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Henoko and the U.S. Military: A History of Dependence and Resistance

By Steve Rabson

Attention in Japan and elsewhere has focused recently on the seaside village of Henoko (Ryukyuan: Hinuku) in northern Okinawa where a powerful protest movement has stymied the Japanese and U.S. governments from building an offshore air base.[1] Attempting to ameliorate outrage in Okinawa after three U.S. servicemen raped a twelve-year-old schoolgirl in 1995, the governments in Tokyo and Washington announced an agreement in 1996 to close Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, located in the middle of Ginowan City. However, the agreement stipulated that a "replacement facility" be built in Okinawa "within five to seven years." [2] Yet, after more than fifteen years and numerous bi-lateral declarations reiterating the two governments' determination to build the base, construction has yet to begin. In 2006 they announced a related agreement to transfer 8,600 of the 18,000 Marines in Okinawa and their 9,000 dependents to Guam, but this is conditioned on relocation of Futenma MCAS to Henoko and remains on hold.[3]

Residents of Henoko, where two American bases are already located, have mounted opposition to the proposed air base at the ballot box in referenda and local elections, on the streets in protest demonstrations, in the media with informational campaigns, and in civil disobedience at the proposed offshore construction site where flotillas of protesters' boats have blocked ships contracted by the Japanese government from completing on-site surveys. Yet, some fishermen in Henoko have assisted in the surveys, receiving charter fees from the government, which has also agreed to consider compensation for the households of fishermen if the base is built.[4] Though reluctant to implement it, the Japanese government retains the options of forcibly removing protesters from the area and seizing the portion of Ôura Bay targeted for base construction, or simply overruling opposition by all levels of Okinawan politics.

This is only the latest variation in a policy of "carrot and stick" (Japanese:"*ame to muchi*," candy and whip) imposed in Okinawa for more than half a century, first, by the U.S. military occupation (1945-1972) and, later, by the Japanese government after Okinawa reverted to Japanese administration in 1972. Seeking land to build or expand its military bases in the 1950s, the U.S. government offered "rental" payments to those willing to turn over their land for the military's use. After ninety-eight percent of the landowners refused, the military began forcibly seizing their land by, as Okinawans put it, "bayonets and bulldozers," which brought arrests and serious injuries.[5] As resistance continued, the U.S, government began offering increased payments along with local employment, purchases of local products, and infrastructure improvements to communities where landowners agreed to "rent" their land, while maintaining the threat of forcible seizure where they refused.

With Okinawa's 1972 reversion to Japan, the Japanese government increased "rental" payments six-fold to the owners of land on the bases, and offered benefits, such as new town halls and conference centers, to communities impacted by the bases. As for the whip, the government in Tokyo threatened to withhold critical development funds for Okinawa, Japan's poorest prefecture, in its annual budget if voters elected anti-base candidates to local offices. In Henoko, where the economy has been especially troubled, sharp divisions have long persisted between villagers who believe the U.S. military brings economic benefits, such as payments for base land and base-related employment, and those who dispute the long-term value of these benefits, pointing to dangers the bases pose to their safety, their quality of life, and the environment.[6] This paper will review the history of Henoko's relations with the U.S. military since the Battle of Okinawa, and present the views of people affected by these relations.

A Long Legacy of Government Neglect

Firebombing in Northern Okinawa

Fighting in the Battle of Okinawa (late March to late June, 1945) was sporadic around Henoko, and in the northeastern part of the main island generally. Still, Henoko residents died in artillery fire and bombing raids, which forced many to abandon their homes for refuge in nearby hills and forests.

Tens of thousands of civilians fleeing the far greater devastation in central and southern Okinawa evacuated to the north, including the area around Henoko. The U.S. military set up a refugee camp on a hill in the village where some 29,000 people from all over the island, including northern Okinawa, remained for several months after the battle ended.[7]

Before the war, Henoko and the neighboring village of Kushi had been among the poorest localities in Japan's most impoverished prefecture. Villagers had long been marginalized and neglected by the Royal Government of the Ryukyu Kingdom in Shuri, by the Japanese central government in Tokyo after it absorbed the kingdom as Okinawa in 1879, and by the Okinawa prefectural government in Naha. Most residents worked in fishing, farming, or forestry, but the high sand content of the soil made cultivation difficult, and crop yields were low. Residents suffered especially during the 1920s and 1930s when, besieged with debt, many were forced to sell their land. Others resorted to even more desperate measures, contracting their sons into servitude at wealthier households or their daughters into prostitution in Naha's Tsuji brothel district.[8]

This history of desperation explains, at least in part, why village leaders decided in 1956 to break with residents of Isahama, Yomitan, Iejima, and other localities in Okinawa who were resisting U.S. seizures of land for military bases. Protests that year culminated in a massive "island-wide struggle" of an estimated 250,000 who rallied on June 30 in Naha and Koza. The demonstration had been sparked by a recommendation of the U.S, House Armed Service Committee setting wholly inadequate one-time "lump-sum payments" for permanent U.S. acquisition of privately owned land that generations of farmers had depended on for their livelihoods. Their cause publicized by the media in Japan and other countries, protesters from Okinawa spoke at large demonstrations in Tokyo and Osaka organized by Okinawans living on the mainland. After reading a report from the Japan Civil Liberties Union, American Civil Liberties Union President Roger Baldwin sent a letter to the

United States Army recommending an end to occupation land seizures and other violations of human rights.[9]

Village officials in Henoko and Kushi, who had refused an earlier American proposal the previous year, accepted a more generous offer in 1956. It specified increased rental payments, along with infrastructure and employment benefits, in exchange for 630 acres of cultivated and uncultivated land that would become the Marine Corps' Camp Schwab and a smaller Army ordnance storage depot. Masamichi S. Inoue explains the difficult choices landowners faced:

Marines guard soldiers, civilians after Battle of Okinawa

> By that time tragic stories of other communities having their land forcefully expropriated with the use of bulldozers and bayonets without enough compensation . . . had reached Henoko. Fearful that the same fate would befall their community, the village leaders eventually decided to accept construction of the American base, with the conditions that . . . residents [would not be forced to] evacuate their community.[10]

As part of the agreement signed on Christmas Eve, 1956, the U.S. military constructed a reservoir to supply drinking water to the two villages, provided electric power, purchased locally grown vegetables, and granted preferential hiring to area residents for jobs on the bases.[11] Inoue cites a "desire in this poor village for a modern, urban life with electricity and sanitary water to be provided by the new base."[12]

By offering rental payments for land under threat of seizure in Henoko that were higher than those offered landowners in other areas, the U.S. military was applying "carrot and stick" tactics to divide the well-organized "island-wide struggle," whose leaders denounced village officials for betraying the movement. By this time, however, disagreements were already beginning to emerge elsewhere between Okinawans who advocated continued confrontation with the military and those who favored negotiating rental fees for use of their land. The mayor of Kushi Village explained at a press conference, "I am prepared for the criticism against my decision to accept the construction when military land issues have not yet been resolved today. . . . Kushi Village, which has been economically ill-fated, would not be able to attain economic transformation without the base building."[13] In 1957, one year after the agreement with Henoko and Kushi, leaders of nearby Kin Town accepted a similar U.S. offer of compensation for land use to construct the Marine Corps' Camp Hansen.

Although weakened by agreements reached between the military and these communities, the protest movement succeeded in forcing the U.S. government to abandon the hated "lump-sum" policy recommended to Congress, and to make more equitable rental payments to all landowners. Sixteen years later, the Japanese government increased rental payments sharply after Okinawa's 1972 reversion to Japan. Applying the earlier American tactic of raising compensation to split the movement, the Japanese government's policy enriched a large coterie of "military landowners" (*gun-jinushi*) in Henoko and elsewhere, making them dependent on Japanese government "rental payments". Nevertheless, protests have continued by "antiwar landowners" (*hansen-jinushi*) and others who have picketed the bases, staged symbolic actions to reclaim their land inside, and demonstrated at the Japanese government's Defense Facilities Agency in Naha.

The base brings infrastructure improvements and jobs—and divides a village

Construction of the Marines' Camp Schwab and the neighboring Army ordnance depot began in 1957 on the same hill in Henoko that had been the site of the wartime refugee camp for civilian evacuees, and was completed in 1959. Local fishermen protested five years later in 1962 when the U.S. government began blasting and drilling in Henoko's offshore waters as part of a plan to enlarge the bay for construction of a military port. This excavation had already killed large numbers of fish, drastically reducing the fish catch. Construction of a military port promised even greater losses. However, a split of local opinion became evident in 1965 when the mayor of Kushi Village approved a U.S. military survey of the bay. The port was never built, but the plan for military construction in the bay was revived in 1996 with the proposed offshore airbase to replace Futenma MCAS.[14]

With completion of Camp Schwab and the ordnance depot, residents of Henoko and Kushi worked on the bases as clerks in the P.X, as janitors in the barracks and headquarters offices, as mechanics in the motor pool, and as cooks and dishwashers in the mess hall. (Low-ranking enlisted men didn't even have to do K.P.) Okinawan women ran a tailor shop next to the barracks for repairing and altering uniforms. The local men employed by the military as janitors were also hired privately by servicemen to make up their bunks, clean their billets, and prepare their equipment for company inspections. It was rumored that some soldiers even paid them to clean their weapons, though this was strictly against regulations.[15] Meanwhile, as Inoue writes, Henoko had undergone a "massive transformation."

> The Henoko administration hurriedly created an entertainment quarter by clearing communal fields and forests. Some leaders curried favor with [U.S.] authorities and illegally appropriated their bulldozers and trucks for development of the entertainment quarter, which ultimately got them arrested. People from all over Okinawa flooded Henoko, where men became construction workers, and women worked for restaurants and bars.[16]

What Inoue calls an "entertainment quarter," officially termed an "amusement area" by the U.S. military, was located on a plateau of high ground separated from residential Henoko below by a sharp embankment. Both sections of the village were accessible from the main highway that ran along the eastern coast of Okinawa, but, as if to keep them separate, they were connected only by a steep and narrow dirt path through high grass and trees on the hillside between them. After construction of the two bases in 1959, the population of Okinawans in Henoko swelled to approximately 2100 residents and 900 transient workers.[17] A bus terminal was built in the residential section to serve the growing number of commuters working base-related jobs, while a fleet of taxis based in the "amusement area" served the generally more affluent American G.I.'s, few of whom rode the buses.

The two sections of Henoko were, literally and figuratively, as different as day and night. Residential lower Henoko remained a farming and fishing village much like other rural communities in northern Okinawa.

Houses with tiled or thatched roofs lined the streets interspersed with shops selling groceries, meat, dry goods, and school supplies. Two or three family-run restaurants served Okinawan cuisine. People shopped and children played during the day, but

Pineapple farm in Northern Okinawa. Tea and sugar are also widely grown.

evenings were mostly quiet with occasional strains of Okinawan folk music coming from family homes. In jolting contrast, upper Henoko's "amusement area" was largely dormant—at times seemingly deserted—during the day when only delivery workers in small vans drove the streets and a few women walked to the stores or the beauty parlors. Occasionally, a U.S. soldier or Marine arrived by taxi or on foot to patronize the restaurants or pawn shops. By around 6:00, however, brightly colored neon signs on the bars were filling the sky overhead with a flickering glare visible for miles. American pop music boomed from jukeboxes on the streets where American G.I.'s, mostly in casual civilian clothes, sauntered along in small groups or alone. Women and girls, some in their mid-teens, stood outside the bars in revealing dresses to beckon customers, or sat inside laughing loudly and pouring drinks.

The "Vietnam War Boom"

In the mid-1960s, Okinawa became a major support base for the Vietnam War, as it had been for the Korean War (1950-1953). According to Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, Jr., commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific, "without Okinawa we couldn't continue fighting the Vietnam War."[18] Installations there stored weapons and equipment, trained troops for "jungle warfare," and, together with Guam and Thailand, launched B-52 bombers for raids in Southeast Asia. Ammunition used in Vietnam was stored at the Henoko ordnance depot, and the Marines at Camp Schwab held combat exercises in the nearby Northern Training Area. It is estimated that between 150 and 200 "G.I. bars" flourished in Henoko during this period, with many also functioning as second-floor brothels. Okinawa was a destination for troops on two-week "R & R" (rest and recuperation) leaves from the war. Soldiers and Marines who had accumulated several months of combat pay in Vietnam would spend so much money that their dollars overflowed the cash registers.[19] "We stuffed them into buckets and cardboard boxes, but they still overflowed, so we had to stomp the piles down with our feet," recalled one bar-owner. "Dollars were raining on us."[20]

The military command required owners of bars and restaurants to obtain official approval to serve U.S. forces. This was issued in the form of an "A-sign" ("approved') certificate to be displayed on the wall of each establishment. Owners qualified for an "A-sign" by passing an inspection of the kitchen and plumbing, and by maintaining separate rest rooms for men and women. They could lose it if venereal disease was traced to one of their employees or if trouble, such as bar fights, brought the M.P.'s. Aside from admonitions by chaplains, the military did little to discourage the widespread patronage of prostitutes. In fact, official policies had the effect of encouraging it. Local commanders periodically sent health inspectors into Henoko to track down the sources of venereal disease and, during one epidemic in 1968 of a particularly virulent strain said to have originated in Southeast Asia, boxes of condoms were placed beside sign-out sheets in the orderly rooms of Army and Marine units in Henoko.

Some women working in Henoko bars became the exclusive mistresses of American soldiers, with a few of these relationships leading to marriage.[21] But, in this impoverished area, other women and teenage girls worked as prostitutes under duress to pay off debts they or members of their families had incurred to bar managers or moneylenders. Some suffered physical injuries, such as cigarette burns on their arms, if they failed to make payments or tried to escape. Such attacks were rumored to be the work of local criminal gangs. However, U.S. forces also perpetrated violence in Henoko's "amusement area," including murder, rape, assault, and burglary.[22] They attacked women who refused sexual advances and fought among themselves with occasionally lethal results, as when one Marine hurled a cinder block that crushed the head of another in 1968. The same year, a woman in Henoko filed rape charges against a soldier at the ordnance depot, but he avoided a court martial by testifying that he had "paid her money," as the company's first sergeant announced triumphantly at morning formation. In those days, under what was oxymoronically called "occupation law," this meant he would not face charges since the Okinawan judiciary had no authority to summon U.S. forces as defendants or witnesses.[23] Today, local residents against the proposed air base point to the likely increase in crime it would bring.[24]

Economic crimes, rampant during this period, included drug dealing (mostly marijuana from Southeast Asia) and the sale of military property on the black market. In 1968 an Army cook stationed at a base in central Okinawa transported meat by jeep from his mess hall, and sold it to the owner of a butcher shop in lower Henoko.

The effects of redistricting, reversion, and the end of the Vietnam War

America's catastrophic war in Vietnam was still dragging on when Okinawa reverted to Japan's administration in May, 1972. The Japanese government immediately broke its promise of a post-reversion U.S. military presence reduced to "mainland levels" (*hondo nami*)[25], and the bases there remain virtually intact to this day with upgraded military technology. They include the 5,000-acre Camp Schwab, where live-fire and amphibious assault exercises continue, and the 300-acre Henoko ordnance depot, which stores ammunition supplying most of the U.S. Pacific command. In 1970, two years before reversion, the town of Nago located across the island on the East China Sea (west) coast, was enlarged to become Nago City (Nago-*shi*), which now encompassed Henoko as a ku (district) on the Pacific (east) coast. This redistricting would have implications for Henoko's economy and for the dispute over relocation of Futenma MCAS. Most post-reversion development projects allocated by the Japanese government for Nago City (total population approximately 60,000) were implemented in the more populous west coast districts, to the neglect of the east coast districts (population approximately 5,000) that included Henoko. As late as 1998, Henoko residents complained that "even sewage disposal has not been installed" and "it would take ten years to get a road built here, even if we put our hands together and begged Nago City authorities for help."[26] In one sense, this was a continuation of Henoko's plight as an impoverished backwater, neglected by both central and local governments in Japan. As the number of American forces in Henoko declined sharply from the early 1970s with the winding down of the U.S.-Vietnam War, hundreds of base workers were laid off, shops and bars were closed, and even the bus terminal was shut down. "Of the 120 bars in business then, only sixteen are left," lamented one local resident in 1998. "And they are sadly run down, their painted sides peeling."[27] At the same time, throughout Okinawa the share of income derived from U.S.-base and forces fell sharply.

Nevertheless, dependence on the military bases did not end in Henoko. In 1997, "military landowners" received a total of 140 million yen (about $1.4 million), an estimated 800,000 yen ($8,000) annually per individual.[28] "Before reversion rental payments were low, " recalled a Henoko resident in 1998. "But today they are essential to our livelihoods."[29] Yoshida Kensei wrote in 2001,

> Henoko is now a sleepy hamlet of 1,500 people, with dilapidated reminders of its boomtown past at its front and in the old village at its rear. Its inhabitants depend partly on agriculture (vegetables, fruits and livestock) and fishing, but mainly on [income] from the military base (i.e., land rentals and employment), public and private construction

projects, and small family stores.[30]

Asked in a November, 1994 interview for his opinion of then Governor Ôta Masahide's plan for "reduction and consolidation" of the bases, Henoko's mayor called it a "nuisance" (*meiwaku*). His opinion was shared by other local government officials, business leaders, and youth whose incomes depended on "rental" payments for land on the two bases, enterprises servicing the military, or jobs on the bases in service, maintenance, or construction.31

Proposal for new air base sharpens long-standing divisions of opinion.

One year later, three American servicemen raped a twelve-year-old Okinawan schoolgirl in Kin. In an attempt to assuage the storm of outrage culminating in one of the largest demonstrations in Okinawan history, the U.S. proposed in 1996 moving Futenma MCAS from the middle of crowded Ginowan City in central Okinawa to a site off the coast of Henoko in northern Okinawa, by then a district of Nago City.

Before reversion in 1972, the political climate and economic conditions of Nago town and Henoko village could hardly have been more dissimilar. In contrast to Henoko's dependence on the two U.S. bases, Nago had been the center of anti-military activism in northern Okinawa, led mainly by local schoolteachers.

October 25, 1995 demonstration

Their protest rallies in the late 1960s featured marches and sit-ins reminiscent of civil rights demonstrations in the U.S. a few years earlier. Sometimes demonstrators gathered outside the gate to Camp Schwab in Henoko, handing out leaflets in Japanese and English. The military command warned troops not to take the leaflets, and also advised against going to Nago, said to be "full of Communists." Few soldiers went there anyway, since it had no G.I. bars. In those days, Nago was a picturesque fishing and farming town with flower-filled gardens and tree-lined streets. One-man sabani fishing boats drifted on the bay where sunsets were particularly beautiful with a sky of deep red glowing above puffy white clouds. Residents raised pigs, goats, and chickens, along with sugar cane. Rows of terraced rice fields covered the hills surrounding the town.

After reversion in 1972 and the redistricting that made Henoko part of an enlarged Nago City, what had been Nago town on the East China Sea coast changed rapidly. The government in Tokyo funded infrastructure improvements, such as paving more roads, but piles of ugly concrete breakwaters were placed along the shoreline that destroyed much of its natural beauty. Mainland corporations bought up beachfront property and built resorts for tourists where Okinawans work in service and maintenance jobs, but the profits flow to the companies' headquarters outside the prefecture. Mainland fast food chain eateries and convenience stores have crowded out many of the locally owned shops and restaurants. Most rice fields disappeared as farmers, unable to compete with mainland agri-business, switched to growing sugarcane.[32]

Today, when travel to and from the mainland is no longer restricted by the U.S. occupation, residents of Nago's western districts derive more income from primarily Japanese tourists who patronize bars and restaurants, stay in hotels, ride in taxis, and purchase souvenirs. A center for anti-military protests in northern Okinawa before 1972, activism continues in western Nago City, which hosts several anti-base organizations and offices. Meiô University, which opened in 1995 as the only university in northern Okinawa, includes faculty members active in the anti-base movement. However, although opposition to the bases is well articulated and conspicuous there, no clear east-west split exists. Many residents of western Nago are employed today by local firms that hold construction and maintenance contracts from mainland Japanese corporations for work on the bases. The building of an air base at Henoko offers the prospect of more jobs to Nago residents in a prefecture with a nine percent unemployment rate, twice the national average of 4.5 percent, and twenty percent among Nago youth.[33]

The 1996 proposal for relocating the Futenma MCAS sharpened divisions of opinion in Nago City and inside Henoko. The stage was set when Governor Ôta, long-advocating a reduction of the U.S. military presence, surprised many by tacitly agreeing in December, 1996, to the joint U.S.-Japanese government plan for relocating Futenma MCAS to Henoko in exchange for Japanese government subsidies for economic development of Okinawa Prefecture.[34] Nago City residents, 72 percent of whom believed there was economic inequality in Okinawa, viewed this as a continuing marginalization of poorer northern districts by the wealthier and more politically powerful southern and central districts. Nago Mayor Higa Tetsuya condemned Governor Ôta's decision at the time, saying "the northern region is not a trash bin of military bases." He evoked Okinawa's past history of domination and exploitation of northern areas by south-central Okinawa, a pattern that goes back to the days of the Ryukyu Kingdom when resources of firewood and water were extracted for use in other regions.[35]

Henoko residents began a campaign in early 1997 to oppose construction of the offshore base, forming the "*Inochi o Mamoru Kai*" (Society for the Protection of Life).[36] They pointed to threats it would pose to daily life and the environment as a result of training accidents, aircraft noise, G.I. crime, and damage to plant and animal life in the bay. Many worried that a new base would increase the disturbances and disruptions caused by the military that were already plaguing their lives. According to Henoko resident Kinjô Masatoki, "The noise from live fire exercises rattles my brain and my window panes. I get money for land I lease to Camp Schwab, but if they plan to build a heliport on it, I want that land back." "After major surgery six years ago, my nerves are so bad I can't sleep even taking tranquilizers," said Kayô Muneyoshi. "The noise from a heliport would kill me." Another resident noted, "My house would be closest to it. How could I sleep with helicopters droning overhead day and night?"[37] Concerned about the effect an offshore base would have on his livelihood, fisherman Teruya Katsunori wondered if "I'd have to go back to driving a truck for a living."[38]

Like Kinjô, other residents receiving financial benefits from the U.S. military presence in Henoko have expressed opposition to the offshore airbase. Nineteen-year-old Toyama Masami's father and older sister both have jobs at Camp Schwab. "Since I was little we've gone there to shop and play video games." Her father brought Marines home to visit, and once, on her way to elementary school, she purposely ran between columns of Marines marching in formation to a parade. They just smiled and waved at her, she recalled. "I wasn't scared at all." She notes that Marines from Camp Schwab join in Henoko's annual boat races, tug-of-war games, and athletic meets (*undôkai*). And, in turn, the Marines invite villagers for holidays on the base. "At Christmas time my sister and I went there and got lots of presents." As for the noise of gunfire, "I guess I've gotten used to it," she says. "I wouldn't want Camp Schwab to close." Nevertheless, she opposes construction of the air base. "I've gone swimming in that bay since I was little, and my

younger brother fishes there. The water will become polluted, so for his sake, too, I'm against it."[39]

78% of Henoko residents signed the Society for the Protection of Life's petition opposing the base in 1998.[40] The movement against its construction has attracted the support of mainland Japanese and visitors from other countries. They travel to Henoko where they sign petitions, join demonstrations, and gather at the "struggle hut" information center built and staffed by the Society's members on the beach at Ôura Bay.

Meanwhile, the village administration in Henoko, at the urging of local construction, bar, and restaurant businesses, had begun to show interest in the building of an offshore base. With official announcement of the plan in December, 1996, the influential Northern Okinawa Construction Industry Association, comprised of 260 companies, proceeded to invite relocation of Futenma MCAS to Henoko, supported by the Henoko Association for Facilitating Economic Activities.[41] Continuing neglect of northern Okinawa's economy had caused an outflow of local residents, especially after reversion in 1972 when travel to the mainland was no longer restricted by the U.S. occupation and jobs there were plentiful in a "high growth" economy. Advocates for base construction argued that the base would create jobs to bring young people back.[42]

Ôshiro Shôyû, Chair of the Henoko Military Landowners Association, said in 1997 that "the heliport would also bring jobs for young people here who are currently unemployed."[43] Thirty-six year-old Henoko resident Chinen Yoshikazu recalled, "Until I finished middle school, my parents ran a bar for Americans. Later I went to work on the mainland, but came back when I was twenty. I started working my present job at a construction company when I was twenty-eight. The only jobs available here are in construction or on Camp Schwab."[44] "Many young people want to work there," explained another Henoko resident, Kohagura Ken, age thirty. "Base workers have the same salary and benefits as Japanese civil service employees. I was against the heliport at first, but would accept it under the proposed conditions. If more private companies come here offering good jobs and land is sold at a discount to local residents, I can think about building a house for my wife and two sons."[45]

Thirty-two- year-old Kushi resident Tawada Shin'ya commented, "Camp Schwab gives hiring preferences to local people. Groups opposing the base come here from outside the prefecture and raise a ruckus about protecting the bay where they've never gone swimming or fishing."[46] The focus of outsiders on environmental issues has particularly angered base supporters. In response to an environmental group's slogan "Save the Dugong," (a rare ocean mammal)," one Henoko resident asked, "Are the lives of dugongs more important than ours? Without jobs we can't live."[47] Seeking to minimize criticism from pro-base residents that outsiders with their own agendas had hijacked the movement, the Society for the Protection of Life began requiring visitors from outside Okinawa to receive permission before entering the "struggle hut." Society leaders even told their members not to speak publicly about such issues as the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty they deemed "too political" in an attempt to refocus the Henoko anti-base movement from the global to the local.[48] They hardly needed to speak themselves to these issues, however, since widening international opposition, including a successful environmental lawsuit against construction of the base filed in U.S. federal court, was bringing added pressure on the Japanese government.

Local election results: A trend toward resistance

On December 21, 1997, a referendum on the proposed base was held throughout Nago City, including Henoko. In the weeks leading up to the vote, pro-base and anti-base activists held rallies and put up signs. The Japanese government poured in money and personnel to support the pro-base forces, and some employers pressured workers to vote in favor of the base. Although the referendum had been conceived as a simple yes-or-no, up-or-down proposition, Nago mayor Higa Tetsuya, who had abandoned his earlier opposition and now favored the base, succeeded in splitting the ballot into four alternatives. The results were:

1. approve base construction--2,562 votes (8.13%)

2. approve if construction is accompanied by appropriate measures for protecting the environment and positive economic effects.--11,705 votes (37.18%)

3. oppose construction--16,254 votes (51.63%)

4. oppose if construction lacks appropriate measures for protecting the environment and positive economic effects--385 votes (1.22%)

With an 82.45 percent of eligible voters casting ballots, a total of 52.8 percent opposed construction and 45.3 percent favored it. Inoue describes the contrasting reactions in the two camps.

> Before 11:00 p.m., the victory of the anti-base group became certain. [Their leaders] burst into joy. . . . Victory banquets lasted well beyond midnight in Henoko. . . . Only a few hundred meters away, in the commercial district of Henoko, pro-base residents could not help showing a deep sense of disappointment and loss.[49]

The results were recorded for Nago City as a whole and not broken down by districts, so it was impossible to determine what the vote had been in Henoko. However, a poll taken in early December showed 60 percent of voters surveyed on the east coast (including Henoko) opposed the base as compared with 41 percent on the west coast (including what used to be Nago town.[50] This suggests that, by this time, a larger proportion of support for the base came from people living in and around the former Nago town who were (or hoped to be) employed by companies with military construction contracts than from people living in Henoko where the base would be located and have a direct impact on their daily life and the environment.

In an astonishing move, Nago City Mayor Higa ignored the results of the referendum just completed and announced his acceptance of the base, then promptly resigned from office. Stung by the results of the referendum, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which controlled the national government, now began offering carrots as described by Urashima Etsuko.

> [The] Party-based system . . . developed a complex structure of persuasion and "buy-off" designed to neutralize, divide, and defeat the anti-base citizen groups. Monies under a "Northern Districts Development" formula (tied to submission to the base project) were poured into Nago City and surrounding districts (80 billion yen in 2000 to 2009), filling the coffers of construction and public-works related groups and easing the fiscal crisis of local governments.[51]

At first, the strategy seemed to work. Nago City voters elected pro-base mayors Kishimoto Tateo in 1998 and 2002, and Shimabukuro Yoshikazu in 2006. The *Asahi Shimbun* characterized the 2002 election as "a bitter choice for the people of Nago,

suffering especially from economic doldrums, of whether to accept the base in return for economic development or to reject it and lose this "carrot."[52] Interviewed on election day, two voters explained, "I hate the base, but we need economic development;" and "There was no alternative because we have to make a living."[53]

In Henoko the split between supporters and opponents of the base had become bitter and personal, sometimes manifesting as internal conflict within families and individuals. Inoue writes,

> Before the referendum, pro-base residents no longer even said hello to anti-base residents on the street, in the village festivals, or in other social functions such as funerals and weddings. This tendency became even more obvious after the referendum. . . .One man serving in the pro-base village administration who was also related to [a leader of] the Society [for the Protection of Life] disappeared from Henoko [and] his family . . . to be found eventually in his car in Kagoishima Prefecture in Kyushu. . . . He stated in retrospect that "I understood both anti-base and pro-base perspectives. Pressured by residents from both sides, I panicked.' President of the [anti-base] Association of Ten Districts . . . , a man in his fifties , attempted suicide by hanging himself for the same reason. [He was rescued.][54]

Meanwhile, deteriorating economic conditions in Nago were belying the claims of incumbent mayors that the city benefited from voters' support for candidates favoring the base. Between 2000 and 2009, unemployment rose to 12.5 percent, three points above the prefecture's rate and double the national average. According to author and Nago resident Urashima Etsuko, "Jobs and income shrank, shops and businesses closed, and economic performance of the city was significantly worse [despite Japanese government] subsidies." Three opinion surveys of Nago residents conducted in 2009 by the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Okinawa Taimusu*, *Asahi Shimbun*, *Ryukyu Shimpô*, and Okinawa TV recorded an average of seventy percent opposed to the base.[55]

Three elections in 2010 marked a shift in voters' attitudes. First, in the nationwide general election of August, 2009, the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) defeated the incumbent coalition of LDP and New Kômeitô. DPJ leader Hatoyama Yukio, who now became prime minister, had made relocation of Futenma MCAS outside Okinawa Prefecture and greater independence from the U.S. in Japan's foreign policy major planks in his campaign platform. The DPJ made substantial gains among Okinawa's electorate. Then, in January, 2010, Inamine Susumu, who campaigned against construction of the air base in Henoko, defeated incumbent Nago Mayor Shimabukuro, winning 52.3 percent of the votes among 77 percent of the city's 45,000 registered voters. During the campaign Shimabukuro tried to downplay his support for the base, claiming that the decision on construction should be made at the national level, but often mentioned the jobs and investment it would supposedly bring to the city. After the election, Inamine said "I fought this campaign vowing to resist the base, and I intend to keep that promise."[56]

Shimabukuro's failed strategy of deferring to the national government might have seemed attractive at the time because Prime Minister Hatoyama was still resisting U.S. pressure to move forward with the bilateral agreement on base construction. But, while Inamine had vowed to keep his campaign promise, Hatoyama broke his four months later, agreeing in May, 2010, to the relocation of Futenma MCAS in Henoko. He explained that he had come to believe that this Marine air base was "necessary for deterrence (*yokushi-ryoku*), considering the security environment of East Asia,"[57] only to confess in an interview shortly after his resignation as prime minister that he had used "the word 'deterrence' as an excuse (*hôben*) since I needed a rationalization."[58]

In the next election for Nago City Council, held in September, 2010, voters chose 16 anti-base candidates to the 27-member council, despite the national government's decision to withhold a grant from the city unless it agreed to the Henoko relocation. Nago voters choose candidates at large (city-wide), and not by district, in elections for mayor and city council. However, among the candidates elected was pro-base Councilman Miyagi Yasuhide, who promised to "represent the views of Henoko residents."[59]

Despite results of the 1997 referendum and recent elections in Nago City of a mayor and city council opposed to the base, the U.S. government has kept up pressure on the Japanese government to implement the 1996 bilateral agreement to build it. Now, however, repeated joint declarations by the two governments that plans for the base "will go forward" are beginning to sound hollow. Not only has local opposition increased, but influential members of the U.S. Congress now say the relocation plan is "unrealistic, unworkable, and unaffordable," recommending consolidation of Futenma MCAS at Kadena Air Base in central Okinawa. "With broad defense cuts due across the board, it's highly unlikely money will flow to the relocation plan," explains Sheila Smith of the Council on Foreign Relations. In December, 2011, The Japan Times pronounced the plan "all but dead."[60] The residents of Henoko are likely greeting these predictions of its demise with mixed reactions.[61]

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Notes

[1]Gavan McCormack, "The Battle of Okinawa 2010: Japan-US Relations at a Crossroad," The Asia-Pacific Journal, 45-4-10, November 8, 2010

[2]SACO interim report of April 15, 1996, link.

[3]Flavia Krause-Jackson,"Okinawa Marines Relocation Delayed as U.S., Japan Revamp Basing Plan," Bloomberg, June 21, 2011.

[4]Ryukyu Asahi Broadcasting and Satoko Norimatsu, "Assault on the Sea: A 50-year U.S. Plan to Build a Military Port on Oura Bay, Okinawa, " *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 27-1-10, July 5, 2010.

[5]Kensei Yoshida, *Democracy Betrayed: Okinawa Under U.S. Occupation* (Bellingham, WA: Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University Press), pp. 58-75 and Higashimatsu Teruaki, *Okinawa ni kichi ga aru* (Bases in Okinawa) (Tokyo: Gurabia Seikôsha, 1969), pp. 64-65.

[6]See Ishikawa Mao, *Okinawa kaijô herikichi: Kyôhi to yûchi ni yureru machi* (An Offshore Airbase in Okinawa: A Town Torn Between Welcoming and Rejecting) (Tokyo: Kôbunken, 1998).

[7]Masamichi S. Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military: Identity Making in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 17 and Arnold Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyu Islands, 1945-1950* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific), pp. 57-60.

[8]Inoue, p. 99.

[9]Yoshida, pp. 58-75. The Army claimed that landowner dissatisfaction in Okinawa was "being cleverly exploited by communist elements." (Quoted on p. 69)

[10]Ibid., p. 100.

[11]Yoshida, p. 73

[12]Inoue, p. 100.

[13]Quoted in *Okinawa Taimusu*, December 21, 1956, translated in Inoue, 101.

[14]Ryukyu Asahi Broadcasting and Satoko Norimatsu.

[15]Information in the following sections is from my observations as a U.S. Army draftee stationed at the Henoko ordnance depot (137th Ordnance Company) from July, 1967, to June, 1968. After Okinawa's reversion to Japan in 1972, the Marines took over several of the Army's bases in Okinawa, including the ordnance depot which became Camp Henoko.

[16]Inoue, p. 101.

[17]Ibid., p. 102.

[18]Quoted in Yoshida, p. 113.

[19]Inoue, p. 102.

[20]Takushi Etsuko, Ok*inawa: Umi o watatta Beihie hanayome-tachi* (Okinawa's G.I. brides: Their lives in America; Kôbunken, 2000), pp. 143-144. All translations are mine unless otherwise cited. Marines and soldiers on "R & R" stayed on base or in hotels which catered to G.I.s in Henoko, Kin, and further south in Okinawa

[21]Two soldiers in my platoon married young women who had worked in bars. I left Henoko while they were still stationed at the ordnance depot, so I don't know whether they returned with their wives to the U.S. American servicemen in Okinawa abandoned many women and their children, even after marriage. See Takushi, pp. 7-22.

[22]Marines murdered bar hostesses in 1961 and 1974. Fukuchi Hiroaki, *Okinawa ni okeru Beigun no hanzai* (G.I. Crime in Okinawa) (Tokyo: Dôjisha, 1995, pp. 240-242.

[23]See Steve Rabson, *Okinawa: Two Postwar Novellas* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1989, reprinted 1996), pp. xii-xiii, 62, and 66. After reversion in 1972, the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) on the mainland covered U.S. military personnel in Okinawa. Japanese courts could now try, convict, and sentence suspects for crimes committed. However, the agreement limits police powers in their arrest and detention as compared with Japanese suspects.

[24]Local women organized protest groups, citing the 1995 rape and other recent crimes. Ishikawa, pp. 158-162 and 175-178.

[25]Matsuda Yoneo, ed., *Sengo Okinawa no kii waado: Kichi no shima no naritachi to ima* (Key Words in the History of Postwar Okinawa: The Origins and Continuing Presence of U.S. Bases) (Gushikawa City, Okinawa: Yui Shuppan, 1998), pp 100-101. On his return from Washington in November 1969, where he and President Richard Nixon signed the Okinawa Reversion Agreement, Prime Minister Satô Eisaku announced that Okinawa would return to Japan "without nuclear weapons" (*kaku nuki*) and with U.S. military bases reduced to "mainland levels" (*hondo nami*). See Steve Rabson, "'Secret' Agreement Reveals Plans to Keep U.S. Bases and Nuclear Weapons Options in Okinawa After Reversion," *The Asia-Pacific Journal.* 5-1-10, February 1, 2010.

[26]Inoue, p. 105.

[27]Ishikawa, 24.

[28]Ibid.

[29]Ishikawa, 167.

[30]Yoshida, p. 187.

[31]Interviews conducted by Takushi Etsuko, reporting for the Okinawa Taimusu. Among her interviewees were a number of Okinawans working on Camp Schwab who lived in Henoko with American spouses they had married during and after the Vietnam War.

[32]During a shortage of Japanese rice in 1994 and 1995, rice was imported from Thailand for sale in Japan, including Okinawa.

[33]Inoue, 196.

[34]He effectively abandoned his opposition, declaring that the issue was to be decided by consultation between Nago City and the Japanese government.

[35]Ryûkyû Shimpô, January 22, 1997. Translated in Inoue, p. 129.

[36]Kikuno Yumiko and Norimatsu Satoko, "Henoko, Okinawa: Inside the Sit-In," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 8-1-10, February 22, 2010.

[37]Ishikawa, pp. 42-43.

[38]Ibid., 87.

[39]Ibid., p. 67.

[40]Ibid,, p. 58.

[41]Inoue, p. 131.

[42]Okinawa Taimusu, December 9, 1997. Cited in Inoue, p. 130.

[43]Ishikawa, p.167.

[44]Ibid., p. 209.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Inoue, p. 188.

[48]Ibid., pp.189-190.

[49]Inoue, p. 185. Also see Kikuno and Norimatsu.

[50]Ibid.,p.167.

[51]Urashima Etsuko, "Electing a Town Mayor in Okinawa: Report from the Nago Trenches ," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 4-1-10, January 25, 2010.

[52]*Asahi Shimbun*, February 4, 2002, p. 2. See Steve Rabson, "Another Undemocratic Election in Okinawa," *The Ryukyuanist*, Autumn, 2002, and Gavan McCormack, Satô Manabu, and Urashima Etsuko, "The Nago Mayoral Election and Okinawa's Search for a Way Beyond Bases and Dependence," *Japan Focus*, February 16, 2006.

[53]Quoted in *Asahi Shimbun*, p. 23.

[54]Inoue, pp. 188-189.

[55]Urashima.

[56]"Okinawa town elects mayor against U.S. base," Associated Press, January 24, 2010. As in the 1997 referendum, voting totals for Henoko, a district of Nago City, were not officially recorded.

[57]"Hatoyama breaks promise on Henoko," *Asahi Shimbun* (English edition), May 24, 2010.

[58]*Haru Deburyu*, February 13, 2011.In January, 2008, the U.S. federal court in San Francisco ruled that the U.S. Defense Department's plans violated the National Historic Preservation Act by not protecting a Japanese "national monument, the endangered dugong." The Japanese government has announced that the decision does not apply in Japan.

[59]*Mainichi Japan*, September 13, 2010. Also see "Saishû hôkoku" (Final election results) at the Nago Cty Council's website.

[60]In speeches in May, 2011 by Senators John McCain, Jim Webb and Carl Levin (chair) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. See Eric Johnston, "Futenma base relocation plan has little hope left," *The Japan Times*, December 16, 2011. The Senate Armed Services Committee had earlier voted to block funding for the proposed relocation of 8,600 Marines from Okinawa to Guam, calling it too expensive.

[61]At this writing the Japanese government is seeking approval for the reclamation of land for the base from Okinawa's governor Nakaima Hirokazu who shifted his position from supporting to opposing the Henoko relocation. With the Japanese government promising a large development fund package for Okinawa in 2012, it remains to be seen whether he will maintain his opposition.