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*Office of the Mayor*

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November 11, 2014

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington DC 20500, USA

Dear President Obama,

My name is Susumu Inamine. I am the Mayor of Nago City, in Okinawa, Japan.

Please forgive me for sending you this letter in a manner that may seem like it is out of the blue, but construction of a new base (airfield) for your country's military is now about to begin at Henoko, which is located here in my constituency of Nago.

I request that you intervene to stop the construction of this new base. The reasons for my asking this of you are 1.) that in the public opinion survey in Okinawa more than 70 percent of respondents opposed the construction of the new base and, despite heavy-handed and what could be seen as illegal restrictive action by personnel of the Japan Coast Guard and the Okinawa Defense Bureau, many people continue to protest on a daily basis in front of the entrance to Camp Schwab as well as out on the sea, 2.) that when considered on a global level, the Henoko coast where the new base is to be constructed has exceptionally rich biodiversity. It serves as an important marine habitat for herds of dugong and precious varieties of coral, and as such is important in terms of protection of the natural environment, 3.) that construction of the new base is going ahead despite it involving the destruction of what can only be described as a treasure trove of nature, 4.) that in the United States a court case is currently being contested that denounces the construction of the new base for driving the dugong in these waters towards extinction, 5.) that Okinawans have suffered the presence of your country's military for the past 69 years, with aircraft crashing on our land and filling our skies with deafening noise and with your military personnel causing a range of incidents and accidents including violations of human rights such as sexual attacks on local women, 6.) that in World War II over 200,000 people lost their lives in the fighting in our small island prefecture, the only part of Japan proper in which a battle was fought on land, 7.) that since then, despite Okinawa making up only 0.6 percent of our country's land mass, we have continued to host 73.8 percent of the U.S. military facilities (those for exclusive U.S. use) in Japan.

Have these circumstances been properly conveyed to the U.S. government by the Japanese government? If they have, and you are aware of the situation, does the government of the United States still consider the new base at Henoko to be necessary? The Japanese government states that the Governor of Okinawa having approved the landfill process for the

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new base satisfies the legal criteria for proceeding with construction, but the people of Okinawa do not accept this. The reason for this is that Governor Nakaima approved the landfill after renegeing on the promise he made, when he was elected, that he would seek the relocation of the facilities currently at Futenma Air Station to somewhere outside of Okinawa. The Japanese government's decision to relocate those facilities to Henoko is not because there is nowhere else to move the base, or because of any advantages offered by Okinawa's geographical location, or any need for deterrence. These unfounded and one-sided explanations merely reflect the structural discrimination that Okinawa has suffered since the end of World War II.

For 69 years Okinawa Prefecture has served as collateral for the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. However, that we continue to host 73.8 percent of the U.S. military facilities (those for exclusive U.S. use) in Japan despite our prefecture only making up 0.6 percent of the country's land mass is unreasonable. This level of burden exceeds what anyone might describe as tolerable.

Okinawa sees its economic development as hinging on tourism and in future it seeks to attract 10 million visitors a year. The features of Okinawan tourism are its rich natural environment with its sub-tropical blue sea and sky, its history, culture and performing arts, as well as our people's *ichariba-chode* (once we meet, we are brothers and sisters forever) spirit of hospitality. The fact that military bases are located right next to our main trunk roads and residential areas, and that military aircraft hold training exercises flying at low levels both during the day and night does not allow Okinawans or tourists to feel at ease when they travel within the prefecture. In some cases it may even put people off from ever coming again.

On top of this, the new base will be able to be used for more than 100 years, so for all intents and purposes it is a semi-permanent facility. This means that it is an issue not just for those of us who are alive now, but also for our children, our grandchildren and then the next generation of Okinawans who will inherit the situation and go on to become victims and suffer the ongoing burden. This is untenable if we consider the matter as parents and as rational human beings.

The numerous acts of violence being carried out in the Henoko area by members of the Japan Coast Guard and the Okinawa Defense Bureau cannot be defined as being within the bounds of acceptable behavior. In no way is this something that should ever occur in a democratic society.

I ask you, President Obama, as the leader of a democratic state, to take this matter seriously and to not to deny our children and grandchildren the bright future that otherwise lies ahead of them.

Sincerely yours,



Susumu Inamine  
Mayor of Nago City  
Okinawa, Japan