

# Respect the Will of the People of Okinawa Island and Stop Imposing Burden of Hosting US Forces on Them

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

Okinawa, an island that occupies only 0.6% of Japan's land area, hosts 74% of US military facilities in Japan.

It is this reality that forces Okinawans to live under the threat of crimes committed by American servicemen. For the past 44 years since the island was returned to Japan in 1972, the number of offenses committed by US soldiers amounted to 5,910, of which 575 were heinous crimes. In April 2016, a twenty-year-old local woman, while jogging, was murdered by a former US Marine. And on top of it, people in Okinawa suffer from the unbearable nuisance of noise caused by US military aircraft, in particular fighter jets. The extent of damage inflicted on the population is documented in court rulings. MV-22 Osprey drills are another source of affliction. When US Marines intended to deploy MV-22 Osprey in Okinawa, over 100,000 Okinawans turned out at a mass rally to oppose the deployment. The plan, however, went uninterrupted, causing a lot of pain on the residents, which have been revealed by local government's investigations. The Japanese and US governments agreed in advance on the operational guideline of MV-22 Osprey, but it is already a dead letter since the need of the US forces is always prioritized.

People in Okinawa expressed, many times over, opposition to the plan to relocate the US base to another place in the island on a number of occasions; mass rallies, National Diet elections, local assembly elections, sessions of the Prefectural Assembly and municipal assemblies. In January 2013, The Chairman and all the members of the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly, the presidents of the four associations of municipal governments and assemblies in Okinawa, and the mayors and chairpersons of all the 41 municipal governments and assemblies of Okinawa jointly signed a letter of petition, in which they demanded of Prime Minister Abe that his administration retract the decision to deploy MV-22 Osprey and Futenma Air Station be closed and removed from Okinawa.

The Government of Japan, however, chose the path of suppressing the non-violent campaign opposing the construction of a new air station by the force of riot police officers, hundreds of whom are mobilized from prefectures in the mainland. It is a gross violation of human rights and democratic principles.

Moreover, if a new air station at Henoko and the Osprey Pad are built, they will deny a habitat to invaluable marine creatures like dugongs and corals, and destroy the irreplaceable ecosystem of the Yanbaru Forest. For this, international environmental groups criticize the governments.

Cognizant of the above-mentioned, we, undersigned, hereby petition:

**The construction of a new air station at Henoko, Nago City be stopped;**

**The deployment of MV-22 Osprey to any place in Japan be disapproved, and the construction works for the Osprey Pad in the North Drill Range located in Higashi and Kunigami villages be immediately terminated;**

**Futenma Air Station be closed down without delay and returned to Japan, given the fact that it endangers the lives of people in Okinawa;**

**The US Marines be withdrawn from Okinawa; and**

**The Status of Forces Agreement, which only entrenches unfair treatment of people in Okinawa, be fundamentally amended.**

Signatories:

Name	address	Country

Please send this to:

**“Sougakari” Action Committee**

3F 1-15 Kanda Awaji-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0063, JAPAN

tel:03-3526-2920