involved were not disclosed in the documents, but according to prefectural officials briefed by the bureau, the dead plants included endangered species. The bureau said the transplanted plants may have died due to typhoons or soil erosion from rain.

Kyodo News, Feb 19, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/02/19/national/rare-okinawa-plants-transplanted-due-to-helipad-projects-perish-papers/#.USmKMTfA55s>

Abe to seek base landfill permission

The government may apply early next month for permission from Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima for landfill work required for the planned relocation of U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, officials said Saturday.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and U.S. President Barack Obama reaffirmed at their summit Friday at the White House that the Futenma base will be moved without delay to the Henoko coastal area of Nago from the crowded city of Ginowan, in line with the current bilateral plan.

“A further delay of the facility’s relocation would wear out the patience of the United States,” a senior government official said in Tokyo.

While stopping short of stating a specific timing for filing the application with Nakaima, Abe assured Obama that he would take “concrete action.”

Abe’s administration on Jan. 29 completed all necessary procedures for the environmental assessment necessary to seek permission for the reclamation work.

Earlier last week, Nakaima said the Okinawa Prefectural Government will not block an application by the central government to construct a replacement facility for the Futenma air station at Henoko. However, there are no prospects for the central government actually obtaining Nakaima’s consent to proceed with the landfill.

At a meeting with Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida on Feb. 16, Nakaima reiterated that he has promised his constituents that he will move the Futenma base out of the prefecture as soon as possible.

A senior Defense Ministry official nevertheless said that “an application should be made immediately” to ensure steady progress on the facility’s relocation, which has been stalled for years by local opposition.

Abe is treading carefully on the timing, trying to weigh the security alliance with the United States against a host of domestic issues, several of which pertain to Okinawa, informed sources said.

At Friday’s summit meeting, Abe and Obama also agreed to accelerate efforts for the return to Japan of five sites currently used by the U.S. military south of the U.S. Air Force’s Kadena base on Okinawa Island. The two leaders hope the deal, which would reduce Okinawa’s burden of hosting the bulk of American forces stationed in Japan, will smooth the way for the Futenma base’s relocation, the sources said.

Ever since Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party swept December’s general election, Abe has been trying to build the central government’s relationship with Okinawa after ties were badly dented under the previous administration led by the Democratic Party of Japan.

But the Okinawa government has shown no signs of changing its stance on the Futenma relocation issue.

Jiji Press, February 25, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/02/25/national/abe-to-see-base-landfill-permission/#.USwTFzfA55s>

U.S. report to deny Agent Orange in Okinawa – Pentagon to admit pesticides dumped but not Vietnam War defoliant

A U.S. Department of Defense investigation into the presence of Agent Orange on Okinawa Island is set to support veterans' allegations of the clandestine burial of potentially harmful chemicals there – but dismiss claims that the toxic Vietnam War defoliant was among them.

Sources knowledgeable about the final report say the inquiry is likely to uphold accounts that large amounts of military supplies, including pesticides, were dumped during the 1960s and '70s at Okinawa installations – possibly including U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and a former military installation in the town of Chatan.

The admission is likely to fuel demands in the prefecture for environmental tests to ensure that the land – some of which has been returned to civilian use – is no longer contaminated.

According to information obtained by *The Japan Times*, the Pentagon launched the inquiry at the request of the Japanese government nine months ago. Full details of the final report will be announced in Washington next Tuesday at a meeting attended by officials from the Japanese Embassy and representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs – the agency responsible for deciding redress for service members sickened in the line of duty.

Over the past 18 months, *The Japan Times* has reported accounts from U.S. veterans that dozens of barrels of chemicals – including Agent Orange – damaged in a shipping accident were buried near Hamby Air Field, Chatan, in 1969. Today, the area is popular with tourists and the allegation of the burial caused alarm among local residents.

Several mayors, as well as Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima, demanded a full probe. It was also reported that as many as 100 barrels of Agent Orange had been unearthed during construction work at Futenma in 1981, sickening the station's former maintenance chief, retired Lt. Col. Kris Roberts.

In that case, it is alleged the chemicals were illegally removed from the base to be disposed of at an undisclosed location.

While the Pentagon report to be released next week may help the veterans directly involved in these burials receive redress for their exposure to chemicals, it is also likely to prompt an angry reaction from hundreds of other former service members who claim they were exposed to Agent Orange on Okinawa Island.

According to details of the Pentagon report obtained by *The Japan Times*, the inquiry will categorically deny claims that the defoliant was ever present on the island.

U.S. investigators apparently were able to track down records of the shipment of Agent Orange to Vietnam. Counter to some veterans' assertions that the defoliant passed through Okinawa ports,

none of the surviving documents suggest this was the case.

The report will also rebuff veterans' accounts of spraying Agent Orange on bases by offering evidence that such substances were, in fact, nontoxic herbicides. However, the Pentagon did not attempt to contact any veterans to clarify their accounts of exposure to Agent Orange on Okinawa, according to the sources.

Likely to draw the ire of many veterans was the man selected by the Pentagon to head its investigation: Alvin Young. A retired air force colonel with more than 40 years of experience investigating military usage of defoliants during the Vietnam War, Young has written dozens of reports and is the author of four books about Agent Orange.

However, his close connection to the Pentagon and previous research funding from the manufacturers of Agent Orange - including Dow Chemical and Monsanto - have led some veterans' advocates to question his findings, which often downplay correlations between defoliants and human health effects.

Herb Worthington, chairman of Vietnam Veterans of America's Agent Orange and Other Toxic Substances Committee, expressed anger when he learned of the report.

"These veterans of both sexes were there on Okinawa at different times, served in different branches, but they all have the same memories of being exposed to Agent Orange and many are ill today. They respected and loved our country - they believed it would never do anything to harm them," Worthington said.

Jon Mitchell, Special To *The Japan Times*, February 15, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/02/15/national/u-s-report-to-deny-agent-orange-in-okinawa/#.UR2ldvIbIjE>
