

YES to World Natural Heritage! NO to US Military Marine Base!

We demand a cease and desist to plans for the construction of US military bases.

Instead, we hope that the areas will be designated as a **World Natural Heritage**.

Our Environment Preservation Group strongly opposes the construction of the new US military base in Henoko and helipads in Takae located in Okinawa Is. of Ryukyu Islands in Japan. We demand that the authorities retract any construction plan. The consequences of going forward with the plans will be the **irreparable damage to unique biodiversity**.

No to military bases! Yes for Natural Beauty!

We do not want the destruction of **the natural beauty of** Okinawa by the land into military bases. There are World Heritage nominated sites in Okinawa which sit in contrast to the idea of putting a US Military base which is about war and destruction, rather than preservation and peace.

The Ryukyu Islands are **blessed with a variety of natural wonders** including coral reefs, tidal-flats, mangrove swamps and subtropical forests. **It is an area rich in biodiversity**.

The Islands have a unique geological history having been **repeatedly separated and rejoining with the continent** by crustal movements and fluctuations of sea level during the glacial epoch. Consequently, creatures that came from the continent were isolated and the local wildlife has **evolved in unique ways** on each and every island. As a result, **unique species and various subspecies currently inhabit** the islands. **Many of them are already endangered species**.

According to wildlife geography, Ryukyu Islands are located in the transit zone between Pale-arctic region and Oriental region. They have elements of both northern and southern systems. They created an **ideal environment for flora and fauna to flourish and Mother Nature to innovate**. Along with the unique creatures inhabiting the islands, rare subtropical forests can also be found growing in the rainy islands with the help of warm ocean currents and monsoon. Together with coral reefs surrounding the islands, it has for centuries provided the ideal **habitat for diverse wildlife**. So much so that in the "World Conservation Strategy" jointly adopted in 1980 by IUCN(International Union of Conservation of Nature), UNEP(United Nation Environment Project) and WWF(World Wildlife Fund for Nature), they identified that the preservation of the unique wildlife was considered a priority and designated the islands as protection areas.

According to the WWF's "Global 200" (1996), the Ryukyu Islands are designated as one of the most valuable natural environment in the world. IUCN adopted the recommendation and resolution regarding the conservation of Dugong, Okinawa Woodpecker and Okinawa Rail in 2000, 2004 and 2008.

"Aichi Biodiversity Targets" (2010 Nagoya), adopted by CBD/COP10 (Convention of Biological Diversity), set up the targets that prevent endangered species from extinction by designating the islands as protected areas. It is an urgent issue to protect endangered species in Ryukyu Islands.

Unfortunately on Ryukyu Islands, there is on-going **destruction of ecosystems and deterioration of environment** due to the construction of military bases and large-scale public works. Although Okinawa Is. is an active center for wildlife conservation, the threats against wildlife is increasing at an alarming rate.

The Ocean is a treasure trove of life

The areas of Henoko, Ooura bay and Kayo in Nago city are the regions with various marine organisms including a huge colony of Blue Coral, large seagrass beds, and Dugong which is unique marine mammal and on the edge of extinction. In 2009, thirty six new kinds of crustaceans were found in the mud of sea bed in Ooura bay. Many endangered species and uniquely evolved benthos live in this sea area, their loss would mean the loss of a unique evolutionary pattern, therefore **it should be designated as World Natural Heritage site.**

In Henoko and Ooura bay area, construction projects of a huge military base of US Marine Corps are in progress as the alternative relocation site for USMC Air Station Futenma. In the end of December 2013, the **governor of Okinawa prefecture approved the landfill** works in the public waters. **However, this approval is unlawful because it is against Article 1 of Clause 4 in the Public Waters Reclamation law.**

It is not logical to utilize the public land full of unique wildlife for military purposes. According to "Guideline of Okinawa Prefecture for preservation of natural environment", Henoko and Ooura bay are designated as the most important sites where the natural environment should be protected. It **makes no sense to trash the areas rich with diverse wildlife and landfilling them for military installations.** According to international and domestic law regarding environment preservation, conservation of nature should get the first priority. For this reason, **construction of military bases should not be approved.** Contrary to this, government officials decided to make an

arbitrary conclusion that appropriate consideration had been made to the environment. Even when there has been **no proper environmental conservation measures** taken. Furthermore, **no scientific or consultative environmental impact assessment** has been conducted.

According to the disclosure of information by news agencies, there are many revised evaluations and unpublicized data, and they point out that the **protective measures** for Dugongs and sea turtles are **inadequate**. Measures for alien organism such as Argentine Ant in the soil for landfill are also **insufficient**.

In regards to the impacts of the military base being built, the Okinawa governor said "***maintenance of natural environment and living environment is impossible***". Despite this remark, he approved landfill for construction of US military base.

To make matters worse, **the governor totally defied the objections to this project made by** the Nago city mayor, which is supported by municipal assembly. Governor's approval to landfill the public waters is **breaking his own election campaign pledge** and citizens are **outraged for his betrayal**.

In Futenma Air Station, military trainings using vertical takeoff and landing aircrafts "Osprey" are already conducted. It is **a breach of the agreement with the local people**. In Henoko the new air force base is expected to badly affect the daily lives of the residents.

Kunigami Mountains in Higashi, Oogimi, and Kunigami village, there is a subtropical evergreen forest called "Yambaru Forest" which is rich in biodiversity and fresh water ecosystem. There are plants and animals indigenous to the area, and many of them are endangered species. Therefore the area should be preserved with global cooperation, and be designated as a **world natural heritage**. The Uka-gawa basin especially is one of the most important areas with seashore, estuary, river, mountain stream and evergreen forest. **Those natures should not be disturbed**.

The Government of USA promised to return half of their Northern Training Area (US Marine Corps Jungle Warfare Training Center, about 7,800ha) to the public. In return they demanded to construct new six helipads for Ospreys in the surrounding area of Takae of Higashi village, which means that their helipads are going to be built in the Yambaru Forest. It'll inevitably cause **harmful impact on the environment and village people life**.

The construction already started despite strong oppositions from local residents. The helipad is 75 meters wide including its obstruction-free zone. Three-meter-wide approach road have also

been constructed.

From our past experience we know that trees along the roads will wither, because the roads create a wind-way phenomenon that will damage the forest. The construction of roads and helipads will likely cause **irreparable ill-effects on the environment of evergreen forest**. We will see soil-erosion, withering and dying trees before long. We have already seen the helipad is under construction partly collapse and the soil from this drained into the valley in January 2013. **Transplanting of the endangered vegetations**, proposed by the self-assessment of Okinawa branch of Ministry of Defense, have been **unsuccessful**. This self-assessment is a name-only assessment while hiding their real intentions around deployment of Ospreys.

Once Osprey training is fully conducted in the near future, It will badly affect rare indigenous and endangered wildlife such as Okinawa Woodpecker, Okinawa Rail, Ryukyu Robin, and Amami Woodcock due to tremendous noise, ultra low-frequency noise and hot downward airflow caused by Ospreys while takeoff and landing.

As you may know through the documentary TV program “The Village of Target” broadcasted by Ryukyu Asahi TV (QAB), the daily lives of Takae village are badly affected by helipad constructions which became **heavy burden and strains for the local people**. Once military exercises are fully conducted using Ospreys, that will certainly lead to **destruction of peaceful life** for local residents.

74% of US military bases in Japan are located **in Okinawa Prefecture**. US military bases **occupy 18 % of whole land of Okinawa Is**. US soldiers and military employees have caused many accidents and have created civil troubles for the community. Many of them **have gotten away with their crimes** without being punished. There is an attitude demonstrated by some of them of feeling **they are above Japanese law**.

Sixty nine years passed since the end of World War II. During that period, every time a US military base was transferred to Okinawa from mainland Japan, the US military presence in Okinawa became larger and the **lives of the residents was more adversely affected**. And now they plan to build new air force bases with more fortified military function.

As a compensation for constructions of US military bases, Japanese government provides Okinawa prefecture with funds for developments. In general, those are regular funds for other prefectures. However the funds for Okinawa are called the promotional fund for further developments. The reality though is that most public works funds go to the companies located in mainland Japan. Consequently, the funds **hardly contribute to energize local business** and

economy in Okinawa.

Large-scale public works by development funds lead to destruction of the natural environment in the mountains, rivers and ocean and affect the sustainable life style of local residents. The current situation in Okinawa is a **violation of the Japanese Constitution**, that is supposed to guarantee rights of citizens, by destroying the environment, human rights and disturbing the peaceful life of the residents of Okinawa. This is **discrimination against people** living in Okinawa.

Because of above-mentioned reasons, our nature conservation, peace and human rights groups strongly oppose the constructions of any new military base in Henoko of Nago city and Osprey helipads in Takae of Higashi village.

We demand a cease and desist to plans for the construction of U.S. military bases. Instead, we hope that the areas will be designated as a **World Natural Heritage**.

We hereby request governments of USA and Japan, and Okinawa governor as follows,

Requests to both governments of Japan and USA.

- 1, Withdraw the construction plans of new military bases in Henoko and helipads in Takae because they cause **destruction of the natural environment rich with biodiversity**.
- 2, **Northern Training Area should** not be partially returned but **fully returned** because that area is the main habitat for the endangered indigenous wildlife of Okinawa. **Futenma** Air Station should also **be returned** as early as possible.

Requests to Japanese government.

1. Establish **eco-friendly policies** that guarantee nature conservation and sustainable use of the wildlife habitat such as Henoko, Oura bay, Kayou and Yambaru Forest. We also request **safe and secure daily life, free from fear, for the residents**.
2. When applying for designation of Amami and Ryukyu as the **World Natural Heritage**, Henoko, Oura bay, Kayo sea and whole Yambaru Forest in northern training area should also be included.

Requests to Okinawa governor

1. **Retract the approval to landfill** in the public waters in the Henoko area.
2. **Order to halt the constructions** of Osprey helipads in Takae.

This statement has been agreed by sixty nine environment, human rights, and peace organizations in Japan including Ramsar Network Japan, Greenpeace Japan, Japan Civil Network for the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity, Save Dugong Campaign Center, Citizen's Network for Biodiversity in Okinawa, Okinawa Environmental Network, Council against the Military Base Construction in Henoko, Residence's Group of No Military Helipads in Takae, WWF-Japan, Wild Bird Society of Japan, and Japan Environmental Lawyers Federation.

※**For further information** ,please contact the following organization!

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