

(UPDATED VERSION as of October 31, 2022)

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman Reed:

We, the undersigned civil society groups, write to make urgent requests regarding the Japanese and U.S. governments' plan to construct a U.S. military base at Henoko-Oura Bay in Okinawa, promoted as a replacement facility for the U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station located in the middle of Ginowan City on Okinawa Island (FRF project).

Since 1997, the Japanese and U.S. governments have pushed the construction plan against the Okinawan people's democratic voice, while the Japanese government has been providing the U.S. government with misleading environmental and feasibility studies and false prospects that the people of Okinawa would accept the construction plan. Now this plan faces a dead end in terms of legality and physical feasibility. In November 2021, after reviewing the issues associated with the extremely soft seafloor found at the construction site, Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki refused to approve the Japanese Defense Ministry's application for ground reinforcement work that would be required to continue the FRF project.

We urge you to take the initiative to stop this project, to close the dangerous Futenma Air Station, and draw up a new realignment plan. The FRF project defies the principle of democracy, the rule of law, and environmental justice, and is destroying the precious environment of Henoko-Oura Bay. It is a political and strategic liability to the U.S. military and the U.S. government. From an engineering perspective, there is no prospect that its defining feature, the V-shaped airstrip, will ever be constructed. By considering our requests, you can show that the U.S. government is committed to upholding the principle of democracy, the rule of law, environmental justice, and engineering common sense, which can nurture genuine security in East Asia. Below, we provide reasons for our requests.

FRF construction faces a dead end: Okinawa Governor Tamaki disapproved of seafloor reinforcement work

On November 25, 2021, Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki rejected the Okinawa Defense Bureau's applications for changes to the construction design or seafloor reinforcement work essential for the continuation of the FRF construction.¹ Seafloor reinforcement work has become necessary because, as the Okinawa Defense Bureau discovered through its soil tests, the seafloor of the construction site in the Oura Bay side is extremely soft, with the N-value of 0, which means a mayonnaise-like consistency (N-value 0 means that instead of being driven into the soil with a hammer, the testing spike sank of its own weight:

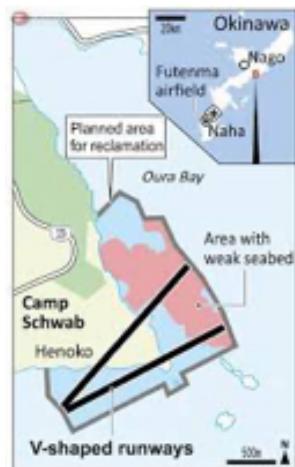
¹ Okinawa Prefectural Government (2021). Fushonin tuchi sho [Notice of Disapproval] (in Japanese).

<https://www.pref.okinawa.lg.jp/site/chijiko/henoko/documents/211125tuutisyo.pdf>

0 is the number of hammer blows required to get the spike to a required depth). The Bureau has proposed that 71,000 piles of various types and sizes be driven into the seafloor for reinforcement. 16,000 of them will be "Sand Compaction Piles" of 1.6 to 2m (5.2 to 6.5 feet) in diameter, these to be driven as deep as 90 meters (300 feet) below the water surface. The Bureau, astoundingly, has claimed that this will not adversely impact the marine environment. The Japanese government further claims that construction can be completed by the mid-2030s, even with a budget three times larger than the original estimate.



On Henoko side, land reclamation work has shown some progress.
On Oura Bay side, little progress has been made due to soft seafloor.
Image Source: Kyodo News



Soft seafloor area shown in red
Image source: Kyodo News

Governor's reasons for disapproval

Governor Tamaki's disapproval is based on the following reasons.²

- 1) Despite the seafloor reinforcement work being a significant revision to the original plan, the Okinawa Defense Bureau has not adequately reassessed the safety and feasibility of base construction. A particular concern is that the Bureau has not surveyed the most critical point of the fragile seafloor, B-27, where fragile clay sediment reaches 90 meters (300 feet) below the water surface level. In addition, no drilling equipment exists capable of carrying out the stated seafloor reinforcement work beyond 70 meters (230 feet). Ground reinforcement work deeper than 70 meters (230 feet) below the water surface has never been attempted anywhere in the world.
- 2) Despite the ground reinforcement work being a significant revision to the original plan, the Bureau has not conducted proper environmental impact studies, particularly the effects on the Okinawa dugong. The Bureau used the same survey methodologies employed in its Environmental Impact Assessment, proposed the same mitigation measures, and concluded that the ground reinforcement work would not adversely impact the Okinawa Dugong. Since the start of land reclamation work, the Bureau has not monitored the impact on the Dugong of sound emitted from the large number of construction ships present at Henoko-Oura Bay. The Bureau has failed to consider that the International Union of Conservation of Nature

² Okinawa Prefectural Government (2021/22). "Disapproval of Application of Change in the Design of the Reclamation Work of Futenma Replacement Facility Construction."
<https://dc-office.org/post/1606>

designated the Okinawa Dugong (Nansei Shotō dugong) as Critically Endangered in 2019.

3) Given these facts, and with the feasibility of the construction work in serious question, the FRF cannot be considered a replacement facility for Futenma Air Station.

We support the Governor's disapproval and his reasoning for his disapproval. It should be noted, however, that besides the reasons the Governor outlined in his official disapproval, many other unsettling issues put the FRF construction in serious question. They include the presence of active faults under the construction site, inadequate assessment of impacts of earthquakes,³ and failure of coral transplantation as a mitigation measure. Coupled with the steadfast voice of the Okinawan people against the FRF project, these issues prompted 18,000 public comments to the Governor's office from Okinawa, from Japan, and beyond. All the comments urged Governor Tamaki to disapprove of the application.⁴

Meanwhile, the Japanese government is now trying to overturn Governor Tamaki's decision.⁵ The contention between Governor Tamaki and the Japanese government appears to be heading to a series of lengthy battles in the Japanese courts.

Two questions that need honest answers

As the U.S. Congressional Research Service and the U.S. Government Accountability Office have repeatedly reported for more than a decade, the FRF construction plan has been considered a controversial and challenging project due to a range of issues, political, environmental, and technical.⁶ Now, with the problems of soft seafloor looming and Governor Tamaki's disapproval of seafloor reinforcement work, as Mark F. Cancian of the

³ Okinawa Prefectural Government (2019). Q6 of *Okinawakara Tsutaetai Beigun-kichi no Hanashi* [About U.S. Military Bases in Okinawa: An Okinawa Perspective] (in Japanese).

<https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/chijiko/kichitai/documents/j21.pdf>

⁴ Burke, M. M and Higa, M. (2021). "Okinawa governor refuses design changes to new Marine Corps airfield." *Starts and Stripes*. November 26, 2021.

https://www.stripes.com/branches/marine_corps/2021-11-26/henoko-mcas-futenma-permit-denied-okinawa-tamaki-3757974.html

⁵ Okinawa Prefectural Government (2022). "Comment from the Governor of Okinawa regarding a judgment by the Central and Local Dispute Management Council in response to a request calling for a recommendation to revoke a Judgment made by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transportation and Tourism."

<https://dc-office.org/post/1781>

⁶ For the latest discussions on the FRF project, see Congressional Research Service (2022). *In Focus U.S.-Japan Relations*.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10199>

Congressional Research Service (2021). *U.S.-Japan Relations: Issues for Congress*.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL33436>

The United States Government Accountability Office (2021). *Burden Sharing: Benefits and Costs Associated with the U.S. Military Presence in Japan and South Korea*.

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/720/713082.pdf>

The United States Government Accountability Office (2017) also notes that the length of the runways on the FRF is too short. See The United States Government Accountability Office (2017). *Marine Corps Asia Pacific Realignment: DoD should Resolve Capability Deficiencies and Infrastructure Risks and Revise Cost Estimates*.

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/684242.pdf>

Center for Strategic and International Studies has stated (2020), "it appears unlikely that this [the FRF construction] will ever be completed."⁷ In light of these new developments, we direct your attention to two critical sets of questions to which the U.S. Congress needs to find honest answers.

First, the U.S. Congress needs to determine when and to what extent the DoD came to know the seriousness of the soft seafloor issues and how the DoD has assessed them. (Conversely, the U.S. Congress needs to determine whether the Japanese government has been forthcoming to the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. government about these issues).

It is likely that the Japanese government came to realize the presence of the soft seafloor during its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which took place between 2009 to 2012. It was in late 2019 that the Japanese government officially admitted the presence of the soft seafloor at the construction site. It was only in 2021 that the U.S. Congressional Research Service and the Government Accountability Office began mentioning the issues.⁸ However, it has been revealed that the Okinawa Defense Bureau was aware of the soft seafloor issue by 2015.⁹ As a result of the Japanese government's withholding of the information, at a Senate Armed Service Committee hearing on February 23, 2016, then U.S. Asia-Pacific Commander Admiral Harry Harris was placed in the embarrassing position of assuring the Committee that while the FRF project had been delayed, "it would be done by 2025,"¹⁰ an estimate based on information that the Japanese government by then well knew was false.

It is regrettable that the U.S. Department of Defense has not produced or made public its assessments of the seafloor issues. (We had hoped that the DoD would produce a report by June 2020 following S. 1260K of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act). It is equally regrettable that a bill proposed in June 2020 by the Readiness Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, which would request the DoD to study the soft seafloor issues, was not adopted into the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.¹¹ Such studies would have alerted the U.S. Congress of the seafloor issues and the question of the feasibility of the FRF project.

Second, the U.S. Congress needs to question whether it is wise for the DoD to take at face

⁷ Cancian, F. M. (2020). *U.S. Military Forces in FY 2021: Marine Corps*. Center for Strategic and International Studies.

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-military-forces-fy-2021-marine-corps>

⁸ Congressional Research Service (2021). *U.S.-Japan Relations: Issues for Congress*.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL33436>

The United States Government Accountability Office (2021). *Burden Sharing: Benefits and Costs Associated with the U.S. Military Presence in Japan and South Korea*.

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/720/713082.pdf>

⁹ "Shasetsu: Nanjyakujiban jyugonen haaku, Dannenseyo" [Editorial: The Ministry of Defense informed about soft seafloor by 2015. Cancel the Plan]. *The Ryukyu Shimpo*. November 19, 2021. <https://ryukyushimpo.jp/editorial/entry-1430306.html>

¹⁰ See C-SPAN recording (2016) "U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Korea Operations." At 01:10:10, Admiral Harris begins discussing the FRF construction.

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?405141-1/hearing-us-pacific-command-us-forces-korea-operations>

¹¹ See "Editorial: Washington is concerned by Henoko Plans-Tokyo should Stop Wasting Time and Taxpayer Money." *The Ryukyu Shimpo*. June 26, 2020.

<http://english.ryukyushimpo.jp/2020/07/05/32352/>

value the Okinawa Defense Bureau's (Japanese government's) environmental impact studies. The Japanese government has pushed the FRF construction based on the conclusions of the Defense Bureau's environmental studies that there will be "no impact." The Bureau's Environmental Impact Assessment studies predicted that the construction of the FRF would not adversely impact the environment of Henoko-Oura Bay and that the Bureau's mitigations measures would be adequate. The Bureau's follow-up monitoring studies all claim that the construction of the FRF has not adversely impacted the environment and its mitigation measures have been effective.

As Governor Tamaki's disapproval of the ground reinforcement work, NGOs studies, and expert opinions indicate,¹² the ODB's repeated "no impact" conclusions do not conform to the truth. Adverse impacts on the environment were predictable at the EIA stage. Adverse impacts have been apparent since the start of land reclamation work. And the Bureau's mitigation measures, such as coral transplantation, have failed. Welch et al. (2010), a U.S. Department of Defense commissioned study conducted in the case of Dugong vs. U.S. Department of Defense, questioned the validity of the Bureau's EIA conducted for dugongs. It points out, among other things, the Bureau's EIA's did not follow consistent scientific methodologies.¹³ The Bureau has also failed to incorporate adaptive management for dugongs during construction, which was recommended by the DoD at the start of construction work in 2014.¹⁴ Moreover, in 2019, the International Union for Conservation of Nature also stated that "One location of major concern is the planned relocation of the current U.S. Marine Corps Air base (Futenma), to the central east coast in Oura Bay (Henoko Bay)"

¹² See, for example, Nature Conservation Society of Japan (2018). "Summary Report of the Symposium on Henoko-Oura Bay."

https://www.nacsj.or.jp/official/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/20180613_english_henokosymposium_houkokusyo.pdf

Also see Kasuya, T and Hosokawa, T. (2021). "Okinawa no jyugon [Okinawa Dugongs]" in Japanese. In *Jyugon to manati: kaigyrui no seitai to hozen*. Tokyo University Press. P.397-434.

*This article is a special addition to the Japanese translation of *Ecology and Conservation of the Sirenia: Dugongs and Manatees* (Marsh, H., O'Shea, T. J. & Reynolds, J.E. eds. 2011).

For a critique of the Okinawa Defense Bureau's EIA, see Nature Conservation Society of Japan (2014). "Press release: New facts which came to light after the Henoko Environmental Impact Assessment."

https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecrepattach/NACS-Jpressmaterials2014Eng_1.pdf

For critical opinions of the Defense Bureau's coral transplantation, see "Abe under Fire over Coral Transplant Remarks for Work at US Base Site." *The Mainichi*. January 11, 2019.

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20190111/p2a/00m/0na/027000c>

See Nogami, T. "Experts Waging War with Defense Ministry over Okinawa Coral." *The Asahi Shimbun*. April 25, 2019.

<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13055265>

¹³ Welch, D. J. et al. (2010). *An Anthropological Study of the Significance of the Dugong in Okinawa Culture*. This document was produced for Commandant US Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., in the case Dugong vs. U.S. DoD.

<https://www.jelf-justice.org/jelf/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/US00004156-Welch-2010.pdf>

¹⁴ U.S. Marine Corps (2014)." U.S. Marine Corps Recommended Findings 2014." This document was produced in the process of the case Dugong vs. U.S. DoD.

https://www.jelf-justice.org/jelf/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Findings_14-April_Revised-Final-2.pdf

and "the reclamation of 160 hectares, a substantial proportion of the total areas of seagrass around Okinawa" is "likely to be a serious impediment to the recovery of the Dugong population in Okinawa."¹⁵

It should be emphasized that the area of Henoko-Oura Bay, just 20 square kilometers in size, is home to some 5,300 marine species, including 262 endangered species such as blue coral and dugongs. The number of marine species found in Henoko-Oura Bay is comparable with that of marine species found in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in Hawaii. This 139, 797 square miles U.S. marine protected area and UNESCO World Natural Heritage site has over 7,000 marine species.¹⁶ In what amounts to a tiny fragment of that huge space, the Henoko-Oura Bay area is home to more than two-thirds as many marine species. The richly biodiverse of Honoko-Oura Bay has been recognized as a "Hope Spot" by Mission Blue, a U.S. based NGO.¹⁷ The Henoko-Oura Bay Coastal Waters has joined other Hope Spots in the world including Monterey Bay in California, the Florida Gold Coast, and Shinnecock Bay in New York.¹⁸ Moreover, Henoko-Oura Bay is just 16 km (10 miles) away from the newly inscribed UNESCO World Natural Heritage Yambaru Forest (2021), the integrity of which has also been threatened by the U.S. Marine Corps Northern Training Area sitting next to it.¹⁹

The U.S. Congress must demand that the Japanese government provide scientifically accurate information on the soft seafloor and the environmental damages caused by the construction work. The U.S. Congress also needs to have its experts examine the information from the Japanese government. We realize that the Armed Service Committees are committed not only to solving military-related issues but also to environmental protection as well. Some Armed Services Committee members are active in environmental protection in coastal areas and creating marine sanctuaries in the U.S. through their participation in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the House Natural Resources Committee, Endangered Species Caucus, Oceans Caucus, and National Marine Sanctuary Caucus. We ask the U.S. Congress to review the FRF construction plan with the same integrity and determination that it has shown in protecting the coastal and ocean environments of the United States.

¹⁵ Brownell Jr., R.L., Kasuya, T. & Marsh, H. (2019). *Dugong dugon (Nansei subpopulation)*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2019: e.T157011948A157011982.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2019-3.RLTS.T157011948A157011982.en>

¹⁶ Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

<https://www.papahanaumokuakea.gov/>

¹⁷ Mission Blue (2019). "Japan's first Hope Spot honors rare coral reefs and dugong habitats." October 22, 2019.

<https://mission-blue.org/2019/10/japans-first-hope-spot-honors-rare-coral-reefs-and-dugong-habitats/>

¹⁸ Mission Blue. "Hope Spots."

<https://mission-blue.org/hope-spots/>

¹⁹ Okinawa Environmental Justice Project et al. (2022). "Letter of concern and requests" addressed to the World Heritage Center and the International Union for Conservation of Nature. <http://okinawaejp.blogspot.com/2022/02/civic-groups-send-letter-tounesco.html>

Futenma Air Station

We now provide information on the other half of the FRF project, Futenma Air Station. While the FRF project faces a dead end at Henoko-Oura Bay, Futenma Air Station continues to impose danger on the residents and communities around it.²⁰ That the Air Station is located in the middle of crowded Ginowan City is the root cause of many problems. If the U.S. military's safety regulations and guidelines in accordance with the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration regulations were applied, the Futenma Air Station would be considered violating them.²¹ And the mitigation measures taken by the Japanese government and the DoD are simply ineffective. The dangerous location of the Air Station reflects the history of the U.S. occupation of Okinawa after World War II. The land where Futenma Air Station sits was taken from Okinawan landowners and communities without their consent and was converted into the Air Station immediately after World War II. The conditions of Futenma Air Station discussed below demand immediate closure of the Station.



USMC Futenma Air Station in the middle of Ginowan City

Image Source: Ginowan City

Things Falling Off Aircraft (TFOA) and Aircraft Crashes

Residents living around Futenma Air Station live in constant fear of objects falling from U.S. military aircraft on them and their properties or "*Things Falling Off Aircraft*" (TFOA).²² Worse, they have to live in fear of aircraft crashing on them. On November 23, 2021, an MV-22 Osprey dropped a stainless metal water bottle in the garden of a private house in Ginowan City.²³ On December 13, 2017, a glass window frame (7.7kg) from a CH-53E fell on the schoolyard of the Futenma Daini Elementary School while students were in the schoolyard for their physical education classes.²⁴ On December 7, 2017, it was reported that

²⁰ Ginowan City. (2018). "MCAS Futenma: Located in the center of the city"

<https://www.city.ginowan.lg.jp/material/files/group/36/2018houbeipanfeigo.pdf>

²¹ Lummis, C. D. (2018). "Futenma: The most dangerous base in the world." *The Diplomat*.

<https://thediplomat.com/2018/03/futenma-the-most-dangerous-base-in-the-world/>

²² Navy Safety Center (2019). *Annual Report 2019*.

<https://navalsafetycommand.navy.mil/Portals/29/Documents/220510-annual-report-2021.pdf>

²³ "Metal water bottle drops from U.S. military aircraft onto Okinawa residence." *The Japan Times*. November 24, 2021.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2021/11/24/national/osprey-water-bottle/>

²⁴ "Object from U.S. military helicopter falls onto elementary school in Okinawa." *The Mainichi*. December 13, 2017.

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20171213/p2a/00m/0na/004000c>

a small cylindrical object fell on the roof of Midorigaoka Preschool from a U.S. military helicopter.²⁵ On August 13, 2004, a CH-53D helicopter crashed on the campus of Okinawa International University, severely damaging university buildings.²⁶ Fortunately, except for the crew of the helicopter, no one has been injured or died in these recent accidents.

It may be hard for Congress members to imagine living in such fear. The reality is that the ill-situated Futenma Air Station negates the U.S. military's reputation of diligence and commitment to safe aircraft operation. And there appear to have been no effective attempts to solve these problems. The only visible measures taken to address TFOA are two concrete emergency shelters (baseball dugout type) built by the Japanese government on Futenma Daini Elementary School. Students are advised to run and hide inside the shelters to avoid falling objects from aircraft.²⁷ How they are to know that an object is falling before it hits the ground (or one of the students) is unclear.

"Noise Pollution"

Residents living around Futenma Air Station have suffered from "noise pollution" from U.S. military aircraft. Ginowan City reports that in 2017, the number of times aircraft noise levels exceeded the Japanese Environmental Standards was 10,940, with the highest noise level reaching 116.7dB daytime and 99.7dB nighttime in the Ue-Ojana District.²⁸ The U.S. aircraft noise level exceeded the environmental standards 30 times a day. The Japanese government has tried to mitigate noise pollution primarily by installing double pane windows in houses and buildings. They are not effective if you are not inside one of those buildings, barely effective if you are.

Over the decades, thousands of residents around the Futenma Station have filed a series of class lawsuits against the Japanese government and U.S. military, demanding aircraft operations be stopped or, failing that, reduced.²⁹ Japanese courts have repeatedly ruled that the plaintiffs have suffered physically and mentally from aircraft noise pollution. And monetary compensation has been awarded to them. The court has not ordered the U.S. aircraft operations be reduced or stopped, however, citing that it has no jurisdiction over the U.S. military base and its training.

²⁵ Persio, S. L. "U.S. military helicopter may have dropped object on Japanese nursery school." *Newsweek*. November 7, 2017.

<https://www.newsweek.com/us-military-aircraft-may-have-dropped-cylindrical-object-japanese-nursery-741393>

²⁶ "U.S. copter crashes on campus; local ire raised." *The Japan Times*. August 14, 2004.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2004/08/14/national/u-s-copter-crashes-on-campus-local-ire-raised/>

²⁷ Ichihashi, A. "Okinawa building shelters to protect children from falling military aircraft." *Stars and Stripes*. July 24, 2018.

<https://www.stripes.com/news/okinawa-building-shelters-to-protect-children-from-falling-military-aircraft-parts-1.539172>

²⁸ Ginowan City. (2018). "MCAS Futenma: Located in the Center of the City" <https://www.city.ginowan.lg.jp/material/files/group/36/2018houbeipanfeigo.pdf>

²⁹ "Japan government ordered to pay damages for noise from U.S. base." *The Japan Times*. March 11, 2022.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/03/11/national/crime-legal/futenma-noise-damages/>

PFAS Contamination of Water and Land

Residents living around Futenma Air Station have been exposed to carcinogenic chemicals Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) and other dangerous chemicals from the base via accidental spills and discharge of chemicals.³⁰ According to Okinawa Prefectural Government surveys (2019),³¹ at seven of the sixteen springs and underground water sites surveyed around the Air Station, the values of PFOA/PFOS exceeded 70 ng/L, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Lifetime Health Advisories for PFOA/PFOS, with the high value reaching 2000 ng/L. In the past, these springs, including Chunaga, a Japanese National Important Cultural Property, were integral parts of local communities' social and cultural life, providing drinking water, nourishing agricultural products, and embodying communal sacredness. Today, residents are advised not to drink water from these springs.

The U.S. and Japanese governments have not apparently implemented effective measures to deal with PFOA/PFOS-related accidents at Futenma Air Station. As no "buffer zone" exists between the Station and the residential areas, fire extinguisher foam containing PFOA/PFOS flew over from the base directly onto the residential house yards, rivers, and roads in a spill accident in April 2020.³² Moreover, as Futenma Air Station is ill-equipped to deal with the amount of PFOA/PFOS it generates, the Futenma Air Station had to release 64,000 liters of wastewater, treated but still containing PFOA/PFOS, into the city's sewage system in August 2021, without consent from the Okinawa Prefectural Government.³³



On April 10, 2020, fire extinguisher foam containing PFOA/PFOS flew over from Futenma to residential areas.

Image Source: The Ryukyu Shimpo

³⁰ Michell, J. (2020). "PFAS contamination from U.S. military facilities in mainland Japan and Okinawa." *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*. Vol. 18. Iss.16. Nm. 9. <https://apjjf.org/2020/16/JMichell.html>

³¹ Environmental Preservation Division, Department of Environmental Affairs, Okinawa Prefectural Government. (2019). "Survey of Perfluorinated Compounds in Okinawa Environmental Waters (Result of Winter Survey in 2018 Fiscal Year)." https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/kankyo/hozan/mizu_tsuchi/water/documents/jfy2018w_result_report_all.pdf

³² Ichihashi, A. and Burke, M.M. "Firefighting foam leaked from Futenma fire suppression system." *Stars and Stripes*. April 13, 2020. https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/firefighting-foam-leaked-from-futenma-aircraft-fire-suppression-system-1.625961

³³ "Editorial: Tainted water released by U.S. in Okinawa further deepens mistrust." *The Asahi Shimbun*. September 13, 2021. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14438927>

It should also be mentioned that over 450,000 residents of Ginowan City and its neighboring municipalities, including U.S. military personnel and their family members, are exposed to PFOA/PFOS through their drinking water.³⁴ PFOA /PFOS from the U.S. Air Force's Kadena Air Base has contaminated rivers and wells from which water is transferred to the Chatan Water Treatment Plant. The Okinawa Prefectural Government has installed activated carbon filters at the Plant to keep the values of PFOA/PFOS under the current Japanese provisional national guideline level of 50ng/L. It remains to be seen, however, whether drinking water from the Treatment Plant can be considered safe if the U.S. EPA's newly proposed Lifetime Health Advisories (0.004 ppt for PFOA and 0.02 ppt for PFOS) are to be applied.³⁵

We trust that Congress members understand the dangers the residents living around the Futenma Station face and empathize with the residents. We recognize that members of the Armed Service Committees have dealt with similar issues and brought solutions through Quiet Sky Caucus and the Congressional Task Force on PFOA/PFOS in U.S. domestic contexts. We urge Congress members to apply their knowledge and experience to review the dangerous situations of the Futenma Air Station.

Concluding Notes

The Prefecture of Okinawa consists of only 0.6 % of Japan's landmass. And yet, it bears 70 percent of the U.S. military bases and facilities in Japan. 16% of Okinawa Island is occupied by U.S. military bases and training areas. The people of Okinawa have repeatedly called for lessening this disproportionate and overwhelming burden of U.S. bases on Okinawa, which many see as structural discrimination. In particular, the people of Okinawa have called upon the Japanese and U.S. governments to withdraw the FRF construction at Henoko-Oura Bay and close the dangerous Futenma Air Station.

The Japanese government is intensifying its efforts to frame the FRF project in the narrative of deterrence against threats from neighboring countries.³⁶ However, with rising awareness of the soft seafloor issues and with the very feasibility of the FRF constuction in serious question, the Government's arguments about deterrence and strategy are unconvincing. Clearly, building yet another giant U.S. base in Okinawa does not decrease, but rather increases, the likelihood of attack. We argue that Henoko-Oura Bay is not a site for military base construction; it is a place for environmental protection. Also, the feasibility of the Henoko construction in question negates the Japanese and the U.S. governments' stance that the "Henoko (FRF construction at Henoko-Oura Bay) is the only solution" to resolve the dangers of Futenma. It is not a solution at all. We emphasize that any accidents or mishaps at and around the Futenma Station causing casualties or damage to properties will backfire on the U.S. and Japanese governments.

³⁴ Michell, J. (2020). "450,000 Okinawans' drinking water contaminated by Kadena Air Base training site, new evidence suggests." *The Okinawa Times*. August 18, 2022.
<https://www.okinawatimes.co.jp/articles/-/998284>

³⁵ The United States Environmental Protection Agency (2022). "Technical Fact Sheet: Drinking Water Health Advisories for Four PFAS (PFOA, PFOS, GenX chemicals, and PFBS)." <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-06/technical-factsheet-four-PFAS.pdf>

³⁶ Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet (2022). "Diplomatic Relations: U.S.-Japan Summit Meetings." May 23, 2022.
https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/diplomatic/202205/_00020.html

The FRF construction plan and Futenma Air Station are political and strategic liabilities to the U.S. DoD and the U.S. government because they defy the principle of democracy, the rule of law, environmental justice, and genuine security. And neighboring countries will take advantage of such contradictions.³⁷ Therefore, we urge you to take the initiative to withdraw the FRF construction plan, to close the dangerous Futenma, and to draw a new realignment plan.

Thank you for your leadership and attention to our requests regarding the FRF project and Futenma Air Station in Okinawa, Japan.

Sincerely,

Contact:

Hideki Yoshikawa

Director

Okinawa Environmental Justice Project

yhidekiy@gmail.com

Groups and Organizations in Okinawa and Japan (57)

Okinawa Environmental Justice Project

The Informed Public Project

Okinawa Environmental Network

Jyugon no Sato

“No Heliport Base” Association of 10 Districts North of Futamai

Eenagu Kai

Save the Dugong Campaign Center

Veterans For Peace-Ryukyu/Okinawa Chapter Kokusai (VFP-ROCK) Ch.1003

Protect Henoko and Takae! NGO Network

The Nature Conservation Society of Japan

Japan Environmental Lawyers for Future (JELF)

Ramsar Network Japan

³⁷ See, for example, U.S. military and Okinawa-related articles by Xinhua News Agency.
<https://search.news.cn/?lang=en#search/0/Okinawa/1/>

Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence

Stop! Henoko umetate campaign

Biodiversity Information Box

Jyugon no Umi

Sapporo Freedom School Yu

The Association to Protect Citizens' Lives from PFAS Contamination

Project Disagree Okinawa

OKINAWA NO KITIWO KANGAERUKAI • SAPPORO

ALL JAPAN DOCKWORKERS'UNION OSAKA BRANCH

PEACE BOAT

Linking Peace&Life

KANSAI Joint Labor Union

Save Awasehigata Association (SAA)

Okinawa heno henkenn wo aoru housou wo yurusanai shimin yuushi

AKAY JAPAN

Kowasuna Kenpo! Inochi to Kurashi! Shimin Demo HYOGO

Ampokanrenho Haishi! Shimin no Tsudoi

Okinawa Genchi Haken Kikin

All Okinawa Council for Human Rights

ZHAP (ZENKO Henoko Anti-base Project)

ZENKO (National Assembly for Peace & Democracy) • Hiroshima

We don't want a nuclear power plant: Hiroshima citizen's group

"HENOKONIDOSYAWOOKURASENAI ! " YAMAGUTINOKOE

Iraq Peace TV in Japan

Civic Action against ODA and Export of Nuclear Technologies (COA-NET)

Shimagurumi Kaigi Ogimi

Henoko Dosya Hansyutsu Hantai Zenkoku Renraku Kyougikai

PAN-Seto Inland Sea Congress

Shinkichi kensetsu hantai Nago kyodo sentaa

Association for Protection of Marine Communities (AMCo))

No More Okinawasen Ehime no Kai

Atumare Henoko

Yuntaku Takae

No Nukes from Shiga

No Helipad Takae Resident Society

Urumashi Gushikawa Kyujo no Kai

Urumashi Shimagurumi Kaigi

ZENKO (National Assembly for Peace and Democracy)

Atumarehenoko@kanto

Ginowan Churamizu Kai/Citizen group for protecting clean water in Ginowan

Okinawa Drone Project

Heaven Heaven

Special Committee on Military Base of the Nishi-Chugoku Diocese of the United Church of Christ in Japan

Iruka(dolphin) & Kujira (Whale) Action Network

The Real Conservation

Groups and Organizations outside Okinawa and Japan (45)

Peace Philosophy Centre (Canada)

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) (U.S.)

World BEYOND War (U.S.)

Veterans For Peace -NYC Chapter 34 (U.S.)

Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security (U.S.)

CODEPINK (U.S.)

Center for Biological Diversity (U.S.)

Malu 'Aina Center For Non-violent Education & Action (U.S.)

Philippine Women Network for Peace & Security (PWNPS) (The Philippines)

Hawai'i Peace and Justice (U.S.)

International Women's Network against Militarism (International)

Women for Genuine Security (International)

Peace Action Wellington (New Zealand)

Kia'i Report (U.S.)

Ka Lāhui Hawai'i Komike Kalai'aina (U.S.)

Malama Makua (U.S.)

Stand with Okinawa (U.S.)

Pax Christi New York State (U.S.)

Independent and Peaceful Network Australia (Australia)

Just Peace Qld (Australia)

Pacific Peace Network (Australia)

New York Peace Council (U.S.)

Gangjeong Peace Network (Korea)

Inter-island Solidarity for Peace of the Sea (Korea)

Association of Gangjeong Villagers Against the Jeju Navy Base (Korea)

St. Francis Peace Center Foundation (South Korea)

Uptown Progressive Action (U.S.)

NYC Metro Raging Grannies (U.S.)

Granny Peace Brigade, NYC (U.S)

Women's Voices, Women Speak (Honolulu) (U.S.)

Kaua'i Alliance for Peace and Social Justice (U.S.)

Climate and Community Project (U.S.)

Democratic Socialists of America International Committee (U.S.)

Worker Communist Party of Iraq (International)

Shut Down Red Hill Mutual Aid (U.S.)

The Red Nation (U.S.)

From Hiroshima to Hope (FHTH) (U.S.)

Guerrilla History Podcast (U.S.)

RootsAction.org (U.S.)

International Peoples Assembly (International)

Justice is Global (U.S.)

Nodutdol (U.S.)

Empire Files (U.S.)

Security Policy Reform Institute (U.S.)

Massachusetts Peace Action (U.S.)

State and Municipal Elected Officials in the U.S. (42)

Bertha Perez, Merced City Council Member (CA)

Claudia Jimenez, Richmond City Council Member (CA)

Gayle McLaughlin, Richmond City Council Member (CA)

Konstantine Anthony, Burbank Vice Mayor (CA)

Kate Harrison, Berkeley Vice Mayor (CA)

Candi CdeBaca, Denver City Council Member (CO)

Elisabeth Epps, Colorado State Representative (CO)

Abdul Osmanu, Hamden Legislative Council Member (CT)

Madinah Wilson-Anton, Delaware State Representative (DE)

Eric Morrison, Delaware State Representative (DE)

Melissa Minor-Brown, Delaware State Representative (DE)

Shané Darby, Wilmington City Council Member (DE)

Richie Floyd, St. Petersburg City Council Member (FL)

Amy Perruso, Hawaii State Representative (HI)

Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, Chicago Alderman (IL)

Dylan Parker, Rock Island Alderman (IL)

Mike Connolly, Massachusetts State Representative (MA)

Zac Bears, Medford City Council Member (MA)

Robin Wonsley, Minneapolis City Council Member (MN)

Ruth Anna Buffalo, North Dakota State Representative (ND)

Mark King, New Hampshire State Representative (NH)

Jabari Brisport, New York State Senator (NY)

Julia Salazar, New York State Senator (NY)

Zohran Mamdani, New York State Assembly Member (NY)

Emily Gallagher, New York State Assembly Member (NY)

Marcela Mitaynes, New York State Assembly Member (NY)

Phara Souffrant Forrest, New York State Assembly Member (NY)

Tiffany Cabán, New York City Council Member (NY)

Alexa Avilés, New York City Council Member (NY)

Shahana Hanif, New York City Council Member (NY)

Jorge Defendini, Ithaca Common Council Member (NY)

Mary Lupien, Rochester City Council Member (NY)

Kimberly Smith, Rochester City Council Member (NY)

Stanley Martin, Rochester City Council Member (NY)

Robin Wilt, Brighton Town Council Member (NY)

Megan Deichler, Poughkeepsie City Council Member (NY)

Nikil Saval, Pennsylvania State Senator (PA)

Rick Krajewski, Pennsylvania State Representative (PA)

David Morales, Rhode Island State Representative (RI)

Brian Cina, Vermont State Representative (VT)

Tanya Vyhovsky, Vermont State Representative (VT)

Ryan Clancy, Milwaukee County Supervisor (WI)