



THE CITY OF GINOWAN

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Chairman Anthony J. Principi
2005 BRAC Commission
2521 S. Clark St., Ste. 600
Arlington, VA 22202

06222005

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am Yoichi Iha, Mayor of Ginowan City, Okinawa, Japan. I would like to ask for your special consideration to the proposal of moving US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station from our city to the United States. Futenma Air Station has occupied a vast area of our tiny city for the last sixty years and most of the citizens of Ginowan have demanded the immediate and complete closure of the station and return of its land.

USMC Futenma Air Station was constructed on local residents' lands seized by US forces during the Battle of Okinawa. The station has been used for the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and many other major war operations. It still exists in Ginowan City sixty years after WW II. Because of its central location in the city, the station poses a huge impediment to the development of the city. Futenma Air Station is a world-class integrated helicopter base with a 2,800-meter runway, barracks, a gymnasium, clubs and churches. About 3,700 military and civilian personnel and about two-hundred Japanese employees are working in the base.

Both the US and Japanese governments agreed in 1996 to return the station to rightful land owners by reason of its dangerous location, that is, in the middle of a densely populated city. Futenma Air Station takes up 481 hectares (approx. 1,188 acres), which represents about 25 percent of the total area of Ginowan City. Over 88,000 Ginowan citizens have to live in the surrounding narrow space in a very crowded condition. Under the 1996 agreement, the station should have been closed by

the end of 2003, but it still remains in the city because both governments cannot find a feasible alternative facility. Ginowan City is continuing to urge both governments to move the station out of the city, deeming inaction of both governments as a great risk to their longstanding alliance. Ginowan City believes that relocating Futenma Air Station to the United States is the best solution in order to enhance a sound and good relationship of both countries.

If the functions and operations of Futenma Air Station are relocated to the United States, a local community may host about 3,700 military/civilian personnel and be able to expect significant economic gains, including the creation of employment for about 200 local residents. Okinawa's location in East Asia, known as the "Keystone of the Pacific", has been a primary ground for US forces to be stationed here. However, thanks to the revolution of military technology and the improvement of sealift with the advent of high speed vessels, we believe the ground for the existence of the US Marine Corps here has become meaningless.

US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld released his recommendation on May 13, 2005 for the closure of 33 major domestic military bases, about 10 percent of the 318 major bases, as well as the realignment of 29 other major bases.

In tandem with the release, the Commission on Review of Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States, established by Public Law 108-132 for independently reviewing US military facilities abroad, also issued its May Report. This report states that Futenma Air Station in Okinawa should be relocated to the nearby Kadena Air Base. Although Futenma Air Station is recommended to be relocated, moving one base to another base within Okinawa is far from our sincere desire, that is, to reduce the overall burden caused by the disproportionately concentrated US bases on our small island.

The governments of Okinawa Prefecture and Ginowan City have made clear our strong demand for removal of US Marine Corps from Okinawa in the course of the ongoing talks between the United States and Japan in an effort to reduce the burden shouldered by the people of Okinawa for more than half a century.

Last August, a USMC heavy transportation helicopter CH-53D crashed into the administration building of Okinawa International University and burst into flames. The university is in the vicinity of Futenma Air Station. This crash proved the danger posed by Futenma Air Station as it is located in the middle of a heavily congested city

where over 88,000 citizens live.

More than 23,000 citizens participated in the fourth Human Chain Action on May 15, which marked the thirty-third anniversary of Okinawa Reversion. They surrounded Futenma Air Station hand in hand to call for the prompt return of the base to the Okinawa people.

I would like to ask for your understanding of the sincere desire of the Ginowan citizens who have carried the burden resulting from the presence of US bases for more than half a century. To have Futenma Air Station remain in this congested city endangers lives of the citizens, which might harm the US-Japan security alliance. I sincerely request the US government to discuss the Futenma problem within the context of the ongoing talks between the US and Japanese governments and the BRAC05 process, seeking the possibility of relocating Futenma Air Station to the United States.

I profoundly appreciate your dedication and efforts for resolving various issues between the United States and Japan.

Sincerely yours,



Yoichi Iha

Mayor

The City of Ginowan, Okinawa, Japan

PS: For instance, based on our research, we have concluded that the following military facilities have the potential for accepting the functions of Futenma Air Station:

1. Naval Support Activity Corona and Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach,
2. San Diego area including Marine Corps Base Miramar and Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton,
3. Naval Weapons Station Concord,
4. US military facilities in Hawaii, and
5. US military facilities in Guam

NOTE: For further information, please contact us by E-mail or FAX shown in the letterhead.