

The Consolidating U.S.-Japanese Military Alliance and The U.S. Forces in Okinawa and Japan

Asia-Wide Campaign -Japan
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1. Overview of the U.S. bases in Japan

As of now, around 37,000 U.S. military personnel are deployed in 83 permanent U.S. bases and facilities in Okinawa and 'mainland' of Japan. In addition, the U.S. Navy 7th fleet, which keep the Yokosuka base as its home port, has around 13,000 sailors afloat. In total, the U.S. Forces Japan or the USFJ has around 50,000 military personnel. It exceeds the number of the U.S. forces in Germany, and Japan became the NO.1 host country for U.S. forces abroad since 2010.

The article 6 of the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty, which was originally signed in 1951 and revised in 1960, stated that 'for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East, the United States of America is granted the use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan.' This has been regarded as the legal basis of the stationing of U.S. forces in the soil of Japan.

The major U.S. bases in 'mainland' of Japan are: the Yokota Air Base in Tokyo, which has general headquarters of the USFJ; the Yokosuka Naval Base, the US Army Camp Zama, the US Army Sagami Depot and other bases in Kanagawa; the Misawa Air Base in Aomori; the Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi; and the Sasebo Naval Base in Nagasaki, etc.

In Okinawa, southwestern island from 'mainland' of Japan, 74 percent of the U.S. bases and facilities are concentrated and around 26,000 military personnel are stationing on this small island. 32 US bases and facilities, including the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, the Kadena Air Base and the U.S. Marine Corps Camp Schwab, occupy around 18 percent of the lands of Okinawa Island. From 1945 to 1972, Okinawa had been remained under U.S. military control. People had suffered from the long- term U.S. occupation. Even after moving of the administrative rights on Okinawa to Japan, people's suffering caused by the existence of many U.S. bases has never changed until now.

These many U.S. bases and facilities have been managed by Japanese government's massive financial support. Every year, Japanese government has provided around 600 billion Japanese yen (6 billion US dollars) or 70 percent of the stationing and its-related cost of the USFJ.

So many accidents and criminal cases have been occurred U.S. servicemen. Residents who live near U.S. air stations suffered from noise. Sexual violence and heinous crime are often happened. One of latest case is the rape case against a women in Okinawa committed by 2 U.S. servicemen. The USFJ promise the 'enforcement of official discipline' whenever such cases happened. But, of course, it is never effective. Environmental destruction is also serous. Recently, the suspicion that the U.S. forces buried barrels of defoliant or the Agent Orange was exposed.

2. Historical Role of the U.S.-Japan Military Alliance

The U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty took effect in 1952 or in the midst of the Korean War. It was the same day as the taking effect of San Francisco Peace Treaty. Through them, the U.S. intends to keep Japan as a 'bulwark against communism', and confront the rising tide toward national liberation and socialist revolution in Asia.

Historically and practically, U.S. bases in Japan have been used as launching pads and logistical bases for U.S imperialists' invasive war and military intervention in Asia and the rest of the world. U.S.-Japanese military alliance has took a role for suppressing against people's liberation struggle and maintaining of U.S. and Japanese imperialists' economic interest in Asia and the rest of the world.

In fact, during the Korean War and the Vietnam War, U.S. bases in Okinawa and 'mainland' of Japan had become major launch pads and huge logistic bases for these wars. USFJ was also dispatched to battle fields in the Gulf War, the Afghan War and the Iraqi War. It was US marines dispatched from Okinawa that carried out the Fallujha Massacre in 2004 during the Iraqi War.

Even after the end of 'Cold War' regime, the U.S. military presence in Japan had never reduced. On the contrary, the U.S. and Japanese governments have consolidated their military alliance without any amendment of the written security treaty as their response for emerging new situation in the region.

In 1996, the U.S. and Japanese governments conducted the 're-definition' of their military alliance and revised it as the essentials for 'peace and stability in Asia-Pacific' and the 'foundation for bilateral cooperation on global issues'. Under this, they made the 'New Guideline for the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation' in 1997. It established the joint operation plan including the using of private facilities such like port, airport, transportation and hospital and also the forced mobilization of workers in private sector and local government in the occasion of the 'emergency surrounding Japan'.

In 2005-2006, the U.S. and Japanese governments agreed on the so-called 'Realignment Plan of the U.S. Forces in Japan'. It was a comprehensive plan for consolidation of U.S. bases in Okinawa, Iwakuni, Kanagawa and other areas and for promoting of military integration between both forces of the U.S. and Japan. People's struggle against this plan is still continue until now.

The consolidation of the joint military posture such as Missile Defense is also promoting. In addition, since after US president Obama's announcement of the 'rebalancing' strategy on January 2012, the U.S.-Japanese joint military exercises and Japan's participation in multilateral military exercises in the region are being conducted rampantly than before.

(3) The U.S.-Japanese military alliance and Japanese imperialism

The Alliance with the U.S has vital meaning for Japanese ruling class in order to maintain their status as political power. At the same time, Japanese imperialists, that have huge economic interests in the Asia Pacific region, have sought to build military posture that can dispatch their own forces anytime when they need for defense their foreign economic interests. For this, Japanese ruling class is pursuing Japan's own militarization under the U.S.-Japanese military alliance now.

The dispatch of Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDF/Japanese army) to Cambodia in 1992 was the first step for the above-mentioned their ambition. After that, in late 1990s, Japanese government enacted a series of war-related laws regarding 'emergency surrounding Japan'. It followed the 'New Guideline for the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation'. In 2001, Japanese government sent SDF's warships to Indian Ocean or Arabic sea to support for U.S. forces that had carried out invasive war in Afghanistan by refueling of the oil (up to 2010). It also sent SDF to Iraq in 2003 (up to 2009).

The article 9 of the Japanese Constitution declared 'renouncement of war', 'non-maintenance of war potential forces' and 'denial of the right of belligerency'. The above-mentioned Japan's moves violate it clearly. Japanese ruling class, however, intends to make the article dead letter rather than respect it, and even try to amend it completely. Especially, present Japanese Prime Minister Sinzo Abe from Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is eager to amend the Japanese Constitution. Such tide toward Japanese militarization is going along with the maneuver for justifying and glorifying of past Japanese invasive war in Asia.

Recently, Japanese government changed its 'Defense Only' policy and held up more proactive or invasive defense policy based on the concept of so-called 'Dynamic Defense'. Under this concept, it promotes permanent deployment of Patriot Missile (PAC3) in SDF bases (and US bases), reinforcement of deployment of Aegis-equipped destroyers and massive reinforcement of SDF deployment in Okinawa.

In order to justify the U.S.-Japanese military alliance and Japan's own militarization, Japanese government is propagating the 'threat of China' over Diaoyu Islands issue and the 'threat' of DPRK's potential launching of ballistic missile

Japan has also intended to develop military relationship among other allied countries in the region such as conclusion of ACSA (Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement) with Australia; participation in the US-PR Balikatan exercise and consolidation of military cooperation with Philippines including recent exposed maneuver toward enacting of stationing and access agreement; and maneuvers toward conclusion of ACSA and GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement). These maneuvers coincide with the orientation of the US 'rebalancing' strategy.

(4) The 'Realignment Plan of the U.S. Forces in Japan' and other recent development

In 2005-2006, the U.S. and Japanese governments agreed on the so-called 'Realignment Plan of the U.S. Forces in Japan' in 2005-2006. As we mentioned in the above paragraph, it was a comprehensive plan for consolidation of the U.S. bases nation-wide and for promoting of military integration between both forces of the U.S. and Japan. The major contents are as follows.

- a) Transfer of the headquarters of Japan's Air Self Defense Forces to the Yokota Air Base in Tokyo, by which both military will be able to cope with Ballistic Missile Defense jointly
- b) Transfer of the headquarters of the U.S. Army 1st Corps from Washington to the Camp Zama, Kanagawa. The headquarters of Japan's SDF Central Readiness Force also transferred there in order to develop mutual military integration
- c) Transfer of 59 carrier-based fighters from the Atsugi base in Kanagawa to the US Marine

Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi, and building of housing complex for moved US servicemen and their families

- d) Deployment of the newest nuclear powered aircraft carrier George Washington in the Yokosuka Naval Base in Kanagawa
- e) Building of new U.S. marine base in Henoko, Okinawa as replacement facility of the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.
- f) Promotion of joint use of military facilities, civil airports and civil ports by the U.S. and Japanese forces, etc.

Originally, both governments announced that this plan was a 'package' and should be accomplished until 2014. But they force to change targeted year for accomplishment because of the struggle of people against such massive consolidation of U.S. bases in their hometowns.

In addition to this comprehensive plan for consolidation of the U.S. Bases in Okinawa and 'mainland' of Japan, the USFJ deployed 12 Osprey transport aircrafts in the US Marine Corp Air Station Futenma in Okinawa on last year 2012. The Osprey is newest but hazardous transport aircraft, which has many cases of crash accidents since under its development. In Okinawa, USFJ started the low altitude flight training by the Osprey already, and then it will expand the training all over 'mainland' of Japan. USFJ plan the additional deployment of 12 Osprey aircrafts also in the Futenma base on the end of this month (July 2013).

Furthermore, the U.S. and Japanese government announced the construction of U.S. land-based X band radar base in Kyotango city of northern part of Kyoto prefecture.

(5) People's struggle against the U.S.-Japanese military alliance

People's persevering struggle against the U.S.-Japan military alliance and U.S bases in Japan is continuing. Here, we show the struggle in Okinawa and Iwakuni.

Okinawa, where U.S. Bases in Japan are concentrated, has long and rich experience of the struggle against U.S. Bases. Especially, a rape case of 12 years old girl committed by 3 U.S. servicemen in 1995 sparked Okinawan people's outrage, and 85,000 people in Okinawa join a rally to condemn this case. After that, the U.S. and Japanese governments announced the 'return' of US Marine Air Station Futenma in Ginowan city, Okinawa. However, they add one condition; building of new U.S. base in offshore Henoko, Nago city as replacement of Futenma base. Nago city is also located in Okinawa.

Since after announcement of this plan in 1996, Okinawan people demand immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Futenma base. In parallel, they have been holding many form of actions to stop building new base in Henoko including daily sit-in on the planned area and afloat protest by canoes and boats to stop preparation for environmental assessment, etc. Because of the continuous struggle, actual construction of the new base does not start yet.

Futenma base is located in highly-residential area. It was said the 'world's most dangerous base' (former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, 2003). As a result of remaining of the base, even a serious crash accident happened in August 2004; an US helicopter belonging to Futenma base crashed into a building inside campus of Okinawa International University located just near Futenma base. When Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) got the ruling power

in 2009, then Prime Minister Ikuo Hatoyama promised the removal of the Futenma base to 'outside Okinawa' in order to gain the support from masses. But facing huge pressure from the U.S., he abandoned the promise soon in the next year.

The deployment of the Osprey aircrafts expanded Okinawan people's struggle. Now, the stop of building of new U.S. base in Henoko and the withdrawal of deployment of the Osprey aircrafts become common demand of all the people in Okinawa, including conservative politician. On September 12, 2012, the prefectural-level rally was held and over 100,000 Okinawan people joined it. On September 27-30, people blocked all the gate of Futenma base, and the function of the base was paralyzed for 4 days. Representatives from prefectural assembly and all 41 local government in Okinawa visit to Tokyo and directly submit Okinawan's demand to the central government.

Also in Okinawa, direct action to stop construction of heliport for US Osprey aircrafts and other helicopters is going on in Takae, northern part of Okinawa.

People's struggle in Iwakuni is also growing. In Iwakuni, the construction for expanding offshore base by reclaiming from the sea had been implemented since late 1990s under the pretext of 'noise reduction'. In addition, the U.S. and Japanese government announced further consolidation of the Iwakuni base in the 'Realignment Plan of U.S. Forces in Japan'; transfer of 59 fighters from Atsugi base. If those fighters would be really deployed, the Iwakuni base would become one of biggest and most significant U.S. bases in Northeast Asia that 120 fighters stationed.

Furthermore, the U.S. and Japanese government intend to build new huge housing complex for 4000 U.S. servicemen and their families who would move from the Atsugi base. They also target the Iwakuni base as main operation hub for nation-wide military training by the Osprey aircrafts. In addition, the USFJ announced the deployment of the newest F35 fighters in Iwakuni bases in 2017.

On the referendum held in 2006, more than half of Iwakuni citizen voted to oppose consolidation of the base. It was the first opportunity for most of people in Iwakuni to show their will against consolidation of the base openly. Then Iwakuni mayor also respected the will of citizens. Japanese government, however, put unjust pressure on the mayor by many ways such as pending of governmental subsidy for ongoing construction of new city hall, etc. After that, pro-base new mayor was elected.

In spite of such governmental harassment, the struggle of Iwakuni people is ongoing perseveringly. Residence who live in the area near planned US housing complex in Atagoyama hill hold the regular rally 3 times in every month, calling the support from people nation-wide. Court struggle regarding noise and other issues is also on going. The struggle against consolidation of Iwakuni base has important meaning to develop anti-base movement in 'mainland' of Japan in solidarity with Okinawan people's anti-base struggle. AWC-Japan started to hold its annual rally there by nation-wide mobilization since 2007 in solidarity with people's struggle in Iwakuni.

We AWC-Japan have supported and joined the struggle of people who suffered from the consolidation of U.S. bases in Okinawa and 'mainland' of Japan. We try to promote coordination and solidarity among anti-base movement in Okinawa, Iwakuni and Kanagawa.

We also try to develop coordination and solidarity between anti-base movement in Okinawa/'mainland' of Japan and the struggle against U.S. forces in countries/areas in the Asia-Pacific region. Our main slogan is; Junk U.S.-Japanese Military alliance! All U.S. Troops, Out of Asia!

AWC-Japan often holds U.S.-led military exercises including US-JPN, US-RP and US-ROK joint exercise at the U.S. embassy and consulate in Japan. Also, we had sent delegations to the sites of anti-base struggle in the region to show our solidarity with struggling people against U.S. base and military presence. In recent years, we had sent our delegation to Philippines, Pyeongtaek of South Korea and Jeju island of South Korea, etc. In order to oppress our international solidarity work, governments and immigration authorities such as the Philippines and South Korea issued the entry-ban orders against our members. In spite of such repression, we, with people in Asia-Pacific, develop further international solidarity and coordination among anti-base and anti-imperialist movement in the region.

Under the situation of 'U.S. pivot to Asia-Pacific', it become further significant issue for people's movement in the region to promote deeper mutual understanding and mutual cooperation and to develop coordination and joint struggle against reinforcement of the U.S. Military presence in the region. Shall we fight for withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Asia-Pacific!

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