US Military Base Issues in Okinawa

MCAS Futenma, Centrally Located in Ginowan City (Photo Provided by Ginowan City)

Okinawa Prefectural Government
September 2011
On August 13, 2004, a US Marine Corps CH-53D helicopter crashed into the Okinawa International University. Although there were no injuries involving the students and local residents in this particular incident, the communities surrounding the Air Station live with the constant anxiety of another aircraft incident.
The existing circumstances of the vast US Forces bases present major obstacles in the economic growth of Okinawa.

- Okinawa Island bears the majority of US bases in Okinawa, taking up 18.4% of its total land area.
- It is home to about 91% of the prefecture’s population, and approximately 80% of the Island’s population is concentrated in the southern half, where various industries are also located.
- The US military bases located in densely populated and commercialized areas greatly restrict urban functions, traffic system and land usage.
Okinawa accounts for only 0.6% of the total land area of Japan, but approximately 74% of exclusive-use USFJ facilities are concentrated here. There are 20 air spaces and 28 water areas surrounding Okinawa, designated for the exclusive use of the US Forces for their training purposes. Various restrictions are placed for commercial fishing activities and commercial flights in these areas.
Recent Major Crimes

★ In Sept. 1995, three US service members abducted and raped an elementary school girl.

★ Another incident involving a minor occurred in Feb. 2008. A Marine Corps Staff Sergeant was court-martialed and convicted for sexual abuse.

- Average of 23 incidents or accidents per month, including traffic-related.
- In addition, there are daily aircraft noise emissions (at times exceeding 100db!) and other adverse environmental impacts associated with US Forces training.
- For 66 years since the end of WWII, the excessive weight of the vast US military bases on Okinawa, and the numerous issues associated with them, continue to weigh down heavily on the shoulders of the citizens.
- These issues are challenges faced by the local population every single day, in various aspects of their daily lives.
At the time of Okinawa's Reversion to Japan in 1972, US Forces-related revenue was 15.5% of the gross prefectural income. In 2008, this ratio decreased to 5.3%.

In contrast, the tourism revenue increased from 6.5% in 1972 to 10.9% in 2008, which is more than twice the US Forces-related revenue.

Okinawa's present economy is not as dependent on base-related revenue as before. The return of bases located in the central and southern regions of Okinawa Island has resulted in positive economic effects of approximately 10 - 200 times in comparison to pre-return, and has had great impacts on the prefecture’s economy and employment.
Okinawa’s Potential for Further Development

Our Vision

- It is necessary to reduce and consolidate US military bases in Okinawa as we continue to shoulder the excessive weight of military bases.
- With the realization of land returns of US military bases south of Kadena Air Base, we can anticipate positive economic and employment impacts through effective land use.
- Establish the prefecture as a hub of exchange by taking advantage of our geographical location, to bridge people, goods, and information between mainland Japan and other Asian nations. It is our desire to actively promote international contributions and do our part for peace and advancement of the Asia-Pacific region.
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