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# The Bases of Empire

The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts

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## CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Foreword – Cynthia Enloe</i>	ix
Introduction: Bases, Empire, and Global Response <i>Catherine Lutz</i>	1
<b>Part I: Mapping U.S. Power</b>	
1. U.S. Foreign Military Bases and Military Colonialism: Personal and Analytical Perspectives <i>Joseph Gerson</i>	47
2. U.S. Military Bases in Latin America and the Caribbean <i>John Lindsay-Poland</i>	71
3. U.S. Nuclear Weapons Bases in Europe <i>David Heller and Hans Lammerant</i>	96
4. Iraq as a Pentagon Construction Site <i>Tom Engelhardt</i>	131
<b>Part II: Global Resistance</b>	
5. People's Movement Responses to Evolving U.S. Military Activities in the Philippines <i>Roland G. Simbulan</i>	145
6. "Give Us Back Diego Garcia": Unity and Division among Activists in the Indian Ocean <i>David Vine and Laura Jeffery</i>	181

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## 8

### OKINAWA: WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR DEMILITARIZATION

*Kozue Akibayashi and Suzuyo Takazato*

On September 12, 2001, U.S. military bases on the island of Okinawa and other locations on mainland Japan went to "Delta," their highest alert level. While the attack on the United States was broadcast live in Japan and drew intense attention from the public, to the majority of the Japanese population, these incidents were "a fire on the other side of the globe." To the people in Okinawa, however, the threat was real. As many people in the United States who live near national landmarks feared the possibilities of another attack, people in Okinawa feared that the next target could be, say, Kadena Airbase of the U.S. Air Force, the largest in the Far East, or Futenma Air Station of the U.S. Marine Corps, located in the midst of a highly populated area of Ginowan City, or many of the other U.S. military facilities on their island. Fortunately, there was no attack on the U.S. bases in Okinawa; the island was instead pummeled by a week-long typhoon that prevented any flights, military and civilian, from entering or leaving Okinawa.

One of the 47 prefectures of Japan, Okinawa has since the end of the Asia Pacific War in 1945 "hosted" 75 percent of those facilities located in Japanese territory that are exclusively used by the U.S. military and has played a crucial role in the U.S. military operations as the "keystone of the Pacific." The reality of the lives of the people of Okinawa under long-term active foreign military occupation is often neglected within the realist paradigm of power politics. This chapter introduces the history of colonization of

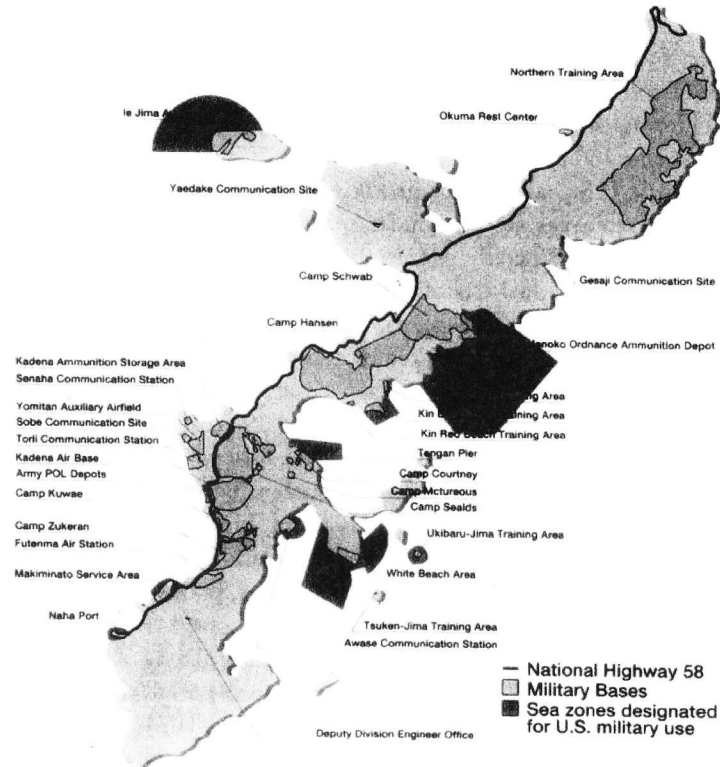
Okinawa and the struggle of the people, particularly women, who have called for an end to military occupation and for demilitarization of the global security system.

### Geopolitical Conditions of Okinawa in U.S. Military Strategies

Okinawa prefecture consists of a vast semi-tropical archipelago of 160 islands located in the East China Sea, 40 of which are inhabited. Its land area represents 0.6 percent of the Japanese total, and its population of roughly 1.3 million constitutes 1 percent of the entire population of Japan. Its semi-tropical climate, natural beauty, and attractions such as coral reefs, which do not exist in other parts of Japan, make tourism the key industry. In Okinawa, agriculture was devastated by the Asia Pacific War, and after the war, self-sustaining agriculture and industry hardly developed as entire aspects of people's lives were affected by the U.S. military bases; this was in strong contrast to the mainland of Japan, whose economy prospered during post-war reconstruction. Okinawa is known as one of the country's most economically depressed prefectures, with an unemployment rate of around 8 percent, compared to the national average of less than 5 percent,<sup>1</sup> and the lowest average per capita income in Japan.

The geopolitical importance of Okinawa has always been featured in discussions of military security in East Asia. Naha City, the capital of the prefecture, is located midway between Tokyo and Manila, and all the major cities in Asia are within a concentric circle of 2,000 kilometers. Even before the end of the Asia Pacific War, the U.S. military started to expropriate the Japanese Imperial Army bases and they expanded the bases during the post-war U.S. occupation of Japan that lasted until 1951 on the mainland and 1972 in Okinawa. These military bases were legitimated by the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America, signed and put into effect in 1960 (hereafter the Security Treaty). Personnel of the U.S. Armed Forces and their dependants and families are stationed on the gated bases.

The U.S. military is stationed at 89 locations throughout Japan, occupying a total land area of 313 square kilometers. The exact number of personnel is difficult to determine, but according to military researcher Hiromichi Umebayashi (2002), the number is between 51,000 and 60,000, including the personnel of the Seventh Fleet home-ported in Yokosuka, Japan.



Map of U.S. bases on Okinawa (Okinawa Prefectural Government).

Okinawa is the largest home of U.S. military bases in Japan; 37 facilities, comprising 75 percent of all those exclusively used by the U.S. military, are located in Okinawa, occupying about 20 percent of the main island. The total number of U.S.-military-



related personnel stationed in Okinawa is 45,354: 22,339 soldiers, 1,503 civilian employees, and 21,512 dependants.<sup>2</sup> One of the distinctive characteristics of the U.S. military stationed in Okinawa is the high proportion of the U.S. Marines Corps: about 17,700 of the 21,600 U.S. marines in Japan are stationed in Okinawa. The facilities in Okinawa include Kadena Air Base, Futenma Air Station for the Marine Corps, the Northern Training Area that caters to the need of jungle warfare training, and other training sites such as the live-ammunition drill sites. The U.S. military bases in Okinawa are said to fulfill a vast range of functions central to achieving the goals of U.S. military strategists in managing two wars simultaneously.

While U.S. occupation of Okinawan land is more visible, air and sea areas are also under control of the U.S. military for their training. When flying into the civilian Naha Airport, which handles heavy tourist traffic, aircraft fly in at a very low level. This is not to please passengers, however, with a clear view of the beautiful ocean, but is required by air control, which gives higher priority to military aircraft. Local fisheries are also affected by the water-training areas of the U.S. military: 29 areas are designated as training sites, thus limiting the local fisheries from entering, giving priority to military exercises such as bombing training.

In maintaining these U.S. bases in Japan, the Japanese government has provided a considerable amount of financial aid, known as *Omoiyari Yosan* (Sympathy Budget). *Omoiyari Yosanin* refers to a part of the host-nation support (HNS), a cost born by host nations to maintain the U.S. military. The entire HNS budget for the fiscal year 2006 is about \$4.1 billion (¥473.2 billion), which covers such costs as rent of the land used by the U.S. military. *Omoiyari Yosan* for the same year is about \$1.9 billion (¥215.1 billion) and is the part of the HNS<sup>3</sup> that was originally stipulated by a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The name originates from the wording of Shin Kanemaru, then Minister of the Defense Agency, when he was urged in 1978 by his American counterpart to increase the financial support for the U.S. bases in Japan. As there was no legal rationale for the new budget, Kanemaru explained to the Japanese Diet (parliament)

that it was *omoiyari* (sympathy) for the U.S. government. The Sympathy Budget covers salaries of Japanese workers on the bases, utilities, and construction of base housing and recreational facilities. In the more recent case of the U.S. military realignment plan, the Japanese government has agreed to bear \$6.09 billion of the total \$10.27 billion cost for relocation of the Marine Corps stationed in Okinawa to Guam.<sup>4</sup> Researcher Chalmers Johnson (2001) points out that this provision by the Japanese government is disproportionately high among the allies of the United States, and that without this financial support, the U.S. military in Japan, especially in Okinawa, could not possibly be sustained.

#### Modern History of Okinawa: History of Colonization by Japan and the United States

The military presence in Okinawa, a heavy burden recognized even in the recent joint statement on the U.S. forces' realignment initiatives issued in 2006, is a result of colonial policies imposed on Okinawa by Japan and the United States that go back to the nineteenth century. The establishment of Okinawa as a prefecture of Japan, when it was formally annexed by the central Japanese government in 1879, ended centuries of the independent Ryukyu kingdom. Located in the East China Sea, this kingdom was at the crossroads of trade among Japan, Taiwan, China, Korea, the Philippines, and other Southeast Asian nations. Due to its location, the Ryukyu kingdom mingled together those various cultures to create its own (Higa, Shimota, and Arasato 1963). At the same time, it had to contend with domination attempts by more powerful nations such as China and the local Japanese feudal Satsuma government in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Finally, the kingdom surrendered its autonomy to become a part of Japan in the so-called Ryukyu Disposition of 1879, an outcome the central Japanese government achieved by force. The purpose of the annexation was the creation of both a military outpost to protect the Japanese mainland and a staging area for Japanese imperial ventures in Asia (Fujishima 1996b). Even then, the Japanese government was not the only one to

consider the crucial role of Okinawa as a location for military bases. The basic research on which the post-World War II U.S. occupation and domination of Okinawa was based had already been conducted in 1853 by Commodore Matthew Perry, who Americans saw as “opening” feudal Japan to the world (Fujishima 1996a). In both cases, Okinawa was recognized as the “keystone” in their military operations in the Pacific, first by Japan, then later by the United States.

After the annexation, Japan’s Meiji government’s imperial policies in Okinawa reflected the growing nationalism of the mainland, and were promulgated with a rhetoric of “modernization” (Higa, Shimota, and Arasato 1963). The “victories” of Japan in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) prompted the colonization of neighboring countries, including Korea in 1910. Okinawa was also the subject of these colonization policies, despite the fact that it was now a part of Japan. Assimilationist policies and denigration of Okinawan ethnicity were reflected in the imperial education system, which, for example, strictly forbade Okinawans from using their language in public, with the standardized Japanese language being required instead (Rabson 1999).

The Japanese government did not recognize the diversity of the nation and its ethnic minorities, including Okinawans, who faced severe discrimination both in daily life and national policies (Onga 1996). Imperial education, which continued to be implemented until the Asia Pacific War, resulted in some acculturation and assimilation to a “Japanese” national identity. The discriminatory attitude of the Japanese government towards Okinawa became even more obvious in the military tactics used from the Japanese invasion of China in the early 1930s onward.

### The Battle of Okinawa in 1945

In order to halt the advance of the United States to the Japanese mainland, Okinawa was sacrificed by the Japanese government (Fujiwara 1991). The war experience of Okinawans vis-à-vis the Japanese Imperial Army made it clear that they were not

considered equal to other Japanese nationals. In the fierce Battle of Okinawa in 1945, described as a “typhoon of steel,” the Japanese Imperial Army was nothing less than desperate and arbitrary (Okinawaken Koukyousou Nanbushibu Heiwa Kyouiku Iinkai 1985). A quarter of Okinawan residents died in the battle. Some were killed by the Japanese soldiers who prioritized military strategies over protecting civilian Okinawan lives. Some were executed by Japanese soldiers after being accused of spying when they spoke their own local language. There were incidents of *shudan jiketsu* (mass suicide), in which Okinawan civilians, mainly children, women, and the elderly, killed each other to avoid surrendering to the enemy, which imperial education had strictly taught was a deep shame and a betrayal of the emperor (Miyagi 2000). In fact, the Imperial Japanese Army operations in the battle were not designed to protect the people of Okinawa, despite their being Japanese citizens entitled to protection (Fujiwara 1991), but had as their first priority saving the emperor in Tokyo by prolonging the battle as long as possible.

### U.S. Military Occupation: 1945–1972

After the war, Okinawa was again dominated, this time by the United States. After its defeat in 1945, mainland Japan experienced occupation by the United States until 1952, a period during which U.S. economic policy was to rebuild the Japanese economy on the mainland in order to strengthen the alliance against communist regimes, while separately controlling and governing Okinawa as a base and outpost of U.S. military operations (Bello 1996; Fujii 1996). Colonization of Okinawa by Japan may have been officially terminated, but it was only replaced by the colonization by the United States.

U.S. occupation of the mainland was brought to an end in 1952 by the San Francisco Peace Treaty. A bilateral security treaty, the antecedent of the security treaty renewed in 1960, was signed and took effect simultaneously. Japan’s official independence was acknowledged, but Okinawa remained under U.S. occupation as the U.S. bases became even more fortified to support the wars in

Korea during the 1950s and Vietnam during the 1960s. In this escalating Cold War context, in addition to its use of what had been Japanese Imperial Army bases, the U.S. military expropriated private lands during and after the Battle of Okinawa for use as U.S. bases, and also controlled the island's economy by differentiating its exchange rate from that of mainland Japan, thus preventing new Okinawan businesses from emerging in the post-war reconstruction. Okinawans had no choice but to become a virtual colony of the United States (Fujishiima 1996b). The purpose of U.S. occupation of Okinawa was largely military; for the Japanese government, it was a bargaining chip with the United States for its own "rearmament" with a "police reserve force," which later became the Self-Defense Forces (Nakano and Arasaki 1976). In the mid 1950s, an emerging reactionary nationalism in the Japanese government insisted on and planned for the nation's rearmament. The welfare of the people of Okinawa again suffered (Bello 1996).

In 1946, the United States drafted a new constitution for the defeated and occupied Japan. The constitution's Article 9 renounced war as a means of resolving international conflicts, and was generally welcomed. However, this document did not seem to apply to Okinawa (Nakano and Arasaki 1976); Okinawa was forced to be involved in wars waged by the United States. In order to maintain and expand its military power, the United States kept control of the island. It was clear to Okinawans and to the U.S. military there that the U.S. presence was neither for the benefit of the Japanese nor, even more obviously, for Okinawa's own protection (Sakugawa 1996).

While the consequences and influences of the security treaty were not highly visible to mainland Japanese, they represented a threat to Okinawans' everyday lives. It may not be a coincidence that the Okinawans' memories of the most intense crimes committed by U.S. soldiers overlap with the periods when the United States was engaged in fierce wars in Asia. For these soldiers, Okinawa was the last stop before actual deployment to the battlefields in Korea and Vietnam. A Vietnam veteran of the Marine Corps, Allen Nelson, recalled that his training became more realistic after he and his

fellow marines arrived in Okinawa, where, for example, targets shaped like human figures were used in live ammunition training (Nelson 1999). He also recalled that the young soldiers' behavior towards locals indicated that they believed that Okinawan people were not equal human beings. This attitude may explain the fact that during this period of the U.S. occupation, felonies committed by U.S. military personnel were rampant, but perpetrators were often not even identified (Military Base Affairs Office 1995).

According to the 1956 Price Report of the Special Subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives' Armed Services Committee, the U.S. military had expropriated 45,000 acres (about 182 square kilometers) of land for its military installations in 1945 without paying the landowners, on the grounds that this was an act of war.<sup>5</sup> As it expanded its bases in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the United States intensified its expropriation of Okinawan land, reflecting U.S. foreign policy opposing the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Okinawans saw this forced expropriation of their land as confiscation "by bulldozers and bayonets" (Arasaki 1996).

The expropriation was a highly significant event in Okinawa's contemporary history as well as in its history of resistance. Some landowners kept fighting to reclaim their land, whereas others accepted its loss in return for rent under the terms of a lease. The resistance to the expropriation of one of the smaller islands, Iejima, led to an islands-wide movement in the 1950s for a return of sovereignty over the islands to the Japanese government (Ahagon 1989; Chibana 1997). Having experienced U.S. domination, the people of Okinawa aspired to this reversion, since this would bring Japan's new constitution, especially Article 9, into effect in Okinawa and therefore lead to Okinawa's demilitarization. This aspiration led to their strong opposition to America's precarious nuclear policy and the use of the bases in Okinawa during the Vietnam War. They also expected that if they returned to Japanese rule, the level of their living conditions would be adjusted to that of the mainland.

In 1972, according to the terms of the Okinawa Reversion Agreement of 1971, the United States gave Okinawa to Japan in

exchange for compensation. The Japanese envoy to the meeting between the leaders of Japan and the United States has since revealed that the two governments also agreed on a secret pact to allow the entry of nuclear weapons into Okinawa, overriding the no-nuclear-weapons policy that Japan had already adopted (Wakaizumi 1994). While the Japanese government still denies the pact on the ground that no record was found in the Japanese government archives, research in the archives in the United States supports the account (Gabe 2000).

Despite the high hopes and expectations of the Okinawan people, there was no substantial change with regard to the U.S. bases. The security treaty was renewed in 1970 without much protest on the mainland, in contrast to the strong protest by the Japanese at its re-signing in 1960. This agreement stipulated detailed conditions of the status of U.S. bases and military personnel in Japan and codified an unequal relationship between the Japanese and U.S. governments. In the event of crimes committed by U.S. military personnel, for example, the U.S. authorities are, in accordance with SOFA, allowed to retain custody of the suspects until an indictment is filed by the Japanese authorities, thus giving U.S. military personnel legal protection.

During the 60-year post-war period, little has changed in Okinawa. The continued control of the island's local economy by Japan and the United States still prevents its sound growth, and has jeopardized any Okinawan attempt to become economically independent from the U.S. base-related industries (Maedomari 1996).

In addition, crimes and accidents involving U.S. soldiers and dependants have caused fatalities in Okinawa. There were 4,790 criminal charges brought against U.S. military personnel between 1972 and 1995. Among them are 12 cases of murder, 355 of robbery, and 111 of rape (Arasaki 2000). It needs to be noted that there were many more unreported cases, and there are no official statistics available before the reversion. During the period of U.S. occupation, local authority did not have the right to arrest or investigate. After the reversion, the U.S. military was given jurisdiction in cases where crimes were committed by U.S. military

personnel; thus many who have committed crimes have not been brought to justice under the Japanese judicial system.

### Resistance of the People Against Double Colonization

Even after reversion, the Okinawan people's struggles continued. Under the security treaty, the island remains under the double domination of Japan and the United States. While both governments have recently paid lip service to the idea of reducing the U.S. military "footprint" on Okinawa, neither government gives any consideration to the Okinawan hope for basic human rights, such as the right to land, safety, and to live in peace (Ota 1999). As a result, the resistance movement has continued. An anti-war landowners' group was organized in 1982 to resist the unreasonable, and even unlawful, use of land by the U.S. military. This group has been one of the major peace movement actors in Okinawa in organizing protest actions. The Japanese government, however, has at times arbitrarily enacted laws to enforce expropriation (Arasaki 1996).

In addition, people have physically but nonviolently resisted U.S. military operations. Residents of Onna village, where a live-ammunition drill site is located, mounted sit-ins on the only road to the site to protect the area, where, incidentally, they had hidden and survived during the Battle of Okinawa (Mercier 1996). Another manifestation of the people's protest was the human chain that surrounded Kadena Airbase on June 21, 1987, in which approximately 25,000 people gathered and completely ringed its 17.5-kilometer circumference. Moriteru Arasaki characterizes this event as a gathering of activists and citizens of various peace and human rights groups (Arasaki 2005).

It was within the political context of increased Japanese nationalism and revived loyalty to the emperor, as well as the long-standing Okinawan anger and frustration towards the Japanese government for its inaction regarding Okinawan suffering, that the rape of a 12-year-old girl by three U.S. military personnel occurred in September 1995. The event shocked the people of Okinawa



even in the face of the experience of a history of crimes by U.S. military personnel against the civil population. Okinawans were further infuriated when the United States refused to surrender the three suspects to the Japanese authorities, invoking Article 17 of the SOFA on jurisdiction over U.S. military personnel accused of crimes committed in Okinawa.<sup>6</sup> A number of citizens' groups demonstrated their opposition and anger towards the U.S. and Japanese governments, and this protest spread to all the Japanese islands. Protestors demanded that the two governments revise or even discontinue the security treaty and the SOFA, the sources of their experiences of domination (Arasaki 1996). On September 28, 1995, propelled by this strong protest and by supporting public opinion on the mainland, the prefectural governor, Masahide Ota, a liberal in his second term, refused to sign the land lease of forced expropriation in proxy for the anti-war landowners who had refused to renew the leases on their lands. The Japanese government soon filed a lawsuit against the governor to force him to sign these leases.<sup>7</sup>

In order for the voice of the Okinawan people to be heard, there emerged a movement for a prefectural referendum on the U.S. base-reduction issue. Though non-binding, this was the first attempt at a prefectural referendum in Japan, and it introduced an innovative strategy to citizens' action, encouraging citizens to participate in the policy-making process. On September 8, 1996, the referendum was held and 53 percent of the 910,000 registered voters favored the base reduction and the revision of the SOFA (Ota 2000).<sup>8</sup> This referendum was scheduled in order to demonstrate, before the Supreme Court, the Okinawan people's will to render a decision on the land lease trial in which the prefectural government of Okinawa was the defendant. Governor Ota himself testified before the Supreme Court on July 10, 1996 (Ota 1999). The court decision was expected in October, 1996; however, the Japanese judicial system, hardly independent from executive government influence, disappointed and infuriated the people of Okinawa by upholding the order of the Japanese government on August 28, 1996, even before the referendum.<sup>9</sup>

The apparently strong and powerful protest began to fade again in the face of the power and the measures taken against Okinawa. Against the hope of many Okinawans, Governor Ota announced that he would sign the leases on September 13, 1996. The package offered by the U.S. government during the visit of President Bill Clinton to Japan earlier that year gave the false impression that there would be a downsizing or partial removal of the bases through the return of the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, located in the highly populated central Okinawan city of Ginowan. In September 1996, however, a few days after Ota announced his intention to sign the leases, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto visited Okinawa. He spoke of a more specific plan for the return of Futenma Air Station which would involve building a new heliport off the shore of Camp Schwab, a Marine Corps base, in the less populated northern part of the prefecture.

The plan for the return of Futenma Air Station has been a major political-agenda item for Okinawan citizens since then. When the relocation plan with the specific site proposal was raised by Prime Minister Hashimoto, the citizens of Nago City, the northern city where Camp Schwab is located, suddenly became the visibly interested party. Camp Schwab is located in the Henoko section of Nago city, which, during the Vietnam War, was known in Okinawa as the location of clubs and bars which catered to U.S. bases, meaning that its economy was dependent on the U.S. soldiers' expenditure on R&R (rest and recreation.) With the disparity in economic power between Japan and the United States closing, however, Henoko's prosperity now belongs to the past. The population decreased because, compared to the mainland capitals, there is no industry except for some modest construction business to support the livelihood of local people.

The division of the community and its public opinion seemed a common tactic that the Japanese and U.S. governments had adopted, and the case of Nago was not an exception. Each time they have faced political decisions regarding U.S. bases, the citizens of Nago have split into two camps, one in favor of the presence of U.S. bases because they are directly connected to government subsidies to the local communities, and the other in opposition

to militarization and ecological destruction, and in support of more democratic control of the area. Economic disparities exist between and within Okinawan cities and towns. Nago City is less developed than others, such as Naha, the prefectural capital, which is located in the southern part of the main island. Within Nago, the section of Henoko, which is less developed than central Nago, is called Higashi-Kaigan (the East coast). The population of central Nago are less affected by the presence of Camp Schwab in terms of noise and other effects, even at present, than are the people in Henoko and the neighboring sections of the base.

In 1997, the newly emerging anti-U.S.-bases movement led to another referendum in Nago City, held on December 21, 1997. Meanwhile, in April 1997, the Diet passed a bill to revise the U.S. bases land-lease law, permitting the government to sign in lieu of landowners who refused and increasing the pressure by the Japanese government on Okinawa to promote the relocation plan. Eighty percent of those eligible voted at the non-binding Nago referendum, 54 percent of them opposing the construction, yet the citizens' will expressed in the referendum did not count. The Japanese government persuaded Tetsuya Higa, then the mayor of Nago, to announce the acceptance of the relocation plan. He did so, and resigned.

In the past decade, three mayoral elections and three gubernatorial elections have been held in Nago. In each campaign, the issue of building a new military facility in Henoko was cleverly shifted away from the focal point of the elections. Instead, candidates supported by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party pushed matters concerning the local economy, including larger government subsidies, as the central issues, dividing the small communities in the locality and Okinawa as a whole by campaigning as if the only alternatives to economic depression were government subsidies provided to Okinawa in return for hosting U.S. bases.

To widespread surprise, Nago City was selected as the site of the G8 summit to be held in July, 2000. Since the city had no background in hosting conferences at the international level, this decision implied the promise of more construction business for the infrastructure, together with more development aid from

the central government. At the summit, "exotic" culture and performing arts of Okinawa were praised, but the contradiction of the militarized security policies that have caused insecurity in the lives and livelihood of the people in Okinawa was never addressed.

Since 1997, some residents of Henoko have mounted protest actions against the plan to build a new U.S. military facility by organizing the group "Inochi-wo mamoru kai" (Association to protect lives). Mainly consisting of elderly members of the community who survived the Battle of Okinawa, the group has appealed to the public for better understanding of the situation in Henoko and policies over the issue, and has monitored the beach from the hatch built at the entrance of the bay to halt any construction initiative. In April 2004, the Japanese government attempted to survey the offshore construction site by building several scaffolds on the coral reef of the bay. This move induced nonviolent direct protest action by the group and its supporters from other parts of Okinawa and Japan. By paddling canoes and diving into the sea, the protestors literally blocked the construction boats from proceeding with the work, while others sat on the scaffolds days and nights as a new form of "sit-in" on the ocean. As a result, the Defense Facility Agency of Japan removed the scaffolds from the bay in September 2005, and the plan to build the new facility on the coral reef was withdrawn. The joy and relief of the local residents did not last long, however. In April 2006, the Japanese government and the city of Nago released a new plan showing that the new facility would be built in the bay with two V-shaped runways on a landfill, closer to Camp Schwab than the previous plan.

Within the history and political context of the steady and systematized denial of the democratic rights of Okinawan citizens, Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence (OWAAMV), a women's peace, human rights, and demilitarization advocacy movement, emerged. Their activities are deeply affected by these events and history. Clearly, the people of Okinawa feel less secure in this ongoing situation of military occupation and political repression. Many challenge the authenticity of the

“mutual security” that was to be assured by the presence of U.S. military bases, and OWAAMV’s analysis and action offer a gender perspective to the discourse as well as to peace movements.

### Women’s Peace Movement: Whose “Security”?

Only recently has the women’s peace movement gained public attention as a distinctive analysis of the militarized security system. Throughout the world, these movements are calling attention to the rise in military violence against women. Many are also challenging the military system itself, as well as the integral element of misogyny that infects military training. Some are raising crucial questions about the prevailing realist concept of security that rationalizes the present proliferation of U.S. military bases around the globe. Women in Okinawa were among the first and most active in posing the challenge and raising the questions.

In the past decade, women involved in the peace and human rights movements in Okinawa have gained increasing visibility by raising their distinctive voices. These women started another “island-wide” protest against the 1995 rape which coincided with the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, with 71 Okinawan women participating in an NGO Forum organized in conjunction with the intergovernmental conference. One of the workshops they offered, entitled “Military Structural Violence and Women,” presented their analysis of the consequences of the long-term active foreign military presence in their lives. At this workshop, the group presented the history of sexual and gender violence committed by U.S. military personnel against women and children in Okinawa, and demonstrated that the military is a violence-producing institution to which sexual and gender violence are intrinsic. The workshop argued that because soldiers, especially marines, are prepared to engage in life and death combat, they are trained to maximize their capacity to attack and destroy an “enemy,” a dehumanized other. Sexism that devalues the dignity and humanity of women is a primary process of dehumanizing others, and denigration of women is integral to much military training. Pent-up feelings of frustration,

anger, and aggression that soldiers acquire from combat training and experiences are often vented against women in their base locality, a reflection of misogyny and racial discrimination. In demonstrating this analysis of the military, the group posed fundamental questions on the notion of militarized security. Whose security does the military provide? From their experience of living in close proximity to an active foreign military whose presence is intended to assure “security,” people in Okinawa knew that the military has in fact been a source of insecurity to local people, especially women and children.

When the Okinawan delegation learned, upon its return from Beijing, of the rape by three U.S. soldiers, the committee members immediately took action to protest, responding to the young victim’s courage in reporting the crime to the local police, which, media reports asserted, she said that she had done because she did not want the same crime to be repeated. The NGO Forum participants’ public protests spearheaded island-wide protests against U.S. military bases, including the Citizen’s Rally held in October 1995, which drew approximately 100,000 participants on the main island and other smaller islands.

As the focus of the protest movement began shifting from the human rights of women and children to the unfair bilateral security treaty upon which the conventional male-dominated peace movement had focused, women realized the necessity of consolidating and developing their newly emerged movement to continue the focus of action on military violence against women. The official establishment of OWAAMV was announced on November 8, 1995, and was followed by a 12-day sit-in demonstration at the Peace Square in Naha, in which dozens of women participated every day. Here, these women expressed their deep anger at another occurrence of sexual violence committed by U.S. military personnel, called for protection of the human rights of women and children in Okinawa, and called on the Japanese government to severely punish such sexual crimes and to revise the SOFA, gathering 511,963 signatures on a petition during the sit-in demonstration. On November 17, 1995, a delegation of 25 members visited the Japanese Foreign Ministry in Tokyo to

hand over the petition and a statement addressed to then Foreign Minister Yohei Kono, protesting against the September 4 rape and demanding closure of U.S. military bases and withdrawal of the U.S. military from Okinawa.

### Military Violence Against Women and Children

When OWAAMV women spoke out against the rape in 1995, one of the questions most commonly posed to them by the mainland Japanese media regarded the statistics of sexual crimes committed by U.S. soldiers in Okinawa. Although OWAAMV women often presented the official statistics released by the local authority, they also emphasized the difficulty in estimating the actual number. Furthermore, no official statistics were available about the crimes committed by U.S. soldiers during the period of U.S. occupation. Few women victimized by U.S. soldiers revealed their experiences, even after the occupation had ended. This reluctance resulted in part from the stigma imposed on victims by societies ridden with different levels and forms of patriarchy. In addition, in the Japanese legal system, rape victims are required to report the crime in order for the police to start an investigation. Needless to say, numerous women and girls chose to remain silent. The official statistics on sexual crimes by U.S. soldiers, therefore, reflect only the tip of the iceberg.

Having worked with many victims and survivors of sexual violence, OWAAMV women started to compile the cases which were brought to their attention or those which occurred in their own communities that were never reported to the police, including in the accounts and memoirs both documented cases and those recorded as oral histories. The most current, the seventh revision of the chronology, accounts for around 300 cases of different sorts of assaults against women and girls, including cases of gang rape, attempted rape, abduction, and murder. OWAAMV members' efforts to collect cases from various sources including oral histories illustrate the realities of military violence against women.

Women in Okinawa have been exposed to gender-based military violence for over 60 years. They have come to analyze

their daily and historical experiences and have theorized that the violence against women committed by U.S. soldiers in Okinawa is an inevitable result of the state-based military security system. Cases listed in the chronology reveal the interplay between war preparation and the intensity of military violence. This chronology demonstrates that gender-based military violence in Okinawa began when the U.S. military landed on the island in 1945, during the last stage of World War II. Since then, women and children have been exposed to violence and have lived in fear. In the period between World War II and the Korean War, during which people in Okinawa lived on land that had been damaged by fierce battle, struggling for survival, women experienced rampant and indiscriminate military violence that can be characterized as follows:

1. A group of between two and six soldiers would abduct one woman at gun- or knifepoint.
2. After being gang-raped, the victim would often be given to other groups of soldiers for more gang rape.
3. Soldiers did not hesitate to kill or severely injure those who tried to help victims.
4. Assaults might take place anywhere, including in fields, on streets, around wells, by the water, or in front of families.
5. Assaults often demonstrated brutality. Women with infants on their backs were raped and killed, and victims' ages ranged from 9 months to the mid 60s.
6. Victims gave birth as a result of rapes. In the four years following World War II, 450 children were identified as having been fathered by U.S. soldiers.
7. Perpetrators were mostly not apprehended, and were often left unpunished.

During the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, violence was directed towards women working in the sex industry around the bases, often by soldiers returning from the front who brought the fear and anger of the battlefield to Okinawa. Rape cases were rampant. Three or four women were strangled to death each year. A survey conducted in 1969 found that approximately 7,400



women worked in the sex industry. These women earned dollars in the still economically depressed environment, and many were forced to sell sex because of large loans imposed on them in forced managed prostitution. Furthermore, many of these women were nearly strangled to death more than once, an experience that left them suffering from trauma. More recently, troops stationed in Okinawa were deployed to the Persian Gulf in the 1990s. During this period, military violence against women in various forms again increased in its intensity.

In current cases of sexual violence, date-rape types of military violence seem to be increasing, rendering such violence less visible and more difficult to prosecute. There are cases in which an off-duty soldier meets a woman at a night club outside the base, brings the woman back to the base – in violation of the military codes – and rapes or gang-rapes her. These crimes occur within the context of a higher percentage of the Marines Corps among troops in Okinawa and the declining relative economic power of the United States vis-à-vis Japan. Marines constitute 60 percent of the U.S. military personnel stationed in Okinawa – the largest number of marines stationed outside the United States; 80 percent of them are between the ages of 18 and 22 and they are stationed in Okinawa for only 6 months. These young soldiers, with less economic power, try to meet women for sex at night clubs instead of patronizing the sex industry. Okinawan or Japanese women with more money than soldiers do visit night clubs to meet American men. When these women are victimized, they are reluctant to report the crimes to the police because victims of date rape are often blamed for the crime in Okinawan and Japanese society.

Moreover, in some of the recent cases, perpetrators of assaults or attempted assaults tend to be increasingly confrontational at trials. In an assault case in June 2001, in which a soldier raped an Okinawan woman in the parking lot of a leisure area, the perpetrator, a special service unit soldier who had been stationed in Okinawa for four years, never withdrew his insistence that the incident had involved “consensual sex.”<sup>10</sup> The Japanese court determined that the victim had been raped, yet the difficulty

which she faced in this case implies the possibility of victims' reluctance or unwillingness to come forward based not only on fear of social stigma in the community but also fear of retaliation by the U.S. military.

OWAAMV established the first private rape crisis center in Okinawa in October 1995, culminating a long-time dream of those who had worked closely with survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Okinawa. The center, Rape Emergency Intervention Counseling Center Okinawa, offers counseling to victims and supports them in their efforts to pursue lawsuits and to gain independence and autonomy. Through the activities of REICO, more and more cases of military violence, most of which had gone unreported to the police, were brought to the attention of OWAAMV women. The September 11 attacks, too, brought direct changes to the military violence against women in Okinawa. As training and base security intensified, there is a widespread sense that crimes committed by U.S. soldiers have increased or become more brutal, as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have clearly affected transfer plans and training. For example, in an August 2003 rape and assault case, the perpetrator might have returned to the United States had there been no war; however, his tour of duty was extended by 6 months, during which he committed the crime.

Children are also targets of military violence. In 2005, on a Sunday morning of the long July 4 weekend, a soldier who lived off base molested two girls aged 10 and 11. The perpetrator was arrested and is currently undergoing trial in the Japanese court, where his lawyers are pleading for lighter punishment, arguing, irrelevantly, that he has a good service record. (Cases tend to occur more frequently during U.S. national holidays observed on the bases. Such relaxation times for U.S. soldiers turn into times of increasing insecurity for women and children around the bases.)

These are only a few of the numerous cases of military violence committed by U.S. soldiers in Okinawa. To achieve the goal of stopping these crimes, a system that focuses on protection of the human rights of women and children must be established.

### International Network

Among peace movements in Okinawa, OWAAMV's approach to violence committed by the U.S. military, to long-term military occupation, and to further demilitarization of global militarized security features intentional networking with citizens of other countries. As early as the 1980s, some of the members initiated solidarity networks with feminist peace activists in, for example, Buklod Center of the Philippines and Du Rae Bang of Korea, who have supported victims and survivors of military violence.

After the group's official establishment, OWAAMV members organized America Peace Caravan to meet with U.S. citizens for direct dialogue on the problems that the U.S. military have caused in host nations. In 1996, the caravan flew to the United States and visited several states to present on Okinawan history and the U.S. military presence, as well as their gender analysis of the military and militarized security system. Inspired by this caravan, an international solidarity network called East Asia-U.S.-Puerto Rico Women's Network Against Militarism was established by feminist peace activists in San Francisco to connect feminist peace activists who resisted violence by the U.S. military, as well as militarization and militarism, in their communities.

The East Asia-U.S.-Puerto Rico Women's Network Against Militarism, which is made up of women from Okinawa, mainland Japan, Korea, the Philippines, the United States, Puerto Rico, and Hawai'i, held its first international meeting in Naha, Okinawa in 1997. Participants identified common problems faced by the residents in the host communities of U.S. military from a gender perspective, including sexual and gender-based violence against women and children; environmental destruction caused by U.S. military training and operations; conversion of U.S. bases; unequal SOFA agreements between the U.S. government and the host nations; and conditions regarding Amerasian children in Asia fathered by U.S. soldiers. These interconnected issues illuminate the structural problems inherent in militarized security systems and militarism as analyzed by OWAAMV women: the military is a system that has subdued other nations and peoples through

the legitimized display and use of power. The essence of military forces is their pervasive, deep-rooted contempt for women, which can be seen in military training that completely denies femininity and praises hegemonic masculinity.

Through actions, discussions, and other solidarity works with feminist peace activists in different parts of the world, the network members have devised an analytic framework of authentic security that should satisfy the following conditions: (1) the environment in which we live must be able to sustain human and natural life; (2) peoples' basic survival needs for food, clothing, shelter, health care, and education must be met; (3) respect for cultural identities and for people's fundamental human dignity must be honored; and (4) people and the natural environment must be protected from avoidable harm.<sup>11</sup> Women active in this international network are convinced that these conditions are necessary to achieve a humane demilitarized security system.

### Towards Achievement of a Demilitarized Security System

In the OWAAMV movement, it is believed that closing the U.S. bases and troop withdrawal need to be implemented in the larger context of demilitarization of the entire security system. As the discussions of the movement's international networking reveal, closing or decreasing the capacity of one Asian base has often led to the reinforcement of other military bases in the region as a means of minimizing the negative effects of the closure on the U.S. military's global strategies. For instance, when the bases in the Philippines were closed in 1992, those troops previously assigned there were transferred to bases in Okinawa and Korea. More recently, "lessening the burden of people in Okinawa," a phrase in the Security Consultative Committee (2006) document, will be achieved by build-up on Guam.

From the perspectives of the international community and of the U.S. military, which limits access to such "highly classified" information on security policies to a handful of people, thereby creating a new hierarchy, this may be an obvious tactic. It has been very difficult for grassroots peace activists to make such

analyses and predictions due largely to the lack of resources and information. In recent years, however, this type of observation of global strategies has been made possible through international solidarity and the exchange of information among areas. Through these networks, members of grassroots movements in Asia and in other parts of the world are now connected and are better equipped to cope with the dwarfing information giant of the U.S. military. People have to unite with each other. There is an increasing understanding among people in the struggle against the U.S. military empire that security of people can never be achieved without demilitarizing the security system.

Feminist international scholars have already argued that a gender perspective effectively reveals an unequal dichotomy between the protector and the protected on which the present security system has been built (Peterson 1992). The OWAAMV movement illustrates from a gender perspective that "the protected," who are structurally deprived of political power, are in fact not protected by the militarized security policies; rather their livelihoods are made *insecure* by these very policies. The movement has also illuminated the fact that "gated" bases do not confine military violence to within the bases. Those hundreds-of-miles-long fences around the bases are there only to assure the readiness of the military and military operations by excluding and even oppressing the people living outside the gated bases.

The practical aspect of analysis, connection, and solidarity among feminist activists worldwide has not been the only empowering experience for women in the struggle. As has happened so many times in the past, people in communities hosting U.S. bases have been divided over such issues as public economic support for the financially distressed localities, and thus have felt isolated and disempowered, unable to mount or maintain protest actions. OWAAMV women have also, at times, been lone voices against a patriarchy that is, they argue, the source of the militarized security system. Not only people in the local communities but also members of communities across borders share knowledge, analysis, and deep rage against injustice, as well as a vision of a demilitarized world with gender justice. Here, we

see possibility and hope for transformation. Those who struggle for the achievement of a demilitarized security system may have a long way to go, but they never lose hope.

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Economic Theories of Development. We are folks whose survival will depend on an ability to recognize a quiet fact: we are heirs to civilizations born up to 2,000 years before Jesus. We've survived this long for a reason. And despite what they say, we don't have to do what we're told, and die.

War Talk is tiring.

That's why this book is hard to get through.

It conveys the gravity of what activists on the ground are up against when we "confront" Empire. And so I cannot help but reserve a last word for my sisters and brothers in the struggle. No one ever need tell us to keep on keeping on. That's our M.O.

One activist to another, I lay flowers at your feet. I can only think how tired they must be.

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