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SPECIAL REPORT: OKINAWA AND THE AMERICAN MILITARY

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In a letter to the editor of the *Japan Times* (Feb. 16, 1997), Ralph Cossa, an American military theorist, denounced Governor Ota of Okinawa for his “inability (or refusal) to understand the geopolitical environment in which he lives.” Cossa further chided Ota for being insensitive to “the fact that U.S. service members are putting their own lives at risk to protect Japan’s (and America’s) national security interests.”

But this statement makes no sense. No less a figure than Newt Gingrich himself, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and the third most senior American political leader, in a July 1995 speech said: “You do not need today’s defense budget to defend the United States. You need today’s defense budget to lead the world. If you are prepared to give up leading the world [i.e., American hegemony], you can have a much smaller defense budget.”

Even if the American troops are not in Okinawa to defend the U.S., they are there to defend Japan, according to Cossa. But the senior military correspondent of the *Asahi Shimbun*, Shunji Taoka, recently wrote that except for the nuclear area, since the late 1950s, Japan has been responsible for its own air defense. According to Taoka, withdrawal of American forces would not require Japan to spend any more on defense.

Other supporters of the American presence in Okinawa say that the troops and aircraft are “forward-deployed” to be ready for any emergency. But Okinawa itself is not likely to be the scene of any future conflict. American troops based in Okinawa would have to be transported to an actual war zone in, say, South Korea or the Middle East. The American amphibious assault ships based at Sasebo are not big enough to move the huge American

forces on Okinawa. In times of a genuine crisis, the American troops on Okinawa are most likely to be stranded there.

Why then are they there? I believe they are there as colonialists- representatives of an American empire that came into being in East Asia as a result of World War II. Just as the United States's earlier colonial outpost in East Asia, the Philippines, was a result of the Battle of Manila Bay of 1898 so the current American colonial outpost in East Asia, Okinawa, was a result of the Battle of Okinawa of 1945. For the past fifty years, Okinawa has had an international status similar to that of Korea as a Japanese colony from 1910 to 1945.

Okinawa and Korea resemble each other in four particular ways. First, in terms of formal legal structures, the Japanese always claimed that the Koreans acquiesced in Japanese rule, just as the Americans and Japanese both claim that the Japanese government has merely leased part of its territory to the Americans. This, of course, ignores Japan's military occupation of Korea in the course of the Russo-Japanese War and the United States's military occupation of Okinawa in the course of World War II.

Second, the Japanese in Korea tried (even though ultimately futilely) to destroy the national identity of the local people. They did this through education, enforced name changes, and suppression of the Korean language. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Americans tried to do the same thing to the Okinawans. By broadcasting the news in Okinawan dialect and calling the people Ryukyuan, the Americans tried to weaken Okinawan loyalties to Japan.

Third, the Japanese in Korea and the Americans in Okinawa contend that their respective occupations contributed to the economic development of the two regions. But only after South Korea was liberated from Japanese rule did it become one of the world's richest countries, even though divided by the Cold War. Okinawa is also likely to prosper only after the American bases have been removed.

Fourth, the Japanese claimed that their occupation of Korea was required for Japan's 'security.' Korea was said to be like 'a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan.' But as former prime minister Shigeru Yoshida often pointed out, if Japan had not occupied Korea, it would not have gotten involved on the continent of Asia and would have avoided its disastrous war with China of the 1930s and 1940s. The United States's claim that its presence is required to maintain security and stability in East Asia is equally doubtful. Peace and stability exist in Asia because of high-speed economic growth, not foreign troops.

The difference between Korea and Okinawa is that Korea was liberated from colonial rule fifty years ago, but Okinawa, even at the end of the 20th century, is still a semi-colonial enclave.

A Japanese version of this essay appeared in the *Ryukyu Shimpo*, March 16, 1997.

Supreme Court of Japan Testimony on U.S. Troop Presence by Governor Masahide Ota

Governor Ota was elected for his pledge to end the American military occupation of parts of Okinawa. Okinawa's land on which the military bases are built is subject to lease renewals every five years. The lessee is the Government of Japan, which "sublets" (as it were) the leased land to the stationed American military forces under the terms of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty. In September 1995, Governor Ota refused to cooperate with the Japanese Government in the procedure required by the Land Acquisition Law.

Using the State-Prefecture relationship stipulated in the Local Autonomy Law, the prime minister of Japan sued Governor Ota at the Fukuoka High Court Naha Branch seeking a court order for the governor to execute duties of State delegated to him. Governor Ota argued against the connection between delegated State duties under the Local Autonomy Law and cooperation with the forcible acquisition of Okinawa's land for use by the American military. In February 1996, the court supported the prime minister. Dissatisfied with the ruling, Governor Ota appealed to the Supreme Court of Japan.

On July 10, 1996, Governor Ota testified before the grand bench of the Supreme Court. The media and newspapers reported that the justices appeared to be favorably impressed with the governor's presentation. However, on August 28, 1996, the Supreme Court announced a very unfavorable verdict on the governor's appeal. It even appeared to treat this case with profound disdain. The court was open for about one minute and closed as soon as the chief justice finished reading the two-line verdict: "[We] reject and dismiss (kikyakusuru) the appeal. The court expenses shall be borne by the appellant." Governor Ota's testimony, presented below in translation, is based on the text published in full in the Ryukyu Shimpo, July 11, 1996. This translation was made independent of any other existing or planned translation of this document and first published by The Ryukyuanist, No. 35 (Winter 1996-97).

The Text of Ota's Testimony

I am Ota Masahide, Governor of Okinawa Prefecture. I heartily thank you for giving me the opportunity to make a statement of opinion (*iken chinjutsu*) before this court. To begin, I would like to explain the background of my appeal to the Supreme Court following my refusal to sign the documents in lieu (*dairi shomei*) of the landowners concerning the forcible acquisition of their land for the stationed [U.S.] armed forces (*churyugun*).

What I would like to say before anything else is that among my people, the longing for peace is very strong. The reason is: not only did we sacrifice almost one third of our population in the Battle of Okinawa toward the end of the Pacific War, but our cultural heritages from our ancestors--valuable national treasures--were totally destroyed. Our rich, verdant land was literally transformed into scorched earth. Not only that. Okinawa was a

small kingdom called Ryukyu until it was annexed by Japan by the process known as *Ryukyu shobun* (punishment of Ryukyu) during the period from 1872 to the 1880s. For ages, the Ryukyu Kingdom had been widely known, even abroad, as an unarmed land of courtesy (*shurei no kuni*).

This was because King Shoshin, who was on the throne in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, forbade people to carry weapons.

The fundamental state policy he established was to maintain the little kingdom in peace by friendly trade with foreign countries. In addition, after its invasion of Ryukyu (*ryukyu shinryaku*) in 1609, Satsuma strictly prohibited people from bearing arms in order to forestall Ryukyuan's possible rebellions. This also [ironically] helped the islanders enjoy the reputation as a peace-loving people (*heiwa aiko no tami*).

On the basis of the above historical background, the [late] Professor William Lebra of the University of Hawaii, in his *Okinawan Religion: Belief, Ritual and Social Structure* (1966), concludes that the cultures of Japan and Okinawa are fundamentally different. That is, in contrast to Japan's "warrior culture," Okinawa's is notable for "absence of militarism." Other scholars define Okinawan culture as a "feminine culture" (*josei bunka*) or a "culture of moderation" (*yasashisa no bunka*).

[The late] Mr. Nakahara Zenchu, a well-known scholar of Okinawan studies, researching the *Omoro soshi*, which is a collection of 1554 old folk and religious songs ranging in age from the 12th to the 17th centuries was impressed with a total absence of words connoting ruthless killing (*satsuriku*) in these songs. Nakahara inferred that Okinawans at that time had none of it [killing] on their consciousness (*sono ishiki ga nakatta*).

[The Impact of the U.S. Military Bases]

In this way, my prefecture is dedicated to a way of life that shuns and abhors armed conflict. Many people in Okinawa are greatly troubled by the fact that contrary to their wishes, they have become participants in the killing and maiming of other people by allowing military bases in Okinawa, from which the American forces have been deployed for military operations in other lands, as in the Korean War earlier, and then the Vietnam and the Gulf Wars.

It may also be pointed out that the military bases in Okinawa are extremely dense, a situation well described by a certain American journalist as Okinawa being in the bases, rather than the bases in Okinawa. In area, Okinawa is only 0.6% of Japan, but about 75% of facilities exclusively used by the American armed forces stationed in Japan are concentrated in this small prefecture.

The American military bases occupy about 11% of the total area of the prefecture and about 20% of Okinawa Island. Moreover, the bases are concentrated in the middle and southern parts of the island which, with a population density amounting to 2198 persons per square kilometer, are among the few most densely populated areas of Japan. In

addition, by virtue of the Status of Forces Agreement based on the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, 29 areas in the sea and 15 air spaces are also controlled by the American forces. As a result, my people are not free to use [much of] their land, sea and air. We wonder whether the nation-state [we belong to, that is, Japan] can really be called a sovereign state (*shuken kokka*).

Under these circumstances, planned urban development (*machizukuri*) is impossible, let alone the growing of industry. Since the reversion [of Okinawa to Japan], the [Japanese] Government has implemented three ten-year economic encouragement and development plans (*shinko kaihatsu keikaku*), investing 4 trillion yen in the construction and maintenance of infrastructure.

As a result, roads and harbors have considerably improved, but regrettably, achievements are unsatisfactory in matters like the elimination of economic differentials [vis-`a-vis Japan as a whole] (*kakusa zesei*) or the laying of foundations for suitable development (*jiritsuteki hatten no kiso joken no seibi*). These are the basic objectives of the economic encouragement and development plans. In particular, industries that may generate sustainable development have not been nurtured. The prefecture's per capita income per annum still remains 74% of the national average, or less than half of Tokyo's. Besides, the unemployment rate is about 6%, twice as high as the national average. Moreover, the unemployment rate of youth in their teens and twenties reaches a serious 12%.

This condition reflects not only the wrinkles created in our economy (*shiwayose*) by the excessive burden of the bases, but also the difficulties that hinder the rise of unique local industries (*jiba sangyo*). The urbanization process itself has been distorted. In my prefecture, "cities" --like Naha, the capital, especially, and others like Urasoe, Ginowan, and Okinawa--have come into being as erratic sprawls around the bases, without the benefit of zoning. These cities are not solid enough to withstand natural disasters. For purposes of safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of the people of my prefecture, an urban redevelopment that [by widening streets] permits operations of fire trucks and ambulances is indispensable.

For example, in Kadena Town, where the Kadena Air Force Base is located occupying about 83% of the town, more than 14,000 people crowd into the remaining 17%. Under these circumstances, it is almost impossible to live as [decently as] humans should. As may be seen from these realities, it is not an exaggeration to say that the military bases forcing a special land use pattern on us have been the greatest problem of postwar Okinawa.

[Origins of the Forced Acquisition of Okinawa's Land]

The forced acquisition of land for military use occurred [in Okinawa] both before and during the war. Prior to the abolition of the [Ryukyu] domain and the establishment of the [Okinawa] prefecture (*haihan chiken*) in 1879, the Meiji government directed the Ryukyu Kingdom to undertake several reforms toward Japanization (*nihonka*), such as the abolition of the traditional embassies to China and of the investiture [of the king by the emperor of

China] (*sakuho*), as well as the adoption of the Japanese era name [Meiji]. The reforms also included permanent stationing in Okinawa of an army unit from the Sixth Division of Kumamoto.

The Ryukyu Kingdom agreed to all the reforms but one, the permanent stationing of Japanese troops (*Nihongun no jochu*), which it resolutely rejected. The Ryukyuan government argued: “no matter how much one might strengthen military preparedness in these little islands, a success would be impossible to attain in defense against enemy attacks;” “arming the little island-state might cause suspicions on the part of other countries and invite an invasion;” and “as in the old saying that ‘softness tames toughness well’ (*ju yoku go wo seisu*), it is wiser to maintain the state in peace by courteous and friendly relations with the people of the neighboring countries.”

But the Meiji government insisted: “since the government has the duty to protect the safety and stability (*annei*), of the territory and population, where to station the armed forces is a matter for the government to decide; no one has the right to oppose [the government].” The government then arbitrarily and forcibly dispatched an army unit to Okinawa. On the pretext that land was needed for barracks, drilling grounds, shooting ranges, hospitals, and so on, the Meiji government selected an area amounting to 61,600 square meters at Kohagura between Shuri and Naha and speedily proceeded to a forcible purchase of the land in the area. Since this was an area of fertile and superior farmland, the Ryukyu government requested the Meiji government to reconsider and offered an alternative site for free. The Meiji government rejected the request and, as planned, decided on basing the dispatched troops at Kohagura.

In this way, Okinawa, formerly a peaceful nation-state (*heiwa kokka*), had no choice but to go along with a military state (*gunkoku*), Japan. This, one may say, was the beginning of Okinawa’s fortification (*Okinawa no kichika*).

As this example illustrates, the tendency of central government policy to override everything else, including the local will, has continued unabated in Okinawa. During the [Pacific] War, farmland was semi-forcibly taken and used for air fields in the name of Japanese defense.

[Land Acquisition by the American Military]

After the war, nothing changed. The expropriation of land continued by ordinances and decrees of the American military as if the war had never ended. Since documents like family registers and land ledgers were lost in the ravages of war, the confirmation of titles to privately-owned land was extremely difficult. One cannot deny that this situation made the arbitrary acquisition of land by the military easier. Moreover, the acquisition was forced, the troops brandishing “bayonets and bulldozers,” as my people will remember. Over the period from 1953 to 1956 or 57, there were “island-wide struggles for [the defense of] land” (*shima gurumi no tochi toso*) in Okinawa. A group of Okinawa’s high-level administrative leaders visited America twice in search of a solution to the land problem. In a sense, today’s forcible land-use problem is a replay of that of the 1950s.

A distinctive characteristic of the land problem observed throughout this history from the prewar period to the present is that much of the land that has become the object of forcible acquisition is farmland belonging to farmers. Until recently, the key industry of Okinawa was agriculture. The farming folk who lost their lands were compelled to emigrate to [faraway] countries like Bolivia looking for places for permanent resettlement, or to work [in odd jobs] on the bases giving up traditional farming. As numerous records indicate, in Okinawa where the proclivities for ancestor worship are strong, land is not a mere plot of soil in which to grow crops. It is not a commodity, something that can be considered an object for buying and selling. If I may paraphrase further, land is an irreplaceable heritage graciously bequeathed to us by our ancestors or a spiritual string that ties us to them. My people's attachment to their land is firmly rooted, and their resistance against the forcible taking of their land is similarly strong. What must be pointed out in this connection is that the military bases on the mainland of Japan sit on land that is 87% state-owned, while more than 30% of the land used by the bases in Okinawa is privately owned. Especially in the central area of Okinawa Island, where the bases are concentrated, 75% of the land used by the bases is privately owned. Moreover, there are differences [in government policy] between mainland Japanese and Okinawan bases, as may be seen in the delays in reaching agreement on noise prevention or [permissible] kinds of military maneuvers. My people consider these differences as amounting to discriminatory treatment [of them by Japan and America] and are increasingly dissatisfied with it.

In addition, incidents and accidents originating in the American bases never cease. Atrocious cases like last year's rape of a little girl are repeatedly taking place.

[The Government's Promises and People's Expectations]

At the time of Okinawa's reversion to Japan, the Diet adopted a resolution about realignment and reduction (*seiri shukusho*) of the bases in Okinawa. [But] its implementation has largely been neglected.

With the collapse of the Cold War structure (*reisen kozo*), my people expected the realignment and reduction of the bases in Okinawa to make progress, if belatedly. But, according to the U.S. Department of Defense report, *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region*, published in February of last year, the American forces in the East Asia-Pacific region would be maintained at a troop strength of 100,000 (*jumannin taisei*). And at the U.S.-Japan summit scheduled for November of last year, it was suggested that the two countries might redefine the Mutual Security Treaty and readjust the use of the American bases in Japan to more globalized perspectives. From all of this, my people feared that the functions of the bases in Okinawa might be reinforced (*kyoka*) and perpetuated (*koteika*) through the 21st Century.

Under these circumstances, anyone responsible for the administration of my prefecture would find it difficult to accept a further reinforcement and perpetuation of the bases. Therefore, I could not favorably respond to [the task of] witnessing and signing (*tachiai/shomei*) [the documents] concerning the forcible use of land by the stationed

forces. I believe that my decision was the only choice available to me as a governor responsible for a prefectural administration that should protect the lives and livelihoods of the people of the prefecture.

I do not have to tell you, since it is obvious, that I do not think that the base issue can be resolved in one day (*itcho isseiki*) by a refusal to witness and sign [the land documents]. For 50 years since the end of the war, my people have been forced to live side by side with military bases and to suffer their enormous impact (*sono juatsu*). This means, without exaggeration, that we have fully cooperated with the Mutual Security Treaty.

The 1972 reversion was a return to the rule of the pacifist Constitution (*heiwa kenpo*) and should have been a great turning point for Okinawa. What my people sincerely wished for at the time of the reversion was a reduction of bases at a rate at least comparable to that experienced on the mainland (*hondonami*), together with the restoration of human rights (*jinken*) and the establishment of home rule (*jichi*).

[Nothing Has Changed]

However, today, a quarter of a century after the reversion, the condition of Okinawa has hardly changed. Today, just as before, the extensive bases packed with military functions remain. Incidents, accidents, and pollution on account of the bases keep appearing. This is a far cry from the meaning of reversion my people desired. The Status of Forces Agreement, Article 2, permits military bases to be built in any area of Japan under the authority of the Mutual Security Treaty--the so-called "bases anywhere formula" (*zendo kichi hoshiki*). If so, then why should Okinawa alone shoulder the excessive burden? One would be hard put to understand it.

Many people in Okinawa do not wish to transfer their sufferings to others. However, if the Mutual Security Treaty is important for Japan, they believe that responsibility and burdens under the treaty should be assumed by all Japanese citizens. If not, many of my people point out that the outcome is discriminatory and goes counter to [the principle of] equality under the law.

In Okinawa, there are about 1.27 million Japanese nationals. Although this lawsuit [formally] concerns the prime minister's order to a prefectural governor to carry out certain duties (*shokumu shikko meirei soshō*), I believe that it implies issues of basic human rights such as constitutionally guaranteed property rights, people's rights to a life in peace, and [the prefectures'] rights to home rule. Because of these constitutional issues, all Japanese nationals everywhere should be actively concerned with Okinawa's base issue as one that impinges on their own basic human rights. In that sense, Okinawa's base issue is not peculiar to one local area--Okinawa--but is eminently general as Japan's problem with implications for Japan's sovereignty and democracy. Is that not so?

[I Demand, Request, Wish . . .]

In searching for the solution to the base problem, beginning with as many as five trips to the United States, I have seized every opportunity to ask the governments of Japan and the United States for a realignment and reduction of bases as well as the prevention of damages due to them. My efforts have produced results: for example, according to an interim report of the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) announced last April, it was decided that [the land used by] the Futenma Air Station was to be returned completely. In this manner, there has been some progress in the realignment and reduction of bases in Okinawa. Yet, in almost all cases of base return, a prerequisite is the transfer of the bases to other areas or facilities in Okinawa. This reinforcement of bases is strongly opposed by the municipalities and residents affected by it. The situation is extremely serious.

I strongly demand that those who make decisions about base transfers actually come and see the areas affected and carefully examine the impact of the bases on people's lives, the natural environment, and the ecosystem.

Up until now, Okinawa's history has been determined by others. Now, of its own free will, Okinawa Prefecture has generated an "Action Program for the Return of Bases" demanding a planned and phased return of [the land used by] the American military bases by the year 2015. The prefecture is also engaged in the formulation of a "Grand Design of an International City, Okinawa," which sets Okinawa's course of development in the 21st Century. All this aims at building a base-free, peaceful, and green Okinawa that can withstand natural disasters and that can literally be an "international" city that facilitates exchanges of people, goods, and information (hito, mono, joho) with Japan and Asian countries in fields like technology, economics, and culture.

I wish to transform the military bases into production sites to serve peace and human happiness and to reactivate the potential of my prefecture's geographical uniqueness and its long history of friendly relations with Asia-Pacific nations. I wish to entrust the future of Okinawa to its transformation into an international city, a hub of peace that pulls Japan, Asia and the rest of the world together.

In conclusion, I would like to note that my people expect the Supreme Court, as the guardian of the Constitution, to render a positive (*sekkyokuteki*) judgment concerning the military base issue in Okinawa. I sincerely request the Supreme Court to examine the past and present of my people who, denied the benefits of the Constitutional principles, have been living under the oppression of military bases, and to grant a judgment that may open up a future filled with broad possibilities for Okinawa, a future that may generate dreams and hopes for its youth. That is all I have wanted to say for my "statement of opinion."
