

Asia-Pacific Policy Papers Series

**THE POLITICS OF THE FUTENMA
BASE ISSUE IN OKINAWA:**
RELOCATION NEGOTIATIONS IN 1995-1997, 2005-2006

By William L. Brooks



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The Edwin O. Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies

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William L. Brooks, an adjunct professor for Japan Studies, has 15 years of experience as head at the Embassy Tokyo's Office of Media Analysis and Translation unit spanning from 1993 until his retirement in September 2009. Dr. Brooks also served as a senior researcher at the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research and provided the Secretary of State and Washington with policy analysis on Japan (1983-1987, 1990-1993). He earned his Doctorate degree from Columbia University in East Asian Studies and is fluent in both Japanese and Chinese. Dr. Brooks taught at the William Paterson University for several years and at SAIS in 1978, before entering government service.

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FOREWORD

It gives the Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies great pleasure to publish this monograph as the latest contribution to our Asia-Pacific Policy Papers monograph collection. The series aims to bridge the delicate divide between policy and scholarship—to present timely issues of public interest and policy importance, in a reflective, analytical fashion that realistically contributes to their resolution. Just as we have dealt in the past with issues of Japanese economic reform, North Korean nuclear policy, and Chinese energy security, so here do we present timely research on the most controversial issue facing U.S.-Japan relations today—the relocation of the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station.

In recent months there has been a blizzard of journalistic commentary on Futenma—hundreds of op ed pieces and television specials on the issue, replete with short-term forecasts on how it may affect the incumbent Japanese administration or the U.S.-Japan alliance. Yet there has been remarkably little serious research—and no at-length historical studies covering the evolution of the controversy from its origins—on just how we got to where we are today. This analytical gap is not only unfortunate from a scholarly standpoint; it also blinds us to important political dynamics, and policy options, that have been relevant in the past, and may well shape the future.

We could not ask for a more appropriate analytical viewpoint on such a hybrid policy-research question than that of Bill Brooks, a valued colleague here at SAIS, with a Columbia Ph.D., with whom I worked closely at US Embassy Tokyo a decade ago. Bill served for fifteen years, until 2009, as head of the Office of Translation and Media Analysis at the Embassy, monitoring and analyzing political-economic developments in Japan, and Japanese reactions to them, for U.S. government officials in both Tokyo and Washington. His research and advice were always well respected, and his

appreciation of subtle developments within Japan, as an American fully fluent in Japanese language and culture, were unequalled. Now, for the first time, we get his public view of fateful events that Dr. Brooks witnessed directly and at close hand as a public servant, although the analysis itself draws only—Bill is careful to add—on openly available sources.

It is for the reader to decide how he or she views this unique analysis, on an issue fraught with public controversy. It needs to be read completely, and a brief summary cannot do it justice. That said, there are recurring themes it is useful to stress from the outset:

- (1) **The Lessons of History**. The Futenma controversy has been boiling on for over fifteen years, but the basic options—relocation to the vicinity of Henoko; choices among mobile basing, reclamation, land-based options inside Camp Schwab, and the so-called QIP method—remain remarkably constant. So do many of the political responses to each of the options.
- (2) **The Centrality of Politics**. Time and again, political decisions—at the national level and at the prefectural and local levels within Okinawa—have complicated resolution of what seemed originally to be a promising, simple, and creative resolution to the pressing imperative of closing an aging military facility in a crowded urban area, and moving it to a less threatening environment. Interested parties transformed the initial, relatively simple option of a heliport at Henoko, inside Camp Schwab, into a variety of complex permutations. New administrations felt the need to impose their own resolutions, even when doing so opened Pandora's boxes. And within Okinawa itself, the preferred option again and again was simply indecision—keeping base issues in play, so as to extract maximum benefit from all parties, without the downside of implementing something distasteful.

- (3) **The “Mission Creep” Dynamic.** The original proposal for Futenma relocation was relatively simple—a land-based heliport inside Camp Schwab. For a variety of reasons, on both the American and the Japanese sides, the plans that ultimately emerged were, time and time again, much more elaborate. Technological change, and the related introduction of new operating equipment and logistical requirements, was one reason; political and economic pressures had their impact also.
- (4) **The Importance of Deadlines, Clarity and Leadership.** Futenma-related decisionmaking has tended to drift, as the issues are unpleasant and peripheral for many of the decision-makers, unless there is an action-forcing event. The tragic 1995 Okinawa rape case, and the 1996 Clinton-Hashimoto summit, initially played this role, and gave birth to the original agreement. Leadership also helped consolidate the 2006 agreement. The history presented in this monograph thus suggests that leadership, against the deadline of the forthcoming November, 2010 Yokohama APEC summit, when President Barack Obama will visit Japan, will be crucial once again in finally settling this longstanding issue.

This monograph is a good read—remarkably bi-national and bi-cultural in its range of perspectives, and the data it summons for analysis. It covers an important subject, from a unique perspective, in an unprecedented way. It is eloquent, and sensitive to both the needs of the U.S-Japan alliance and the tragedy of Futenma citizens caught in the middle. I enjoyed it, and I know that future readers will as well.

Kent Calder
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INTRODUCTION

On September 4, 1995, three U.S. servicemen abducted and raped a 12-year old Japanese schoolgirl. The shocking crime not only triggered a wave of anger and outrage that swept across Okinawa and the rest of the country, it also set off a bitter debate over the continued presence of U.S. forces in Japan that has yet to fully abate. President Bill Clinton and Ambassador to Japan Walter Mondale immediately expressed their anger at the incident and apologized to Japan and Okinawa, but the damage to bilateral relations was becoming serious, and Okinawa seemed to be reaching a boiling point. Although the three American servicemen were arrested, tried and convicted under Japanese law, the public outrage triggered by the incident released pent-up emotions about the U.S. military that had built up over the years in the island prefecture where over 70% of bases for exclusive use of U.S. forces in Japan were concentrated. The result included massive anti-American demonstrations in Okinawa, demands to deprive U.S. military personnel of extraterritoriality by revising the status of forces agreement and even calls to remove all bases from Okinawa over time. The U.S-Japan alliance arguably faced its biggest crisis and test since the signing of the Mutual Security Treaty in 1960.

The rape incident was ultimately brought to closure, at least for the moment, by the U.S. government's decision, announced by then Ambassador Mondale and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto on April 12, 1996, to close a U.S. Marine Corps facility, Futenma Air Station, located in downtown Ginowan City in Okinawa, and revert it to Japan in five years. The agreement reached would relocate its helicopter and other air transport facilities to other locations, including a site in Okinawa. The base, long deemed as dangerous due to its location, was the scene of a crash of one of its helicopters in August 2004 on the campus of a nearby university, setting off a

new wave of protests. Its presence soon became the symbol of the U.S. base problem in Okinawa.

Now, 14 years later, Futenma remains open, despite agreements to relocate it, the latest in 2006 involving moving the helicopter unit to a facility to be constructed on the shore of Camp Schwab in Nago, a city in northern Okinawa. As of this writing in early May 2010, the current Japanese coalition government, led by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, has emerged from a long deadlock over whether to honor the previous agreement with the U.S., provide an alternate site that is politically acceptable to Okinawans, who are adamantly opposed to relocation inside Okinawa, convince the prefecture to accept a compromise site somewhere in the prefecture, possibly within Camp Schwab, or even to split up Futenma's functions to sites that include a small island near Kyushu. The Prime Minister has even journeyed to Okinawa to float a relocation proposal that would leave the relocation site in the prefecture, a solution that is anathema to most residents there. In effect, the struggle over the fate of Futenma, still retaining its symbolic presence, continues to test the alliance, even to point of its being seen by some as a crisis, obscuring the relatively smooth and cooperative main areas of the bilateral security relationship.

Unlearning the Lessons of History

Ironically, no matter how many times over the past 15 years various relocation sites have been vetted in the previous two sets of negotiations, now heading into the third, the resolution always returns to the original site, somewhere in waters off or on the coastal shores of Camp Schwab. The Hatoyama administration, despite its admittedly muddled efforts to come up with a better scheme for solving the Futenma conundrum has been forced to conclude, undoubtedly with great reluctance, that the original agreement and site location continue to have relevance today.

Moreover, in looking back over the past nine months or so of efforts by the Democratic Party of Japan and its coalition partners to distance themselves from the track record of past Liberal Democratic Party governments on the Futenma issue and come up with a new solution – preferably relocating it anywhere but in Okinawa – one gains the striking impression that the lessons of the history of the past negotiations have been lost. A new government comes in vowing to rectify alleged past misjudgments and even misdeeds by past governments, but there has been little recognition how difficult were the earlier negotiations, how strained the alliance became at times, and how frustrating it was in the end not to be able to smoothly implement the agreements that had been so painfully and meticulously negotiated.

It is also important to note that dramatic changes in the global and regional strategic environment, accompanied by concomitant technological advances in warfare, impacted heavily on the negotiations to find a Futenma replacement, particularly the second set when the Pentagon undertook a global force-transformation exercise, and included Futenma into a complex, puzzle-like scheme for realigning the U.S. bases in Japan. At times, bilateral negotiations -- that ranged from strategic roles and missions of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and U.S. forces in Japan to shifting military units and realigning bases -- almost derailed when diverging agendas and interests threatened to clash fatally. Even now, in the case of Futenma, the expectation that conventional helicopters from that base will be phased out in favor of V-22 Ospreys (a multi-mission, military, tiltrotor aircraft with both a vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL), and short takeoff and landing (STOL) capability. It is designed to combine the functionality of a conventional helicopter with the long-range, high-speed cruise performance of a turboprop aircraft), which need a longer runway, has ruled out a solution of constructing a simple heliport, as originally envisioned when the initial decision to return Futenma and disperse its functions was made.

Okinawa has long sought a reduction and realignment of the U.S. bases in the prefecture and a transition from a “base economy” to one that is more self-reliant. The 2006 agreement that would reduce the presence of the U.S. forces in Okinawa has been generally appreciated, but the notion of relocation of Futenma to another spot in Okinawa has been strongly resisted from the start. Another factor that continues to complicate the resolution of the Futenma problem is the belief that despite Okinawa’s strategic location, a dramatic reduction in the Marines and even other U.S. forces there that goes beyond the 2006 realignment agreement is now technically and strategically feasible and desirable. For that reason, perhaps, there is a lack of understanding not only in Okinawa but in the rest of Japan as well as to why the Marines in Okinawa are so important, even under the 2006 force realignment agreement. Indeed, if one scans the literature in Japan available for public consumption, there has been little articulation about the specific roles and missions of the Marines in the defense of Japan or in responding to possible regional contingencies that makes them so important to the alliance.

On Futenma in particular, the public and the media continue to question why on the one hand the helicopter unit needs to be located so close to the combat troops, when on the other hand the realignment agreement is moving 8,000 Marines to Guam. Many Japanese simply do not buy into the proximity argument, and some even challenge the need for any Marines, calling for moving all them out of Okinawa to other places in Japan or abroad. People also are confused as to why with the decision to return Futenma and break up its functions, a simple heliport project for one unit over time grew into a major runway with heavy-lift capability, and then in a second set of negotiations turned into a downsized version split into two intersecting runways. Such strategic ambiguity is not lost on critics of the Futenma replacement facility.

As Ryukyu University Professor Masaaki Gabe, an expert on U.S.-Japan base relations, has pointed out:

The Japanese government has not explained to the public why Japan provides the U.S. with military bases even in the 21st century. Japanese politicians have never attempted to explain what deterrence to maintain Japan's security means.

The United States has remained silent also as to how the U.S. military bases in Japan benefit it, just reiterating that they contribute to Japan's security. Many Japanese therefore just tolerate the presence of U.S. military bases, although they have never received any concrete explanation for it. It is an inconvenience for Japanese to even hear a rumor that a U.S. base might be moved to their community. They eventually protest. (Ryukyu Shimpo, p.3, May 7, 2010)

Professor Gabe's assertion about a lack of understanding of the rationale for the bases may reflect a common feeling among the public, but the Ministry of Defense in its Defense of Japan 2009 does seek to fill that gap (see pp. 224-227). Still, the ministry's white paper is mainly read by specialists and scholars. When it comes to the mass media, there is little or no attempt to provide such an explanation.

It is also evident from researching the Japanese press that politics played a dominant role, sometimes for the better but more often for the worse, during the various negotiations. But the political strategies and even artifices that can be seen playing out at the central and local government levels in the two earlier sets of negotiations seem oddly missing from the efforts of the current political administration since last fall. Earlier sets of talks practiced a kind of brinkmanship and sometimes threatened to reach crisis proportions. But in the end, both sides always pulled away from the brink to reach a compromise that eased tensions and ultimately resolved the issue, often with the intervention of strong leaders, seeking to balance alliance and Okinawa interests as best as possible. The U.S. in the past was always closely involved – these were bilateral negotiations -- unlike the

current unilateral process done in isolation by a small group of coalition leaders each with pet proposals, none of which had even been vetted with others, not to mention the U.S. and affected local leaders and communities. The outcome from such an unstructured and haphazard process to most observers seemed doomed to failure from the start.

True, the two agreements to relocate Futenma both failed to be implemented, the first encountering strong local environment-related resistance and the second overturned by radical political change that brought a party into power that campaigned on moving the base outside of the prefecture. But the latest ambiguous and non-transparent decision-making process, constantly the butt of severe criticism by the media, including the Western press, and increasingly agitating pro and anti-base elements alike in Okinawa, seems to have inflicted more than its share of damage to the alliance, even touching on the trust relationship usually enjoyed at the highest levels of the two governments.

This paper, based mainly on Japanese press coverage and the published recollections of key Japanese analysts and officials, looks back in the first part at the political process and atmosphere in 1996-97 of reaching the initial agreement to relocate Futenma to a remote part of northern Okinawa, specifically a sea-based facility to be constructed in the offing of Camp Schwab in Nago City. But the ambitious project was never implemented, and it took the crash of a Futenma helicopter in August 2004 into a university campus – a near tragedy since no civilians were hurt – to spur a second round of even more complex and contentious negotiations to find a suitable alternative relocation site. Part two of this essay focuses on the tangled web of talks, intrigue, and political maneuvering on the Futenma issue – complicated by its inclusion in comprehensive force transformation and base realignment talks -- that ultimately produced a second agreement in 2006 to construct V-shaped runways on the shore of Camp Schwab, the plan currently being challenged in Tokyo and Okinawa. In examining the

Futenma issue in minute detail, it is hoped that new light can be shed on the current effort – the third major reevaluation – to finally close that base and lighten the security burden on Okinawa – particularly the excessive one imposed on the real victims in this saga, the citizens of Ginowan City where Futenma is located.

PART ONE: NEGOTIATIONS IN 1995-97

Futenma “Symbolizes the Bilateral Security Relationship”

The Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) was established in November 1995 by the Governments of Japan and the United States in a meeting of the Security Consultative Committee (SCC). The two governments launched the SACO process to reduce the burden on the people of Okinawa and thereby strengthen the Japan-US alliance. A careful scan of Japanese press coverage of U.S.-Japan security relations during 1995-96 reveals that the resolution of the 1995 Okinawa schoolgirl rape case, outside of the bringing of the perpetrators to justice, involved much more than the fate of one Marine air station. Prior to the U.S. decision to return Futenma as part of the SACO process (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/96saco1.html>) that had been set off by the rape incident, the U.S. government was faced not only with a demand by Okinawa prefecture for a phased withdrawal of all U.S. forces there by 2015, it also was witnessing a growing consensus in the Liberal Democratic Party-led ruling coalition for moving a significant number of U.S. troops out of Okinawa to Guam and to reduce the level of U.S. forces in Japan, then placed at 47,000 troops. At the same time, there was a strong view in the Pentagon, as articulated by oft-quoted senior officials (for example, see *Mainichi*, Feb. 18, 1996), that Japan was lacking in threat perception not only toward a nuclear-ambitious North Korea but also toward a rising China and that it did

not understand the value of the deterrence capabilities of the U.S. military presence in Japan to deal with such possible regional contingencies as a clash in the Taiwan Strait. Such U.S. dissatisfaction with its ally gave rise to a drive to revise the 1978 set of defense cooperation guidelines that were seen as woefully out of date. The result was a far-reaching agreement on U.S.-Japan cooperation in case of a regional contingency (*shuhen jitai*). But the Okinawa base problem remained essentially unresolved.

Then Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, the center of the imbroglio, must be congratulated for his efforts and political skills to head off such a growing divergence of strategic interests between the two countries and to press for an expeditious revision of the defense guidelines to meet potential threats in the region. Credit also must be given to Hashimoto's determination and leadership to deal resolutely with the Okinawa base problems, starting with Futenma, while playing off competing political interests at the Tokyo and Okinawa levels.

Clear evidence of a growing divergence in 1996 can be seen in the visit to Washington in early February of a ruling coalition survey team, led by former Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama, to sound out views on a partial transfer of U.S. troops from Okinawa to Hawaii and Guam and to press for reducing the level of U.S. forces in Japan. The Marines transferred to the two U.S. locations would only return to Japan if there were a regional contingency, the group argued. The team also reportedly pushed for Futenma reversion as a top priority. They met with Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Defense Secretary William Perry, and members of Congress. The *Yomiuri* (February 6, 1996) reported that Washington was particularly rankled that a view in the ruling parties of only stationing Marines in Japan during emergencies was gaining prominence. The visit by Nakayama's group also upset the threat-conscious Japan Defense Agency (JDA), which adamantly opposed any proposal for a reduced U.S. force presence in Japan. Defense Agency officials pointed out such flaws as the time delay of returning

U.S. troops to Japan in case of an emergency. They also warned about the message sent to Asia about diminished U.S. deterrence capabilities if forces were reduced in Japan.

At the time, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), headed by Takako Doi, was a member of the ruling coalition. The party in February issued a five-point policy statement on the U.S.-Japan security arrangements that included a call for full reversion of Futenma under the SACO agreement. The SDP also demanded the settlement of all requests by Okinawa prefecture, including base withdrawal and revision of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that gave U.S. forces in Japan extraterritoriality. It further called for bilateral talks on the future level of U.S. forces in Japan. The party in March altered its position somewhat with a statement calling for Futenma reversion in five years, some bases in Japan relocated outside the country, and negotiations to revise the SOFA based on Germany's version (*Nikkei*, March 28).

In early 1996, the return of Futenma was far from a done deal, as seen in reporting of the visit to Okinawa February 11-12 of then Defense Agency Director General Hideo Usui as part of an effort to resolve such base issues. Usui took the view that the return of Futenma was "difficult in consideration of the harmony with the goal of the Japan-U.S. security arrangements" (Mainichi, February 3). The Okinawa Prefectural Government (OPG) called for "reversion of all U.S. military bases in the prefecture." OPG's action plan called for return of all bases there by 2015. Usui countered that such would mean a renunciation of the security treaty with the U.S. To defuse the confrontation between the central government and OPG, Tokyo reportedly expected SACO to come up with its plan for base problem resolution before President Clinton's visit to Japan in April.

Prior to that, Prime Minister Hashimoto held a summit meeting with President Clinton in Santa Monica on February 24. He raised the Futenma

issue at this meeting (<http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/hasimotosouri/speech/1996/kisya-0515-1.html>). He reportedly wanted to use such diplomacy not only to deflect domestic political trouble but also to assuage U.S. concerns that Japan would not cooperate further on regional stabilization at a time when tensions were rising between China and Taiwan. China had carried out a large military exercise across the Strait on the eve of the Taiwanese presidential election. But there is no evidence from the press readout of the summit meeting that the Japanese premier and the U.S. president either hit it off well or went beyond the usual formalities and set phrases, such as reconfirming the strength of the alliance. Despite Hashimoto's long trip to California, the two only met for 50 minutes. The meeting was hardly covered by the U.S. media.

By mid-February, Futenma had already taken on “symbolic existence” in the overall issue of base reduction, reported the *Asahi* (February 18) and the *Mainichi* (February 23). In a meeting with Defense Minister Usui, then Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota asked for a full reversion of Futenma by 2001, stressing that an accident there would badly affect U.S.-Japan relations. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the U.S. was being uncooperative in resolving this key element on the Okinawa base problem through the ongoing the SACO process. The *Asahi* revealed (February 18) that with SACO to reach its interim conclusion in the spring, the U.S. had proposed transferring Futenma's airlift operations to Japan's mainland, listing Iwakuni and other candidate sites. Futenma had three units with different functions: 1) helicopters; 2) airlift; and 3) aerial refueling. In addition to 70 helicopters, the facility had two C-12 planes and 12 KC-130 aircraft. The U.S. argued that helicopters would be excluded from relocation because they could not be separated from the combat troops in case of the need for rapid deployment. It was also noted that only Okinawa had the training area for joint maneuvers.

Reversion is “Difficult”

Full reversion at the time was not on the table. The Mainichi reported on February 23 that in addition to shifting part of Futenma’s functions to Iwakuni, the U.S. had indicated willingness to consider a reversion of the northern training area at Kunigami-son (eventually there was agreement for a partial reversion), but there was “strong opposition” to shifting other functions to mainland Japan. In a meeting with new Sakigake party leader Masayoshi Takemura on March 13, Ambassador to Japan Walter Mondale stressed that Japan’s hoped for return of the Futenma facility was “difficult.”

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Hubbard reportedly in a meeting with Taro Nakayama’s Okinawa Base Problems Team, according to *Sankei* (March 8) was negative about reversion, causing the daily to conclude, “Hubbard’s emphasis on the strategic value of that airfield and suggestion that the reversion would be difficult” places more hurdles in the path of satisfactory resolution of the base problem. Tokyo, however, continued to press Washington, with *Asahi* reporting on March 12 that the government had proposed reversion of 17 bases and facilities in Okinawa, placing the return of Futenma as a “future task.”

The tone already was set in Okinawa in January 1996 by the issuance of an Action Program for the Return of U.S. Bases, drawn up by Governor Ota and his deputy (<http://www.niraikanai.wvma.net/pages/archive/base96.html>). The program called for the return of the bases in three phases, the final one ending in 2015. Commenting on the event in a *Chuo Koron* (January 2010) interview, former Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya explained:

“It was a program for disallowing the construction of any new bases in Okinawa, which was a battleground [in World War II] and once occupied [by the U.S. forces]. The anti-base movement opposing any

new requisition of land by the U.S. forces, which had seized land in Iejima, Ginowan City, and other locations in the 1950s, was on the rise. Kadena Air Base, the last facility that would remain under the Action Program, was supposed to be removed by 2015. For this reason, when the Hashimoto administration decided on the return of Futenma, 'building a new facility' to replace Futenma was from the beginning not an option. Looking back, I think we were led to consider the Kadena Air Base because of the situation in Okinawa."

Meanwhile, the atmosphere between Okinawa prefecture and the central government worsened in March 1996, when Prime Minister Hashimoto met Governor Ota for the second time that year. Hashimoto told Ota that reversion of Futenma would be "difficult." The governor pressed the premier to "speed up" resolution of the base issue, adding, "If there is an accident at Futenma that takes lives, the emotions of the citizens of this prefecture would seethe, hurting Japan-U.S. relations" (Asahi, March 23) Arguing for a postponement of the decision until the fall, Hashimoto cited the tense situation in the Taiwan Strait as a reason for the delay.

The Okinawa base landowner problem was also a major source of trouble for the central government throughout 1996. The leases to the Sobe Communication Site (a fenced-in antenna field dubbed the "elephant cage") -- part of which was held by one of the group of anti-war landowners who had grabbed up tiny plots in order to protest the presence of bases on Okinawa -- expired on March 31, because of the refusal of Governor Ota to advance the procedures. This created the need for the government to modify the existing law to forcefully renew the leases and continue the U.S. forces' use of the facility. (*Hitotsubo Hansen Jinushi no Kai* (Society of Antiwar 1 Tsubo Landowners) was formed in the early 1980s to support landowners refusing to provide land for U.S. bases. It has more than 2,000 members, including academics, politicians and citizens both within and outside Okinawa who

share ownership of some U.S. base land.) Though ultimately successful, the Hashimoto government had to go through political hoops to pass the legislation. This volatile issue undoubtedly had an impact on negotiations by SACO on the overall base problem, adding further pressure for swift resolution.

Decision to Return Futenma

On April 15, 1996, SACO issued its interim report following a meeting of the Security Consultative Committee (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/seco.html>), with a final version slated for November. The “difficult” issue of the reversion of Futenma was masterfully resolved in the following language:

Return Futenma Air Station within the next five to seven years, after adequate replacement facilities are completed. The airfield's critical military functions and capabilities will be maintained through relocations of facilities. This will require construction of a heliport on other US facilities and areas in Okinawa; development of additional facilities at Kadena Air Base; transfer of KC-130 aircraft to Iwakuni Air Base; and a joint US-Japan study on emergency use of facilities in the event of a crisis.

The decision on Futenma was in large part the result of a strong desire by Prime Minister Hashimoto and direct negotiations between him and Ambassador Mondale. But the SACO interim report in April did not mention a specific site to which the core functions of Futenma would be removed. That ambiguity would return to haunt the alliance. The Nikkei reported on April 16 that candidate sites had been sought, but no locality on mainland Japan was willing to accept bases relocated from Okinawa, including Iwakuni's mayor, Yoshimitsu Kifune. Revealing the U.S. conditions for Futenma

reversion to the Diet, Hashimoto cited a study of the use of Japanese civilian facilities that the U.S. forces might use in the event of a “Far East” emergency. In retrospect, it is amazing, given the longevity of the alliance, that such a possibility had never been discussed. Hashimoto told the Diet: “I told myself that I had to give consideration to the feelings of the citizens of Okinawa, but at the same time, I felt I must not degrade the Japan-U.S. security arrangements.”

Hashimoto’s playing of the Futenma trump card not only won him reversion, he also enjoyed a bump in the polls. A Nikkei opinion survey, released April 23, found that the prime minister’s popularity had jumped 11.6 points to 48.3%. Moreover, 70% of the public gave him high marks for attaining the U.S. promise to return Futenma. Interestingly, half of the respondents opposed defense cooperation between the U.S. and Japan that hypothesized conflict on the Korean Peninsula, an apparent sign of a lack of threat perception at the time.

It is also interesting to note that despite the then tense situation building with China, Shinshinto (New Frontier Party) President Ichiro Ozawa – who is now secretary general of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) -- travelled lavishly to China in early April, meeting President Jiang Zemin and other leaders. Ozawa, who bolted from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to form his own party and anti-LDP coalition in 1993, was by 1996, Hashimoto’s bitter enemy in the Diet. Interestingly, his courting of China at a time of increased tensions in the Taiwan Strait continues today. DPJ Secretary General Ozawa in early December 2009 led a massive delegation of 650, including 143 DPJ lawmakers, to Beijing at a time when strains in security relations between Japan and the U.S. over the Futenma relocation issue had emerged.

Struggle Over Site Location

Seeking to calm security waters, President Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto signed a joint declaration in Tokyo on April 17, 1996, reconfirming U.S.-Japan ties for a "stable and prosperous" Asia (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/security.html>). Clinton pledged to keep 100,000 American troops in the Asia-Pacific region to preserve peace and uphold U.S. interests. Japan strongly welcomed the commitment, and Hashimoto said he and Clinton had worked to "reduce the burden on the Okinawan people" through the SACO process.

Without designating a specific site for the relocation of Futenma, the SACO process immediately became a tug-of-war between the Japanese and U.S. governments, with Okinawa caught in between. The public record, which is murky over the next several months following the April summit meeting, shows that in July or August of 1996, Tokyo began to push Washington hard on accepting a plan to integrate Futenma's heliport into Kadena Air Base, also on Okinawa. The plan was formally proposed on September 13 and involved the integration of the 36th Marine Air Group into Kadena (a housing area would be demolished) and the transfer of Marine training to Iejima, a remote island in Okinawa. The Kadena option was backed by Japan's Air Self Defense Force, which concluded that such a plan was "technically feasible" (Mainichi, Sept. 9), Kadena being four times the size of Futenma. The Kadena option was strongly opposed not only by the U.S. forces in Japan but also by the mayors of Okinawa City, Chatan, and Kadena, cities surrounding the base, for environmental and other reasons. The representatives of the communities were also upset that coordination with them had not taken place before the plan was presented. They directly conveyed their opposition to Prime Minister Hashimoto on September 17, when he was visiting Okinawa.

In addition to the added noise and operational issues, the U.S. argued that such relocation presented a major air-safety problem due to Air Force jets taking off and landing. The U.S. then floated the notion of a site in the waters off Camp Schwab in the Henoko district of Nago City in northern Okinawa. The U.S. reportedly at first was willing to accept the heliport function at the Kadena ammunition depot area, which is not part of the main airbase, but local opposition to such a move forced it to look elsewhere, hence the Camp Schwab site. The U.S. in the new site proposal also reportedly wanted a full-fledged runway to be built, not just a heliport. At this point, the U.S. and Japanese sides were united only on resolving the issue by November, prior to the issuance of the SACO final report (Sankei, August 27; Nikkei, September 6; Mainichi, September 9) – but some of the details clash; there also was a flurry of speculative articles in September. For example, Yomiuri also reported on September 8 that the U.S. side, in “secret” internal talks, was split on Kadena, with the civilians willing to accept such an option for the heliport and the uniforms adamantly opposed.

Former Vice Defense Minister Moriya (Chuo Koron, January 2010) had this to say about the outcome of the Kadena option:

“The U.S. forces opposed the plan for three reasons: First, controlling low-speed helicopters and high-speed fighters simultaneously would be too much of a burden on the air traffic controllers. Second, the plan would make Kadena an airfield with 60 to 70 each of helicopters and fighters conducting exercises even in peacetime, and in a contingency, the number of aircraft could grow two- or threefold. Kadena could not handle this volume in a contingency. Third, Kadena was considered too noisy even at that time. Aprons for P-3C anti-submarine patrol planes were moved and noise-blocking walls were built under the SACO agreement as noise-reducing measures. The U.S. side pointed out that such measures to reduce the burden of the citizens of Kadena would be for naught. The towns of Kadena and Chatan, where Kadena is

located, felt that even the status quo was beyond the tolerable level, so why make the environment even worse? Therefore, the Kadena integration plan was dropped.”

The Asahi reported on September 20 that the U.S. had proposed a “floating heliport plan” for the Futenma replacement site. No specific location was mentioned, but the understanding was that it would be in the seas off Camp Schwab. The Kadena option seems to have been laid to rest, because the Japanese side was reportedly already considering what kind of construction method (fixed megafloat -- a mobile offshore base that would be permanently anchored – or a QIP (quick installation platform) – steel posts driven into the ocean bottom to support a pier-like platform). Eventually, in October, the U.S. and Japanese sides reportedly agreed on the size of the runway, if not the method of building it. It would be an alternate facility of seven hectares with a runway 1,500 meters long and 500 meters wide.

Meanwhile, an Okinawa prefecture-wide referendum on September 8 showed 90% of the residents wanting realignment and reduction of U.S. bases there. The mood of the public desiring a reduced U.S. military presence and not another base was to be a constant obstacle in the months ahead as the central government worked to convince Okinawa to accept a relocation site for Futenma inside the prefecture.

The Battle Off Camp Schwab

The final SACO report was not issued until December 2, 1996, at a meeting of the Security Consultative Committee (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/96saco1.html>). It did not specifically name a location for the Futenma relocation, although everyone knew it was to be off the coast of Camp Schwab in Nago City. The report formally rejected the Kadena option and concluded:

The SBF (sea-based facility) is judged to be the best option in terms of enhanced safety and quality of life for the Okinawan people while maintaining operational capabilities of U.S. forces. In addition, the SBF can function as a fixed facility during its use as a military base and can also be removed when no longer necessary.

The report was vague about the method of runway construction, only that it would be on the ocean and not on land, and it only mentioned the preferred location as “off the east coast of Okinawa.” It also placed the U.S. in the light of having showed the utmost to accommodate Japan’s wishes. In the months that followed, about the only new development on Futenma was the Iwakuni mayor’s statement of willingness to accept the relocation of the base’s air refueling unit (Yomiuri, January 28, 1997). Interviewed by the Asahi on Jan. 29, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Kurt Campbell, noting that the U.S. and Japanese governments had agreed to find a suitable site for Futenma’s helicopter unit, called for a speedy resolution of the issue. He added that Nago City was only one of the candidate sites. However, the conventional wisdom in Okinawa was that only Nago was being seriously considered.

Based on the SACO report, the U.S. and Japan set up a Futenma Implementation Group (FIG) of working-level officials to plan the construction of the alternative facility. It ultimately designated a site off Camp Schwab in Nago as the optimum candidate for the relocation. Based on this, the Japanese government in early 1997 approached the local community for a survey that would in place by the end of the year. On January 16, Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama broke the ice by declaring that Camp Schwab was the best choice for the relocation. The same day, in another first, then Defense Agency Director General Fumio Kyuma said that the military training area in waters off Camp Schwab was the likely candidate.

Meanwhile, former diplomat turned international consultant Yukio Okamoto was picked by Hashimoto to serve as his assistant, acting as go-between between the central government and Okinawa in convincing the local community and Okinawa to accept the offshore heliport. He had his work cut out for him.

Okamoto met with Governor Ota on January 8 to hear Ota reiterate his plea for reduction of U.S. troops in the prefecture. The governor said that it was not enough to “play musical chairs” by transferring bases to other spots in Okinawa. Ota pressed Tokyo to find a location for Futenma that was outside the prefecture. Okamoto countered by dangling the possibility of compensatory economic development measures for the prefecture in the national budget, as well as priority distribution of local allocation taxes to communities hosting U.S. bases.

Ota later that month travelled to Tokyo to meet Prime Minister Hashimoto and press for troop reduction. Hashimoto rebuffed him, citing the North Korea threat and revealing his prioritization of the security relationship with the U.S. The two in March had an equally unproductive meeting. Ota continued his crusade, however, and in April, travelled to Washington to make his case for troop reduction to deaf ears. Pentagon officials already in late January had made up their minds not to consider a troop reduction in Japan under the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and Washington sent a letter to the Foreign Ministry indicating that decision. Okamoto also continued his efforts, making another effort to persuade Okinawa. He made a pitch for the establishment of a free trade zone as part of the government’s economic development package, and to seek Nago City’s understanding for the planned construction survey in waters off Henoko. Without Okamoto’s efforts in Okinawa, it seems doubtful that the Henoko offshore plan would have ever been accepted there.

Hashimoto's Dilemma

Caught on the horns of a dilemma, Hashimoto continued the tactic of playing it down the middle, pressing Okinawa to accept the Futenma relocation based on the SACO report, while promising ample compensation. He also told the Diet in late February (Asahi, February 28) that he planned to ask President Clinton to “reduce the burden” on Okinawa. He indicated elsewhere that he wanted to see a breakthrough on the other pending issue, the land use problem, by the time Vice President Al Gore visited Japan by March 23. If no prospects existed for continuing the leases on the land used by U.S. bases in Okinawa, he would have to amend a special measures law, securing the legal ground for the continual use of the land.

As President Clinton was being sworn in for his second term, the Japanese government on January 21 was formally asking Nago City to accept a site survey for a possible heliport off the coast of Henoko, the district where Camp Schwab is located. The city ultimately accepted the request.

With the unofficial selection of the waters off Nago City as the Futenma relocation site and a survey being planned, local politics began to insert itself into the squabble over the method of constructing the new facility. Former Vice Defense Minister Moriya (Chuo Koron, January 2010) reveals an incident that left the removable facility option high and dry: “The Ota administration of Okinawa and Nago City had different intents. In mid-November 1997, I was in Nago City. This was one month before the referendum on whether to accept the Futenma replacement facility was held. At a meeting with the leading people of Nago, they told me: ‘We don't need any megafloats or QIP; we want land reclamation.’ From their point of view, the Okinawa Expo of 1975 in the town of Motobu in northern Okinawa, which was undertaken as a government project for Okinawa's economic development, did not benefit the economy in the north; only companies in Naha and on the Japanese mainland made money. They absolutely did not

want a repeat of the same story. Their reasoning was that only contractors in northern Okinawa should participate in the construction of the Futenma replacement facility as a project for local development.”

The Moriya Connection

Interviewed for the monthly literary journal *Chuokoron* (January 2010, pp. 106-120), former Vice Minister of Defense Takemasa Moriya revealed much about the lengthy negotiations between the United States and Japan to revert the Marine Corps’ Futenma Air Station in Okinawa and the equally tortuous process to find a politically and strategically acceptable site for the relocation of Futenma’s heliport function. Although the details he revealed were new about the decade long – 1996-2006 – wrangle centered on the Futenma relocation that ended in agreement to build a V-shaped runway on the shores of Camp Schwab, Moriya’s real purpose in his kiss-and-tell interview seems to have been to lay blame on certain political leaders in the central, prefectural, and local governments, as well as local commercial interests – competing to broker or land contracts for land reclamation and construction of the runway – for the setting and breaking of agreements that have led to the current impasse in resolving the fate of the Marine base in downtown Ginowan City – deemed one of the most dangerous in Japan.

It is clear from Moriya’s narrative that in his mind, the security interests of Japan and the human interests of residents near the base were always secondary in the minds of many of those responsible in Tokyo and Okinawa for final decisions on the base relocation. He sees the U.S. government, always negotiating in good faith, as the collateral victim, unable to close down and revert Futenma as intended and pressed always for compromises, including a drive to reduce forces in Japan and Okinawa, that would weaken its deterrent capabilities in the region.

Prime Minister Hashimoto, the main figure in the drive starting in 1996 to bring closure to the Okinawa base problem sparked by the September 1995 rape of a schoolgirl by three U.S. soldiers --comes across well as well intentioned but constantly sandwiched in between the U.S. and Okinawan interests. Moriya eludes to, but does not name names of those tugging behind the scenes for commercial advantage, including those at high political levels. But he does point the finger at Okinawa governors Ota, Inamine, and Nakaima for the string of broken agreements that have prevented Futenma from being reverted to Japan. Local politicians, fronting for business interests in Okinawa, are seen as playing a hard game of poker, setting the stakes high in order to achieve goals largely unrelated to the Futenma resolution. Laying blame even wider, Moriya cites rumors of certain influential politicians having bought up mountains that could be exploited for the lucrative land-reclamation project.

Moriya himself and his colleagues at the Defense Agency (now a ministry) come across as well-intentioned in the negotiations. Moriya takes credit, for example, in convincing U.S. negotiators, when the original plan for an offshore runway was blocked by environmentalists, to accept a land-based plan at Camp Schwab that should have been acceptable to all in resolving the relocation issue. Local interests undercut it by insisting that only a sea-based option – using a landfill method that would benefit locals – was acceptable.

The eventual second compromise agreement in 2006 for a V-shaped runway along the shore of Camp Schwab (Henoko district of Nago City in Okinawa) — once the political hurdles were overcome, as covered in part 2 of this article, actually was steadily moving forward. The difference in views over the exact location was eventually reduced to only 50 meters, and that could have been easily resolved after the outcome of the Environmental Impact Survey scheduled for completion in the summer of 2010. It was just before that point when the Democratic Party of Japan won the Lower House election in August 30, 2009, replacing the Liberal Democratic Party that had

tangled with the Futenma issue for 13 years. The administration of Prime Minister Hatoyama then halted the process, calling for a full review of the 2006 agreement on Futenma.

Moriya, however, was apparently not the completely disinterested party he portrays himself to be in his interview, at least not late in the game. It was reported on December 6, 2007, that he had been arrested on November 28 in connection to allegations of receiving bribes and other favors from a defense contractor. Moriya had retired from the Ministry of Defense (formerly the Defense Agency) that August. Moriya was accused accepting lavish bribes from Motonobu Miyazaki, a former executive of defense contractor Yamada Corp. who has been charged with embezzlement. Moriya has admitted going on golf trips, paid for by Yamada Corp., which violated defense ministry ethical rules. Miyazaki formed his own company in September 2006 and allegedly received favorable treatment from Moriya, who was instrumental in the government's review of the Futenma relocation plan. (<http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=140&article=50746>; also see: <http://www.iza.ne.jp/news/newsarticle/event/trial/338660/>)

According to Mainichi (p.3, May 5, 2010), when Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto visited Okinawa in September 1996 and announced a sea-based heliport plan, he had the QIP method in mind. The method is designed to build a runway on numerous steel piles driven into the seabed. The Defense Agency examined the technical aspects of the plan from 2000 to 2002. But the plan drew strong objections from local construction companies, including those in Nago, which feared they would be able to join the project only as subcontractors, greatly reducing their anticipated profits. The reason was because the method was so highly technical that only non-Okinawa-based general contractors and construction companies specializing in offshore engineering would be able to join the project, making it extremely difficult for local construction companies to win contracts directly. Unable to ignore such

local opposition, the government's final decision came down in favor of the land reclamation method as the most appropriate.

Interestingly, the Hatoyama government is now (May 2010) considering the quick installation platform (QIP) method, a revision of the existing plan to construct a V-shaped pair of runways on landfill off the coastal area of the U.S. military's Camp Schwab in the Henoko district in Nago City, Okinawa Prefecture. This method was partially adopted for Haneda Airport's No. 4 Runway (D-Runway) in Tokyo's Ota Ward, which is now under construction.

Although the QIP method is said to minimize environmental damage, the method is not damage-free, notes the Mainichi (*ibid*). It is believed that the government has returned to the QIP method following Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's remarks that reclaiming land from the sea is a "sacrilege against nature." But a government source told Mainichi: "Coral will be damaged in the construction work that will drive thousands of piles into the seabed. The surface of the sea under the runway also will receive no sunshine."

Other Base Issues

Returning to 1997, local intransigence over relocating Futenma and the central government's apparent inability to deal decisively began to affect the overall alliance relationship in early March. Nikkei reported on March 7 that during bilateral consultations in Washington, the U.S. side became "visibly impatient" with the Japanese side over the Okinawa base problem. The U.S. delegate is quoted as having said, "The Okinawa base issue is not all there is about the U.S.-Japan alliance." The U.S. wanted Japan to resolve the local hang-ups over that issue quickly and move on to such pending broader issues as revising the defense cooperation guidelines and moving forward with missile defense to counter the North Korea threat. The record

shows, however, that regardless of U.S. irritation that Okinawa issues would not go away, the relationship continued to be dominated by them.

LDP Policy Research Chairman Taku Yamasaki, in a Sankei report on March 11, laid part of the blame on the coalition partner, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) for the stalemate on Okinawa, particularly on a second parallel issue to Futenma that was clogging the political pipeline, namely, the land-use problem. The government was planning to pass a special measures law to force the continued use of land by U.S. bases when the some 3,000 landowners refused to sign leases. The SDP was opposed to such a measure. Yamasaki warned that with the leases of Kadena Air Base and other facilities running out in mid-May, if the two ruling parties could not reach consensus, there would be an “April crisis.”

A third issue that threatened to further gum up the works in Okinawa was an incident on a remote island in mid-February 1997. Through an oversight, the U.S. forces in live-fire practice on the island had strafed it radioactive bullets made with depleted uranium (DU). To make matters worse, the U.S. side allegedly was delinquent in informing the Okinawa Governor Ota of the incident. The result was a cascade of protests, including one outside the U.S. Embassy by a crowd that included many SDP supporters. Governor Ota quipped, “The U.S. still thinks Okinawa is under American occupation.” It did not matter that the radioactivity in DU shells is insignificant and no harm to the public, or that the island was uninhabited; the harm had been done.

Politics at the Center

Where were Shinshinto President Ichiro Ozawa and Democratic Party of Japan President Yukio Hatoyama on the alliance issues? The Sankei reported on March 16 that Ozawa at a press conference in Sendai has said: “The U.S. forces are stationed in Japan at Japan’s request for the sake of the

peace of Japan and the Far East.” He added, “The Japanese people must understand why the U.S. forces had to stay in Japan after the war.” According to Sankei, Hatoyama, meeting the press in Mito on March 15, was negative about the special measures law to force landowners to accept land use leases, favoring persuasive tactics. He also indicated he favored reducing the Marine presence in Okinawa.

Interestingly, Hatoyama’s position was close to that of the SDP, which was then a ruling coalition partner. The SDP, then headed by Takako Doi, had become a force to contend with in the coalition because of its close support for Okinawan interests on the land-lease issue and Futenma. The Nikkei on March 18, 1997, noted that the Hashimoto government was “walking a tightrope,” pressed by the SDP and Okinawa on one side and the U.S. government on the other. A Foreign Ministry official is quoted as saying that “the atmosphere in Washington is severe.” The U.S. reportedly was annoyed that although it had agreed to the reversion of Futenma, Japan was now pressing it to reduce the number of Marines stationed on the island prefecture. At the same time, talks to revise the defense guidelines were stalled.

Hashimoto’s Juggling Act

Hashimoto was determined to sort out and resolve all the pending alliance issues by the time he journeyed to Washington in April to meet Clinton. Asahi (March 24) referred to him as the “stage producer” who “has managed to reach agreement with the U.S. on reversion of Futenma Air Station despite the odds against base reduction.” The daily continued: “In return for that, he unveiled the offshore heliport plan. ...(The U.S. agreed) under heavy pressure to make concessions, triggered by the (1995) unfortunate schoolgirl rape case.” But the “dominant view” in the U.S., Asahi concluded, is not to make any more concessions, such as reducing the number

of troops in Japan, especially Okinawa. The Foreign Ministry and Defense Agency reportedly fully backed the U.S. on this point.

Indeed, when Vice President Gore visited Japan on March 24, Hashimoto told him that Japan was not going to ask for the time being for cuts in U.S. troop strength, placing emphasis on Asia security (Asahi, 3/25). The issue was taken off the front burner. Deputy Assistant Defense Secretary Campbell, meeting separately with LDP policy chairman Yamasaki, stressed that the U.S. would maintain its 100,000 troops in the region, citing the North Korea threat. He added that the U.S. would not discuss the question of withdrawing Marines from Okinawa during negotiations on Futenma.

Despite the U.S.' unequivocal position, Okinawa Governor Ota, meeting Hashimoto for the second time that year on March 25, continued to press him to seek a reduction of U.S. forces in Japan. And SDP Secretary General Shigeru Ito called the U.S. refusal to reduce its Japan military presence "regrettable," arguing that the current level was unnecessary due to perceived diplomatic progress with North Korea. (This argument was indirectly rebuffed by Defense Secretary William Cohen, meeting in Tokyo on April 9, as reported by Asahi the next day. The Pentagon view was that the purpose of U.S. forces in Okinawa was overwhelmingly the deterrent value not only toward North Korea but also China, particularly the then tense situation in the Taiwan Strait. Cohen saw no reduction of troops in the foreseeable future.

Base Problem "Resolved for the Time Being"

With the LDP and SDP split over the other Okinawa issue, amending the land-lease law to allow the government to forcibly continue the use of leased land by the U.S. forces in Okinawa, the political football of Futenma relocation seems to have been left in the locker room, safe from sight for the

moment. The SDP local chapter in Okinawa warned that if the parent party approved the amendment, it would leave the party. The Shinshinto under Ozawa suddenly turned critical of the proposed measure for its own benefit, and the DPJ, then under Naoto Kan, offered to approve the bill if there was an accompanied reduction of U.S. troops in Okinawa – probably realizing that fulfilling such was impossible. Political wrangling in the Diet continued at high pitch until finally a deal was worked out and the bill passed just prior to the Clinton-Hashimoto summit meeting on April 25, 1997. The revision of the law passed with more than 80% support in the Diet, in spite of the SDP's opposition.

On April 10, Governor Ota finally acquiesced to accept the feasibility study in waters off Camp Schwab, citing its earlier acceptance of the Nago city mayor. It was understood that accepting the study did not mean such would lead to their agreement on actual construction of the Futenma replacement facility (Ota laid out Okinawa's view on the base issues in a speech in Washington in April. The speech is at this Web site: <http://www.iwanami.co.jp/jpworld/text/okinawa01.html>). However, in breaking the logjam on the survey, special prime ministerial assistant Okamoto seems to have played a major role in convincing the local community.

Efforts of Hashimoto, Okamoto Finally Paid Off

The summit conference between President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto in Washington lasted about an hour and delivered little tangible results on alliance issues (their press conference is at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs site: http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/archive_1/970425.html). It was agreed that the review of the defense guidelines would be completed in the fall and that the SACO process was making suitable progress. But the Futenma issue was not mentioned in the press conference, which focused on broader foreign and security policy issues, such as North Korea and China. Nor was the subject brought up by the press corps.

Hashimoto played his cards well in 1997. In the run up to the 25th anniversary of the reversion of Okinawa, the prime minister continued to stress that he would “do my ultimate best to boost the economy” of that prefecture. He never fell into the trap of promising something he could not deliver, namely, the reduction of troop strength. He only reiterated the faithful implementation of the SACO final report, which promised to return Futenma. What was important to Hashimoto, in addition to assuaging Okinawa opinion, was to manage Diet affairs and pass legislation that would allow the continued legal use of leased base land by the U.S. forces in Okinawa. In the view of Hashimoto and his aides in the *Kantei* (Prime Minister’s Official Residence), the Okinawa problem was settled for the time being. Only time would reveal that the Futenma issue was far from being resolved. However, for the rest of 1997, revising the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation (see http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_policy/dp04.html for the text) became the policy priority for the Hashimoto administration.

In a *Yomiuri Shimbun* review (p. 11, April 26, 2010) of a dialogue on “Why Japan cannot resolve the Futenma issue,” (from *Sight* magazine) between House of Representatives member Kenji Eda and University of Tokyo Prof. Kiichi Fujiwara, the two in questioning the seriousness of the Hatoyama administration about resolving the Futenma issue, praise the efforts of Prime Minister Hashimoto and his aide, Yukio Okamoto. Eda served as a secretary to Hashimoto, at the time when he managed to reach an agreement with the U.S. on returning Futenma to Japan. According to Eda, Hashimoto was able to “win the hearts of the people of Okinawa” because he had visited the prefecture many times before becoming prime minister to pay tribute to and bring back the remains of those Japanese soldiers who died there in World War II. Eda also described Okamoto, who had put in every effort to fulfill his role as intermediary for Hashimoto: “He visited Okinawa 53 times. He listened to the views of local people even at bars in rural areas and won their trust.” Eda sees such efforts as displaying true empathy

toward Okinawa and constantly engaging in dialogue with Okinawans as essential for moving toward a successful conclusion.

Okinawa and the Alliance

Prior to the reversion anniversary, the Asahi carried out an opinion survey (released on May 12, 1997), sampling views from the nation and Okinawa. Asked about the presence of U.S. bases in Okinawa, 72% of the respondents across the nation as well as in Okinawa wanted a phased reduction, 59% of Okinawans and 38% of all Japanese wanted Okinawa bases relocated elsewhere in Japan. Significantly, 57% of Okinawans and 76% of all Japanese wanted the security treaty with the U.S. maintained. Such results show a conspicuous divergence of opinion between the citizens of Okinawa and those in the rest of Japan about a concrete solution to the problem of military bases in Okinawa. In later similar, the results have not been much different (see the study of public opinion in Okinawa by Yasuhiro Miyagi in the Japan Focus blog at <http://www.japanfocus.org/-David-McNeill/2490>).

Nago voters, however, were also against accepting the Futenma relocation. On December 21, 1997, Nago City held a non-binding referendum on the construction of an offshore heliport envisaged as the replacement for Futenma Air Station. With an overwhelming 82.45% turnout rate, a majority, or 52.85% voted against accepting the facility. When Nago was picked as the best potential location, an immediate reaction was the formation of a vocal anti-heliport group. The heliport, it was argued, would not only have a detrimental effect on the largely unspoiled local environment but it would increase the chances of local residents falling victim to military related incidents. Nago already hosted the Marines' Camp Schwab and the Henoko Ordinance Depot, as well as small portions of both Marine Camp Hansen and the Yaedake Communications Site, and many residents wanted to prevent further incursions. The referendum underscored that sentiment.

Following the Nago referendum, Governor Ota in February 1998 formally came out against the construction of the Futenma replacement facility in the offing of Henoko, betraying Prime Minister Hashimoto. In calling the Prime Minister to tell him that he opposed the project, Ota cited the Nago City referendum, a prefectural assembly resolution also opposing the construction plan, the adverse impact of the project on the environment, and the goal in the Action Program of seeking a prefecture without any bases (Ryukyu Shimpo, February 6, 1998).

The picture indeed looked bleak for the relocation project, but the tide would soon change again. After Nago City's incumbent mayor, Tetsuya Higa, resigned under pressure from protest groups for having accepted the government's replacement plan, Tateo Kishimoto, who backed the plan, fought a successful campaign and won the mayoral election in February 1998. His win (and subsequent reelection) ostensibly paved the way for the heliport project to move forward. Ota himself did not run for reelection that fall.

Unraveling Agreement Under Obuchi

The next phase in the Futenma saga occurred during the tenure of Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, who came into office in July 1998. That November in the Okinawa gubernatorial election, Keiichi Inamine, the candidate supported by the LDP and Okinawa's business community, won. Although he supported the Futenma relocation plan, he set conditions that further complicated implementation. One of his campaign pledges was the concept of a joint military-civilian use airport for the Futenma replacement facility. The original plan for the length of the runway on a removable facility was 1,500 meters, but Inamine proposed an airport with a 2,500-meter runway in order to accommodate civilian aircraft. In order to be consistent with the prefectural government's policy of not allowing any new military base, he set a time limit of 15 years for the U.S. forces' use of the proposed

new airport. In this way, the airport would eventually become the property of Okinawa.

This was a tough condition for the Japanese and U.S. governments to swallow. Obuchi, however, eventually capitulated, with the cabinet adopting a resolution a year later a year later in December 1999 approving the concept of a joint military-commercial airport. The government also took seriously the concept of a 15-year limit on its military use and agreed to discuss it with the U.S. At this point, the original proposal supported by Prime Minister Hashimoto was rendered null and void.

After that there was a scramble by various commercial interests to jockey for favor and possible contracts, particularly over one of the three construction methods--land reclamation, megafloat, and QIP—each of which would bring benefits to different groups of companies. However, the key concept of an eventual "civilian airport" proved unmarketable, according to Moriya, for neither Japan Airlines (JAL) nor All Nippon Airways (ANA) wanted to operate flights that they foresaw as unprofitable. As a result, the proposed airport was then reconfigured as a hub airport for distribution of goods and cargo, but again, reality set in. It was soon realized that Okinawa, particularly the sparsely part of the main island, could never be a match for Narita in the Tokyo area or Chitose in Hokkaido terms of geographical location. In the end, an idea to make this a center for the maintenance of civilian aircraft was suggested, but JAL and ANA said that the service center in Haneda was quite adequate for their needs. The "civilian" part of the much publicized Inamine plan eventually became untenable. As for placing a time limit on the U.S. forces' use of the facility, the U.S. government never budged an inch in its rejection of the notion. It argued that there was no way to predict the security environment in the region in 15 years. Although Okinawa Governor Inamine continued to demand a 15-year limit, the condition became meaningless when that Futenma replacement facility plan was discarded by the Japanese government in 2005.

(For an examination of the role of Prime Minister Obuchi in the Futenma issue, his decision to hold the G-8 summit in Okinawa in 2000, and his approval of large appropriations to stimulate the economy of Okinawa, especially the northern part where Nago is located, see: Robert D. Eldridge, “Okinawa and the Nago heliport problem in the US-Japan relationship,” *Asia-Pacific Review*, May, 2000, pp. 137 — 156.)

Indecision of Okinawa's Leaders

In June 2001, soon after Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi took office in April, the central government and Okinawa Prefecture convened their joint replacement facility panel for the seventh time to discuss the joint military-commercial airport option, eight candidate relocation sites, and three construction methods. By then, there was consensus that the runway would be scaled down to 2000 meters. On the method of construction, the dominant thinking in political and business circles in Okinawa since the end of the Hashimoto administration was in favor of land reclamation. Eventually, reclamation became the only construction method of choice for the candidate site. In the spring of 2002, Nago Mayor Kishimoto made a request to then Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Teijiro Furukawa and Vice Minister Moriya that the new facility be scaled-down even more. At its ninth and final meeting on July 29, the Replacement Facility Council finally chose a distant site in waters off Henoko as the relocation site.

Moriya revealed in his interview that in 2002, he had become doubtful about the Okinawa prefectural government's handling of the Futenma relocation issue. It had taken the prefecture two years and nine months just to draw up the basic plan for the joint military-civilian airport. Although the next step was an environmental impact survey based on the basic plan, it took all of a year and nine months just for the prefecture to start the

procedures for such. Moriya found the prefecture to be elusive and contradictory. Even though the prefectural ordinances stipulated that the Okinawa government was the contracting party for the civilian airport portion, the prefecture kept insisting that it was a national project, so the central government should assume responsibility. When asked to change the relevant prefectural ordinances, officials refused to do so.

The tendency of the governor and local leaders to hesitate to exercise their legal powers in cooperation with the national government and to defer making decision was frustrating to Moriya. But he felt that for the central government to do nothing about the situation would lead to more delays in resolving the Futenma problem. In the end, the government agreed with his assessment and in December 2003, the Defense Agency finally made the decision to take charge of the environmental assessment.

PART TWO: NEGOTIATIONS 2005-2006

Pattern of Opposition

As Kent Calder has pointed out in his insightful book on the politics of U.S. military bases in Japan (*Embattled Garrisons*, Princeton, 2007), U.S. bases in Japan are becoming “embattled garrisons,” crucial to security but besieged by nationalistic forces and grassroots anti-base resentment. While it is ironic that Okinawa, despite its tragic loss of one third of its population during one of the bloodiest battles of the Pacific War, still hosts 74% of the bases for exclusive use of the U.S. forces in Japan, covering roughly 10% of Okinawa’s territory. It is Okinawa’s unfortunate fate to have a geostrategic location making it the ideal choice for the forward deployed U.S. military presence. As a result, “as the heritage of its bitter history, Okinawa has a

clear collective norm of anti-militarism, often emotionally expressed,” concludes Calder (p.166).

This pattern is evident in the long delay to relocate Futenma due to local opposition, even though keeping the “dangerous” base open was clearly not in the best interests of the residents living adjacent to it. But the Henoko offshore plan, which the U.S. and Japanese governments had hailed as resolving the relocation problem, was never to even get started. Blocked by environmental protesters, the project to build a replacement facility for Futenma Air Station off the coast of Henoko in Nago City languished for years until a near tragedy near the Marine base set off new waves of protests in Japan and jolted the U.S. and Japanese governments into action.

Helicopter Crash a Near Tragedy

At around 2:18 PM, on August 13, 2004, a US Marine Corps CH-53 D helicopter suddenly lost control and crashed into the main administration building of Okinawa International University, bursting into flames. The university is in the vicinity of Futenma Air Station in Ginowan City. The crash damaged the building and its environs, and it crippled the functions of the university. Debris from the building and parts of the helicopters were hurled around the crash site and the neighboring residential area. It was a miracle that no civilian was injured and that the three U.S. crew members were not seriously hurt. But the crash was the worst helicopter accident that had ever occurred in Okinawa.

On September 12, 2004, Ginowan City released a resolution protesting the crash and calling for the immediate return of Futenma Air Station. The resolution complained that the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement had been misused when U.S. forces cordoned off the crash site and kept out central and local authorities. The resolution stated:

They shut out even faculty and employees of the university. Such attitudes hindered the on-site investigation by Japan which was necessary to ease anxiety of Ginowan residents and to restore the functions of the university administration. It is an extraordinary situation that the U.S. forces exclusively controlled the crash site and impinged on the sovereignty of Japan, although the crash occurred outside a U.S. military facility

Lieutenant General Robert Blackman, Commander, Marine Corps Bases Japan announced that they halted flights of CH-53 D helicopters, the same model that caused the crash, until the investigation is completed. However amid citizens' strong protest against the crash, demanding cessation of U.S. military flights, US Marine Corps resumed CH-53 D helicopter flights on a quiet Sunday, August 22. It seems that U.S. forces insults the people of Okinawa and shows defiant attitude against us.

The ultimate goal of the 1996 Final Report of Japan-U.S. Special Action Committee on facilities and areas in Okinawa (SACO) was to reduce the burden carried by the people of Okinawa by removing the dangerous and defective air station within five to seven years. The due date for the return of the air station has already passed but the air station still remains in Ginowan City. This crash proved the danger of the air station and urgent necessity of actualization of the return of the air station. Both governments should immediately halt military operations on Futenma Air Station and should make every effort to realize the prompt return of the air station. (http://www.city.ginowan.okinawa.jp/DAT/LIB/WEB/1/00021_00003.pdf)

The *Stars and Stripes* reported on August 25 that daily protests and sit-ins were occurring near the crash site, and that a mass rally of up to 10,000 persons was scheduled for early September. In an article for *Chuo*

Koron (March 2010, pp. 104-111) that generally lambastes the Hatoyama administration for allegedly mishandling the Futenma issue, former JDA Director General Fukushiro Nukaga looks back at the situation in 2005-2006 to relate his role in working out the current plan for a V-shaped runway along the shoreline of Camp Schwab. Noting that the first agreement negotiated during the administration of Prime Minister Hashimoto for a relocation site some 2.2 kilometers off the coast of Henoko had languished eight years, blocked by protest groups, Nukaga stressed that the situation became untenable in the summer of 2004 when a helicopter crashed into the university campus close to Futenma Air Station. Although no civilian was hurt, protests erupted with calls for an immediate closing of the base. According to Nukaga, both the Japanese and American governments reached a common understanding that the process of relocating Futenma must be accelerated.

Henoko Offshore Plan Adrift

Nukaga, who was then chairman of the LDP's Policy Research Council, told Prime Minister Koizumi that it would be best to take a position of actively including the Futenma issue in the realignment of U.S. forces talks that were going on between the two governments. He argued that this would be a good opportunity to change the relocation site to one that would have a high possibility of being implemented. There was impetus, too, from the U.S. side. The Pentagon had for some time been on board regarding the need to speed up the reversion of Futenma, following the visit of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to Okinawa in the fall of 2003. He reportedly was dismayed to find the heavily used base located in the center of a congested downtown residential area, and he ordered that something be done to speed up reversion.

The situation did not allow for progress on building a replacement facility. On Sep. 9, one month after the helicopter crash near Futenma, scaffolds were set up in the waters off Henoko in order for drilling to start as part of the site survey. Suddenly, a group of environmentalists arrived in boats and managed to disrupt operations at the site. The survey was canceled.

According to Nukaga, when the Kantei (Prime Minister's office) ordered the Japan Coast Guard to crackdown on them, it responded, "Since the sea is deep in that area, if you pull the protesters down from the scaffolds, they might die." Both Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda and Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Masahiro Futabashi were reluctant to risk lives, so Prime Minister Koizumi ordered that a plan be considered that would "reconsider the sea-based plan that has entailed protest action by environmentalists." In September, Koizumi, again focusing on the issue, indicated that he was interested in changing the Futenma Replacement following the crash of a Futenma-based CH-53 helicopter in Ginowan City, Okinawa.

DPRI Talks

In their summit meeting in New York (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/meet0409.html>) on September 24, 2004, Koizumi and President Bush agreed to accelerate the resolution of the Futenma issue by incorporating it into the realignment talks, premised on the balancing the need to maintain deterrence and to lessen the security burden on the local communities in Okinawa.

The realignment talks, officially known as the Defense Posture Review Initiative or DPRI talks, began at the end of 2002. They were an ambitious initiative to transform the U.S.-Japan alliance, based on the radically changed security environment of the 21st century following the September

11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America. DPRI talks reached a conclusion finally in 2006 that included agreements on Futenma and the transfer of approximately half of the Marines in Okinawa to Guam. The talks that ranged from the roles and missions of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. forces in Japan to the realignment of U.S. bases in Japan were ultimately successful because of the unique presence of a strong and enormously popular leader in Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi, and his close personal relationship with President Bush.

The talks also were supported by a group of officials on both sides who valued the alliance and were dedicated to sustaining and strengthening it. The process, however, was not as smooth as everyone involved had hoped. Despite rhetoric that the U.S.-Japan alliance had never been better, the DPRI came to the verge of collapse several times over the three years of talks. Each time, it took senior-level political intervention to save it. For both countries, the base realignment process proved to be painful, especially in the case of settling on a Futenma replacement facility. This issue became so divisive -- even within the Japanese government -- that it threatened at crucial times to pull down the entire realignment process that had been carefully and intricately devised.

There are several explanations for the slow progress of DPRI talks, according to Yuki Takumi, a senior research fellow at the Henry Stimson Center:

No significant political figure in Japan has championed the DPRI in the way that Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro did for U.S. force realignment in Okinawa in the mid-1990s. Even Prime Minister Koizumi's interest in this issue has been sporadic at best. Japan also scores poorly on interagency coordination and its attitudes toward the negotiations. The Japan Defense Agency (JDA) often neglected to consult with the Defense Facilities Administration Agency, the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Treasury, and relevant offices in the

Cabinet Affairs Office. The lack of notification to affected local governments slowed progress in the JDA's efforts to convince them to accept the force realignment plan that was agreed between Tokyo and Washington in October 2005. A string of leaks to the Japanese media on the negotiation generated resentment and mistrust among U.S. officials, fueling their frustration. Most importantly, stubbornness on both sides created a sense of "us" vs. "them," often overshadowing the ultimate purpose of the negotiation - to strengthen the bilateral alliance.

http://www.glocom.org/debates/20060502_tatsumi_defense/index.html

From the start of the realignment talks, Tokyo pushed for a reduced U.S. military presence in Okinawa as an indispensable part of the process. The driving force for that initiative was Prime Minister Koizumi. The bottom line was to have the outcomes be seen as benefiting Japan and, in the case of Okinawa, alleviated the security burden in that prefecture. It was agreed in December 2004 during the visit to Japan of Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Richard Lawless to set up two working groups to tackle specific realignment issues, one on the future of Yokota Air Base and the other on the Okinawa bases. For example, the Japanese government wanted to probe the feasibility of turning the large base in the far Tokyo suburbs into a dual-use military and commercial airport, the pet project of Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara. Lawless wanted Yokota instead to be used jointly by the U.S. forces Japan and the Self-Defense Forces, and not by commercial airlines. (Asahi, January 13, 2005) A third working group would study technical problems, mainly the improvement of interoperability between the USFJ and SDF in such areas as intelligence and communications.

Realignment was only one component of the bilateral talks between the two governments. At the February 19, 2005, meeting of the Security Consultative Committee (SCC), commonly known as the "two-plus-two", the

foreign and defense ministers of the U.S. and Japan reached an understanding on a set of “common strategic objectives,” and underscored the need to continue examinations of the roles, missions, and capabilities of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the U.S. Armed Forces in pursuing those objectives. They also decided to accelerate consultations on realignment of the U.S. force structure in Japan and directed their staffs to report expeditiously on the results. The common strategic objectives were written with an eye on deterring armed conflict in the region, given China’s military buildup and North Korea’s nuclear and missile development programs, but they also were designed to meet the new asymmetrical threats, such as international terrorism.

Prior to the SCC, JDA Director General Yoshinori Ohno traveled to Okinawa on January 18, his first visit there since his cabinet appointment. He carried out aerial and local inspections of the waters off Henoko where the government planned to construct the Futenma replacement facility. According to Mainichi (January 19, 2005), although he initially concluded that the current site location was the “only way” to implement the 1996 SACO agreement, he soon began to change his tune when faced with the difficulty of implementing the offshore plan. The Futenma replacement site was again entering a state of fluidity.

Koizumi Becomes Involved

Only days before the SCC met on February 19, Prime Minister Koizumi, being briefed in his office by senior foreign and defense officials on the upcoming two-plus-two meeting, suddenly turned red-faced and angrily shouted: “Do something on Futenma!” (related in Tsuyoshi Sunohara, *Domei henbo* (Alliance Transformed), published by Nihon Keizai Shimbun Shuppansha, 2007). But with no alternate plan then in the works to replace the one formally approved by the Cabinet almost a decade ago, it was

impossible to return to a blank slate, the officials argued, seeking Koizumi's understanding. But he would not budge, responding: "I don't care. The policy of the Koizumi Cabinet in case something does not work is to end it right there." Until that time, Koizumi's interest in the Futenma problem was sporadic and usually low, so his sudden change of heart surprised the two officials. Until his intervention, the Foreign Ministry and Defense Agency were quite prepared to stick to the Henoko offshore plan as the only one that Okinawa had agreed to accept. At that point, Moriya's land-base plan surfaced and was floated in the government.

Actually, the U.S. side was beginning to move, as well. Lawless at the Pentagon began to pursue other options, such as integrating the helicopter function of Futenma into Kadena Air Base, but on this, he ran up against strong opposition from the Air Force. No one on the American side was optimistic that the SACO agreement to relocate Futenma to the offing of Henoko would ever be realized. The U.S., too, was fishing for a new solution to the problem.

Moriya Makes His Move

About the time when U.S. and Japanese working-level officials were hurrying to draft a set of common strategic objectives in time for the SCC meeting in February 2005, Vice Minister Moriya, as the top civilian official in JDA, sprung into action on his own to work out a new Futenma relocation plan. While his proposal for a land-based facility inside Camp Schwab seemed to him to make the best sense, particularly since it harked back to the original SACO agreement in 1996, it ultimately pitted him against the U.S. forces in Okinawa and local officials who had their own plan.

On February, 25, 2005, a meeting took place in the Pentagon between Deputy Under Secretary Richard Lawless, the policymaker who finalized the common strategic objectives between the U.S. and Japan, and then LDP

Security Affairs Research Council Chairman Fukushima Nukaga. This was a defining moment for the two governments (Sunohara, p.166). Nukaga and Lawless agreed that since nine years had already passed since the Futenma relocation agreement and with no progress in sight, the two governments should search for a pragmatic solution. Both felt frustrated at the current impasse and agreed that a more appropriate relocation site must be secured.

Soon after, Moriya's land-based plan emerged, but the DPRI team headed by Lawless felt a strong allergy to the scheme. Moriya's proposal required the live-fire training ground and the facility for the disposal of unexploded munitions to be moved in order to make way for the relocated heliport. However, JDA, in presenting the proposal, never explained that such would be the cost of adopting the new plan.

The U.S. side's initial objection was based on the argument that placing the heliport inside Camp Schwab would mean that the air routes of the helicopters would take them over the homes of local residents. The U.S. feared that the local community would react fiercely to such a plan, so it was rejected. The plan that the U.S. counter-proposed was originally drafted by a local organization, the Northern Division of the Okinawa Prefecture Defense Cooperation Association (Sunohara, p.167). Even the Nago City mayor endorsed the plan, and some Foreign Ministry officials involved in the Futenma issue reportedly were on board. It would have the runway built on reclaimed land in the shoals along the coastline of Camp Schwab. Since the facility would be built in the water relatively far from the Henoko settlement, it was neither expected to be noisy nor dangerous.

Moriya and JDA, however, insisted that the land-based plan was more feasible. The Pentagon, though, was stubborn, reportedly taking the strong view (Sunohara, p.167) that if this was the Japanese government's final proposal, the relocation of Futenma base itself should be cancelled. But Moriya continued to press on, reportedly rebutting: "We can't delay the

Futenma issue any longer. We must at any rate come up with an implementable relocation site inside the base.”

The holdout in the government for implementing the original offshore relocation plan was the Defense Facilities Administrative Agency, which was in charge of U.S. base affairs for the JDA. Sankei reported (April 13) that Director General Ohno actually kept DFAA officials from attending DPRI talks in Hawaii on April 8 because they were reluctant to abandon the offshore option with local governments’ support.

That is not to say there was a shortage of ideas being floated and vetted. For example, there were press reports in April 2005 (Tokyo Shimbun, April 3, 2005, p. 1) that the U.S. and Japanese governments were mulling moving Futenma’s helicopter unit to Iejima, an outer island of Okinawa Prefecture. The notion was to transfer Futenma’s air-control rights to the SDF and make that airfield into a prepositioning base in case of a contingency. Futenma’s air tankers would be moved to the Maritime SDF’s Kanoya Base in Kagoshima Prefecture or else to the Air SDF’s Nyutaburu Base in Miyazaki Prefecture. But the residents of Iejima, hearing of the new development, strongly protested, and the option was dropped as a viable alternative.

Another surprise was the emergence of a Kadena integration plan from the Japanese side, since that option had been vetted and rejected during the original SACO negotiations in 1996. Sankei reported top play on April 13, 2005, that the Japanese government was again considering such a plan, and for a while, it was treated seriously. The idea reportedly was broached by Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda, who summoned senior Foreign Ministry officials and instructed them to look into the Kadena possibility. It may have come to him originally from the Defense Agency. According to Sankei, the government of Prime Minister Koizumi, split over whether to go with the existing relocation plan or pick a new one, was searching frantically for new ideas, hence the Hosoda initiative was seized on. Sankei also

reported that the Koizumi government's approach was to persuade Okinawa to go along with whatever new plan it picked by promising to reduce the U.S. military presence in that prefecture in connection with the bilateral base realignment talks. But officials also cautioned that until a viable alternative plan was set, nothing could be promised as a tradeoff.

Even the U.S. seemed to be waffling, perhaps a prelude for the confusion of plans and counter-plans that were to dominate the news until the fall of 2005. Yomiuri reported (May 2, 2005, top play) that the U.S. during realignment talks was now pushing for a second major runway in Okinawa for heavy-lift aircraft besides the dual ones on Kadena Air Base. The argument went that once Futenma was closed down and only the dual runways at Kadena Air Base remaining, the U.S. forces needed an emergency alternative runway in Okinawa in case Kadena during a contingency was rendered inoperative due to an accident or enemy fire.

In another of its series of scoops on the U.S.-Japan DPRI negotiations, Tokyo Shimbun reported (May 13, 2005, p.1) that Japan has floated the possibility of the U.S. forces redeploying F-15 fighters from Kadena to Guam. This report likely was linked to the incipient Kadena integration proposal, for the transfers would make room for the helicopters at Futenma to be moved over to Kadena

Pressure Builds to Reduce U.S. Military Presence in Okinawa

Still supporting the Henoko-offshore plan, Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine, too, made it clear that he was adamantly against the notion of moving Futenma's functions to other bases in the prefecture. He also began to demand that there be an actual reduction of the U.S. military presence in Okinawa and not just a relocation of Marines to another part of the prefecture. He made this pitch initially to U.S. officials during a March 2005 trip to Washington. On April 5, (Yomiuri, April 6, 2005, p.4) he repeated the

request to JDA Director General Ohno in a meeting in Tokyo, pressing him to add the alleviating of the security burden of Okinawa into the ongoing force realignment talks. He warned Ohno that expectations of such among the Okinawans were high and that there would be a backlash if their hopes were dashed.

As a result of Japanese government pressure, the U.S. government sent a fact-finding team to Okinawa in early May (Yomiuri, April 15, 2005, p.1). The team was charged with preparing a report on the base-burden issue and local requests, and then to submit it with recommendations to the White House and the Pentagon by mid-May. The report would be used in determining the feasibility of relocating Marines out of Okinawa to U.S. territory or the mainland.

The Okinawans were already anticipating such a move. OPAC, the Okinawa Peace Assistance Center (www.opac.or.jp), which is a Naha City-based think-tank issued in late April (Tokyo Shimbun, April 24, 2005) a prescient report on U.S. global force transformation and the reduction and realignment of U.S. bases in Okinawa. The organization predicted the likelihood of the Pentagon moving up to 7,800 Marines from the prefecture in connection with the closure of Futenma Air Station. It expected that the 31st MEU, which operates the helicopters at Futenma, would remain in Okinawa.

However, the Pentagon in early May was still playing hardball with the Japanese side. In a meeting on May 4 in Washington with a group of LDP representatives led by Nukaga, Deputy Under Secretary for Defense Lawless was negative about moving U.S. troops out of Japan as part of the realignment, citing North Korea's nuclear ambitions and the need for maintaining a deterrence capability in Japan. Lawless was sympathetic about alleviating the burden on communities of hosting bases, but he saw such possibilities as the joint use of bases by the USFJ and SDF as a better option than reducing U.S. forces in Japan.

Indeed, just when Japan was pushing for a reduction of the U.S. military presence, including Okinawa, during realignment talks, North Korea was again rattling its sabers, testing a nuclear device in May 2005 -- hardly the time to talk about moving troops out of Japan. Adding to the Pentagon's case, the Overseas Basing Commission in a report to the U.S. Congress stated that keeping current force levels in the East Asia region was important due to growing tensions with North Korea over nuclear and missile programs and with China over the Taiwan Strait (Tokyo Shimbun, May 12, 2005, p.2).

Okinawa Reacts – Again

At the same time, Okinawa was starting to react sharply to the stream of reports not only the apparent musical-chairs game of base relocations and alignments being played in DPRI talks but also to the possibility that base functions in Okinawa might actually be strengthened in the end. Tokyo Shimbun reported (May 16, 2005, p.23) that 24,000 Okinawan residents formed a protest ring around Futenma Air Station in a rally on May 15 on the thirty-third anniversary of the reversion of Okinawa and to commemorate the 2004 crash of a helicopter into the university campus near the base. The human chain reportedly stretched 11 kilometers long. Ginowan Mayor Yoichi Iha joined the rally to tell the crowd: "I want the base transferred overseas, because it has now become impossible to relocate it to Henoko."

Interestingly, Katsuya Okada, who then headed the opposition Democratic Party of Japan, joined the rally on May 15 to oppose the presence of military bases in Okinawa (Asahi, May 17, 2005, p.4). His unprecedented move was most likely less motivated by ideology than by the political desire to drum up votes for the DPJ in Okinawa. The party then had no elected lawmakers from that prefecture. His remarks simply focused on the need to focus on the need to speed up the return of Futenma.

The Kadena Option – Again

Prime Minister Koizumi also continued to be actively engaged behind the scenes during the DPRI talks. Tokyo Shimbun reported (May 20, 2005, p. 2) that in late May, he had sought the help of senior defense specialists in the LDP to help work out a proposal on the modality of U.S. bases in Japan, including Futenma. Nukaga, who headed the party's panel of U.S. security and base-alignment issues, was put in charge. He indicated at the possibility of the party being able to clear the way with local communities for the various proposed realignments coming, saying, "We would like to say what the government cannot say." Fumio Kyuma, another defense policy specialist who then headed the party's General Council, also made the case for maintaining the status quo in the U.S. military presence, ruling out for strategic reasons the relocation of Futenma outside Okinawa prefecture (Mainichi, May 24, 2005, p. 5). The party was to continue its active role until Nukaga formally took charge in the fall as defense agency chief.

In June, the Kadena option formally reappeared as the apparent plan of choice in the DPRI talks. Mainichi (June 2, top play) revealed that U.S. and Japanese negotiators had agreed to withdraw the long-stalled offshore relocation plan at Henoko and to consider the possibility of transferring the helicopter unit to Kadena, an option that was considered during the 1996 SACO talks and then rejected. "Redeployment there has now become certain," trumpeted the daily, not realizing that such a possibility was far from reality, given the past history of such a plan. The daily correctly reported, though, that carrier-based jets stationed at Atsugi Air Base in Kanagawa Prefecture would be transferred to Iwakuni as part of the base realignment agreement. Iwakuni was then to be the location for air tankers to be transferred from Futenma, based on the original SACO plan.

Despite JDA's push for a new plan to relocate Futenma's heliport function to Kadena Air Base, DFAA Director General Shoei Yamanaka continued to take a strong stance opposing the notion, arguing that the Kadena integration proposal would never be able to gain the understanding of local communities around the base which were already complaining about noise and danger from the Air Force jets (Asahi, evening edition, July 30, 2005, p.3). Ultimately, Yamanaka was correct in his assessment, that agency having cultivated close contacts with local communities in Okinawa.

High-Level Effort to Kick Start a Stalled Process

Sensing a need to add further impetus to the DPRI process, JDA chief Ohno met Defense Secretary Rumsfeld at a hotel in Singapore, where both were attending a conference. In agreeing to speed up talks on USFJ realignment, the two set a mid-July deadline for readying a report on the roles and missions of the U.S. forces and the SDF (Mainichi, June 5, 2005, top play). The two, it has recently been learned, did talk specifics about Futenma, effectively kicking up the resolution of that vexing issue from the working-level to the cabinet level in the negotiations. Ryukyu Shimpo reported on November 4, 2009, that the U.S. in June 2005 was considering three alternative sites for Futenma: 1) a land-based site on Camp Schwab; 2) the Kadena ammunition depot; and 3) an auxiliary airfield at Yomitan. The Koizumi government as of April 2005 was mulling five plans: 1) Kadena integration; 2) joint use of Kadena and Futenma; 3) an alternate facility on the remote island of Iejima; 4) a land-based runway at Camp Schwab, and 5) keeping the original plan.

The problem that could not be resolved by the defense chiefs, however, was Japan's growing insistence, as transmitted by Ohno, that the level of U.S. troops in Okinawa must be reduced as part of the realignment package.

Rumsfeld was elusive, citing the need for the U.S. to give priority to maintaining a credible deterrent capability.

Ohno himself was under the gun from Koizumi around that time. The Prime Minister, according to Mainichi (p.2, June 14, 2005), called in Ohno on the evening of June 13 and instructed him to work on the U.S. during realignment talks to reduce the burden on Okinawa and other base-hosting areas. JDA was to work with the Foreign Ministry to come up with constructive suggestions. Then, on June 20, Ohno met with U.S. Marine Commander in Japan Robert Blackman at the Defense Agency to make his pitch for reducing Okinawa's burden of hosting U.S. bases as part of the USFJ realignment process. His effort does not seem to have elicited a positive response.

Given the complexity of the myriad of DPRI issues being negotiated in the summer of 2005, the possibility of a breakthrough on Okinawa base issues seemed remote. In an editorial commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa, Yomiuri (June 23, 2005, p.4) was pessimistic that the "heavy U.S. military footprint" in Okinawa would soon be alleviated and that the resolution of the Futenma relocation issue would come soon. As seen in the excerpts below, there seemed to be no way out:

Sixty years ago today, the Battle of Okinawa ended. Prime Minister Koizumi will attend a memorial service to be held in the city of Itoman for all the war dead in Okinawa, where he will clarify his resolve to alleviate the burden of U.S. military bases on Okinawa. However, the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture has yet to be returned to local hands, and there has been little progress in the realignment and reduction of other U.S. military bases on the island prefecture along with the U.S. military's ongoing global transformation. Okinawa—the only Pacific War theater in Japan of ground battles involving local residents—is still unable to rid itself of its war memories.

Ahead of his attendance at the memorial service, Koizumi came out of himself when he answered questions from reporters yesterday at his office. "It's been 60 years [since the Battle of Okinawa ended], and I will mourn for the many victims who lie in the shadow of peace," Koizumi said. "I feel that Japan will have to remain a peaceful nation (so as not to repeat a tragedy like the Battle of Okinawa)," he added.

However, base realignment and reduction are straying off course, as seen in the case of Futenma airfield. ...Futenma has become a symbol of U.S. military base issues in Okinawa. In 1995, Okinawa-based U.S. servicemen raped a local schoolgirl. This incident triggered local cries for base reversion. In 1996, the Japanese and U.S. governments decided to return the site of Futenma airfield into local hands. In December that year, the Japan-U.S. Special Action Committee on Okinawa, or SACO for short, released a final report on the issue of realigning, consolidating, and reducing the U.S. military bases on Okinawa. At the time, the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed to build a sea-based alternate facility in waters off the Henoko district of the northern coastal city of Nago to take over the heliport functions of Futenma airfield.

Nine years later, however, Futenma airfield has yet to be returned. The airfield is still in the U.S. military's use. Last November, a boring survey started at long last for the planned installation of a sea-based facility. However, it encountered local opposition. Consequently, the offshore geological survey has seen no progress.

Futenma airfield is on 90-percent private land. There are more than 2,800 landowners, in addition to antiwar landowners refusing to receive land rents from the government. The annual payment of rents from the state coffers to these landowners totals 6.4 billion yen. The municipal government of Ginowan city has worked out a blueprint to

use the airfield after its site is vacated and returned. Yet, its plan for Futenma exploitation remains infeasible.

With Futenma relocation becoming deadlocked, Tokyo and Washington sought to review their plan. A number of ideas were floated from within the Japanese and U.S. governments. One idea is to integrate Futenma's heliport functions into the U.S. Air Force's Kadena base in the prefecture. Another floated idea is to break up and disperse the airfield's functions to several other bases, including those on Japan's mainland. However, all those ideas are no more than wild cards. Japan and the United States have now bogged down in their coordination for the return of Futenma.

Harsh Views Toward U.S. Military Presence

In connection with the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa, Mainichi and Ryukyu Shimpo carried out a joint opinion survey in Okinawa and across the nation on the U.S. military presence in Okinawa (Mainichi, June 22, 2005, top play). The joint survey found 70% of Okinawans and 45% of all Japanese (including Okinawa) saw the U.S. military presence in Okinawa as “unnecessary.” Only 30% of the residents of Okinawa wanted the U.S. military to continue to stay in their prefecture. The gap between mainland Japan and Okinawa was revealed to be wide; with 55% of all Japanese saying they did not want U.S. base relocation to their communities.

Asked about the lack of progress in relocating Futenma and what should be done about it, the general population in Japan was widely split, with 17% favoring relocation to the waters off Henoko as planned, 12% going along with another site in Okinawa, 13% preferring a site outside of Okinawa, and 18% opting for moving the base outside of Japan. Another 23%, the most preferred choice, wanted Futenma closed without relocation.

Okinawa residents not surprisingly were more definite in their answers. The most favored option with 33% of Okinawans was to close Futenma without relocation. Another 32% wanted the base moved overseas, while 27% would have it relocated elsewhere in Japan. Only 7% approved its relocation to the original site off Henoko, and another 7% would accept another site in Okinawa.

Koizumi Caught Between U.S. Rock and an Okinawa Hard Place

Most likely aware that such opinions dominated thinking in Okinawa, Prime Minister Koizumi gingerly attended the memorial ceremony for the Battle of Okinawa on June 23, 2005. He focused his main remarks on paying tribute to the children who had lost their lives during the 1944 evacuation from the island. The ship Tsushima Maru was carrying school children to mainland Japan when it was hit by a torpedo fired by a U.S. submarine. A total of 1,484 people died, including 738 children. Koizumi limited his remarks that day at the ceremony only to the possibility of U.S. bases in Okinawa being relocated to mainland Japan to reduce Okinawa's burden. He avoided the subject of Futenma.

Koizumi was also aware the ongoing DPRI negotiations had entered a sensitive phase, in which the two sides were mulling the possibility of integrating the helicopter unit of Futenma into Kadena as the replacement site for offshore plan at Henoko. He also realized that he needed to balance somehow Okinawan wishes to reduce the presence of U.S. troops by dispersing them elsewhere and the strong U.S. desire to maintain the status quo deterrence force in Okinawa.

DPJ's "Okinawa Vision"

Meanwhile, the largest opposition party was trying to gain political support in Okinawa by promising in its platform what it felt the residents wanted. On June 21, 2005, the Democratic Party of Japan reissued its August 2002 "Okinawa Vision" that included a call for the relocation of Futenma Air Station outside of Okinawa or eventually outside of Japan – a campaign promise that reappeared in the party's successful strategy to win the Lower House election in August 2009. The original 2002 Okinawa Vision, however, had simply stated that the party would "look into every possible option" to relocate Futenma. The DPJ's plan for Okinawa should it become the ruling party would also include a large development package and the building of a new civilian-use runway at Naha International Airport in the part that is now used jointly by military and civilian aircraft. (The 2008 and latest version of the DPJ's Okinawa Vision is fairly similar to the 2005 one and can be read at <http://www.dpj.or.jp/english/news/080714/01.html>). There is no evidence that the DPJ ever understood the complexity of the relationship of Okinawa to the central government in the run-up to the realignment agreement. The party was only trying to gain votes for the next election for its candidates.

Long, Hot Summer of Okinawan Discontent

Japanese press reports on U.S.-Japan negotiations all that summer of 2005 revealed the intensity as well as the confrontations between the two governments in laying out realignment plans for the U.S. bases in Japan, including Okinawa, Yomiuri (June 30, 2005, top play) revealed that the U.S. was balking at removing combat marines from Okinawa in view of possible contingency scenarios in the region, particularly a Taiwan Strait crisis. In such a contingency, the U.S. argued, the Marines would be organized into a

Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF), which could swing troops to Taiwan in a day or two. In response, Japanese negotiators asked the U.S. to scale back the Marines' rear echelon and other non-combat units. At the time, 18,000 Marines were officially stationed in Okinawa, many of whom being combat troops, but approximately 3,000 of those troops had been transferred to duties in Iraq. Japan wanted to the realignment process to make a serious dent in that overall number by transferring thousands to facilities outside Japan.

Meanwhile, the situation in Okinawa became volatile in July, when a U.S. serviceman stationed in the prefecture was arrested for sexually molesting a schoolgirl. With memories of the 1995 gang rape still vivid, many Okinawans responded emotionally with protests and demonstrations. In a letter of protest to Kadena Air Base (reported in Asahi, July 5, 2005, p.38), DFAA warned that the furor was spreading across the prefecture and that unless measures were taken to prevent a reoccurrence, USFJ realignment talks could be derailed.

At the same time, Okinawa International University, the site of the crash of a heavy-lift Marine helicopter from Futenma in August 2004, revealed a plan to preserve the wall of the building of the crash site as a reminder of the danger of the adjacent base (Asahi, evening edition, July 4, 2005, p.4). And on July 20, according to the announcement of its organizer, some 9,500 demonstrators, including Governor Inamine, gathered outside Camp Hansen to protest live-fire exercise at a newly constructed facility close to a residential area, another constant source of friction with local communities in Okinawa (Asahi, July 20, 2005). Okinawa was not in a mood to take no for an answer to its demand for a reduced U.S. military presence.

Seeking a breakthrough in the stalled realignment talks, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Richard Lawless met on August 18 with two influential defense policy specialists, LDP Executive Council Fumio Kyuma and former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki (Nikkei, August 19, 2005,

p.2: Tokyo, August 19, 2005). The three agreed on the need to settle the remaining realignment issues, including Futenma relocation, later in the year after the fall national election.

Prime Minister Koizumi, faced with internal party turmoil over his postal privatization plan, dissolved the House of Representatives on August 8 and called for a snap election on September 11. The election handed a landslide victory to Koizumi's LDP, with the party winning 296 seats, the largest share in postwar politics. With its coalition partner, New Komeito, the ruling parties then commanded a two-thirds majority in the lower house. The apparent calculation was that assuming an election victory, the government then would then have the political clout to be able to push for an early and decisive resolution of the base issue.

Flash Forward: Mikio Shimoji

One candidate from Okinawa, Mikio Shimoji, a former LDP member who was running as an independent from District 1, also won a seat in the September election. He had lost his seat in the 2003 election. As reported in Sankei (August 19, 2005, p.2), Shimoji was also beginning a concerted effort - that continues today -- to become a major channel or “pipe” to Tokyo for Okinawa on base issues. He cited in his campaign the need for Okinawa to constantly “send messages” to the central government, singling out the USFJ realignment talks and the Futenma issue. He noted that the even after nine years, Futenma remained open, its relocation plan moribund. He proposed dropping the Henoko offshore plan and integrating Futenma’s helicopter function into Kadena Air Base.

Last fall, trying to be helpful, he inserted himself into the Hatoyama coalition government’s efforts to come up with alternative solutions. Shimoji, now a Lower House member of the splinter New Party Japan, which is part

of the DPJ's ruling coalition, continues his advocacy role. He has formally proposed two possible solutions to the Futenma problem: either a Camp Schwab land-based plan or the Kadena integration plan that he had earlier championed.

Gridlock Over Site Locations in September 2005

The standoff over the Futenma question that had continued all summer only seemed to grow worse as fall approached. On September 19, 2005, when JDA Director General Ohno, after consulting with Moriya, held a secret meeting with Lawless, then visiting Japan (Sunohara, p.167). He floated several plans then being considered, but all were versions of the land-based plan. In response, Lawless counter-proposed a scaled-down version of the shoals plan, reducing the heliport runway to 1,500 meters. The meeting ended with JDA and the Pentagon continuing to be at odds over the location and design. The situation was reflected in contradictory reports in the press, with Yomiuri claiming (September 14, 2005, top play) that coordination in the talks was heading toward selecting a land-based plan at Camp Schwab, and Tokyo Shimbun (September 14, 2005) noting that since the Henoko offshore plan was dead, JDA had revealed that there still was no bright prospects for selecting a new site. Both dailies agreed, however, that most of the other elements in the talks, such as the joint use of Yokota Air Base and the shift of the U.S. Army's I Corps from the U.S. to Camp Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture were on track for finalization in October.

On the table at this time for both governments to consider were four proposals for the Futenma replacement facility:

- The original Henoko-offing plan, based on the 1996 SACO agreement, which was scheduled for joint military-civilian use (Runway 2,500 meters long, 730 meters long);

- A scaled-down Henoko plan, also known as the shoals plan or the reef plan, that would only be a military heliport (Length 1,500 meters, width 500 meters);
- Camp Schwab land-based plan (Runway within the base 1,300 – 1,500 meters long);
- Kadena integration plan, under which a heliport for the Marines would be built inside that Air Force base.

Although the U.S. side did not formally reject the original Henoko offshore plan, by mid-September it was pretty much dead, replaced essentially by the shoals plan which called for the replacement facility to be constructed in three meters of reclaimed land near the shore. There seems to have been a push in mid-September (Sankei, September 16) for a 3,000-meter runway, longer than Futenma's 2,800-meter runway to be used jointly with the SDF. This scheme, apparently backed by Defense Director General Ohno (Asahi, September 21, 2005), was soon dropped in favor of the scaled-down plan for a runway to be used only by the U.S. forces.

The Kadena option also was eventually dropped, mainly due to the environmental factor: local communities simply would not put up with more aircraft noise and additional danger. Those same factors – noise and danger - - soon sealed the fate of the Camp Schwab land-based plan. Lawless met with Ohno on September 19 to specifically reject that option (Asahi, September 24, 2005, p.1). He explained that: 1) local understanding for the plan could not be obtained; 2) the proposal for such a construction project did not include alternate relocation sites for the displaced live-fire training and unexploded-shell disposal facilities; and 3) the proposed small runway would impose severe limitations on the Marines capabilities. A senior U.S. official speaking to Asahi (*ibid*) during the Lawless visit, stressed that the U.S. hoped to see a satisfactory resolution of the site problem by the time President Bush visited Japan in November, timed to the APEC meeting in South Korea. The official

warned that if the site could not be formally fixed and accepted, Futenma would stay open as is. The U.S. side apparently was willing to play hardball in order to reach a resolution in favor of its choice, a site in the shallows near the shore of Camp Schwab.

Meanwhile, around the time that the U.S. was rejecting the Camp Schwab land-based proposal in September, force transformation talks, too, had reached a deadlock. The U.S. reportedly (Asahi, September 24, 2005, p.2) was strongly dissatisfied with Japan's handling of the relocation issue and with its reluctance on the roles and missions side to be specific about how far the government was willing to let the SDF take over some of the USFJ roles. With burden-sharing then deadlocked, U.S. negotiators reportedly complained that Japan was solely interested in reducing the burden and not letting the SDF pick up the slack from the U.S. forces.

Koizumi After Election Victory Piles on Pressure

With the LDP's massive election victory in mid-September, however, momentum on the base realignment issues finally began to build. Meeting with several relevant members of his cabinet on September 23, Prime Minister Koizumi ordered the ministers to speed up coordination with the U.S. on the realignment front and nail down the replacement site for Futenma. With the postal privatization problem finally on its way to resolution, Koizumi was finally able to devote his fixed attention to the USFJ realignment process.

With news of the tentative selection of a new site in the reef off Henoko to be the Futenma replacement facility, Nago City Mayor Tateo Kishimoto revealed (Yomiuri, September 20, 2005) his intention to accept, if proposed, the notion of building a reef-based military facility in the shallows off the Henoko district of his city. Although he was concerned about the noise level, Kishimoto said that he otherwise had no problem with the proposed plan. He

added, however, his wish to have the runway scaled-back so that no large aircraft could use it. Kishimoto a week later (Yomiuri, September 27, 2005, p.4) told the press that he had accepted the new reef-based relocation plan, but that he would only approve of a downsized option if the runway were built on reclaimed land. If the government refused to build the heliport on reclaimed land, he would ask that Futenma base then be moved out of Okinawa.

Governor and Nago Mayor At odds, While Environmentalists Protest

Mayor Kishimoto's decision to conditionally accept the shoals plan immediately pitted Nago City against Okinawa Prefecture. Governor Inamine continued to hang on to the offshore plan, as well as to his goal of turning the 2,500-meter facility into a joint military-civilian airport, and he gave indications that he would oppose the scaled-down version in the shoals off Henoko. If that option were tossed aside, Inamine said he would ask that Futenma be removed from Okinawa. At this juncture, one daily, the Mainichi, was moved to comment (September 25, 2005, p.3) that in each step along the way, what it noticed was the unhelpful conduct of local officials, who not only reverse their stances repeatedly, approving this or rejecting that. The newspaper was frustrated by local politics continuing to change the goal post.

Sankei (October 2, 2005) analyzed the situation in a similar way. As relocation talks reached an impasse over the optimum plan, relations between Okinawa Prefecture and the central government became distant. Tokyo seemed to be misreading local opinion and being constantly surprised when it changed or was different than expected. The daily noted that the politicians like Prime Minister Obuchi and Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama who used to support Okinawa issues in the past and had open channels to local leaders were now dead. There was no influential politician

working behind the scenes anymore to intermediate between Tokyo and Okinawa. Another factor was the favored choice of JDA, the Camp Schwab inland plan, disgruntled local interests who had counted on landing lucrative construction projects with the original offshore plan. Another factor was a constant worry about safety and flight routes which the government's Camp Schwab plan did not sufficiently address. Sankei was critical especially of Governor Inamine for not trying to break the stalemate in the talks. He was accused of only being interested in his pet project of a joint military-civilian offshore airport with a 15-year limit on the facility's use by the Marines.

Local governments were not the only obstacles to be surmounted whenever relocation plans were floated. The same environmental groups that had blocked the Henoko offshore plan for years were prepared to do the same with the Henoko shoals plan being proposed. The groups protested that similar to the previous offshore relocation plan, the environment in local waters would be destroyed and the endangered species of dugongs which inhabit the area would still be threatened even with the runway closer to shore.

Negotiations Heat Up As October Deadline Approaches

Sparks flew in Washington in late September when working-level negotiators from the U.S. and Japan met to iron out remaining differences on base realignment. North American Bureau Deputy Director General Kazuyoshi Umemoto and Defense Policy Bureau Deputy Director General Chisato Yamauchi attended from the Foreign Ministry and JDA, respectively. Lawless led the U.S. delegation. The talks immediately deadlocked and then broke down, not only on Futenma but on other base realignment issues, as well. For example, the U.S. side was irritated that the Government of Japan had yet to coordinate with local governments such key moves as the new U.S. Army command coming to Camp Zama and the transference of carrier-based

jet fighters from Atsugi to Iwakuni base in Yamaguchi. There was concern in Washington that an interim report planned for October would never be readied in time. There was an expectation that only the intervention of Prime Minister Koizumi could force speedy resolutions of the remaining issues (Yomiuri, September 29, 2005, p.4; Sankei, September 30, 2005, top play).

With Defense Secretary Rumsfeld then scheduled to visit Japan in October, the game plan, according to Sankei, was for him to bypass a meeting with the seemingly ineffectual JDA chief Ohno and go straight to the Prime Minister to express his dissatisfaction with the way talks had been going and urge him to reset negotiation stances in order to reach early settlements. In the end, however, Rumsfeld, sensing that the Futenma nut was still too hard to crack, put off his trip to Japan in October but went on to visit China and South Korea as planned (Asahi, October 6, 2005, p.1) Sankei headlined on October 7: “Cancelled Rumsfeld visit clouds alliance; Prime Minister Koizumi dumps Futenma issue on laps of defense and foreign ministers; Lawless sounded off, too, in late September.”

Washington instead decided to continue to take a hardline stance, trying to force Tokyo to sign an agreement in its favor. According to *Ryukyu Shimpo* (October 7, 2005, top play), the U.S. was pressing Japan to cooperate on the reef-based plan by warning that otherwise, Futenma would stay open as is. Ambassador to the U.S. Ryozi Kato relayed that message to the press. On October 7, Nikkei reported almost incredulously that although the Japanese government was placing priority on achieving an agreement on Futenma in time for the interim report that month and a SSC two-plus-two meeting on October 29, it was still insisting on the Schwab inland plan. The daily noted that Futenma was the only part of the realignment process that was holding back the signing of an agreement, the other issues having been ironed out. *Ryukyu Shimpo* reported (*ibid*) disarray in Tokyo over this issue, with inland-plan advocate JDA pitted against the Foreign Ministry, which supported the shoals option.

Suddenly, with a Nikkei scoop on October 10, 2005, there was news that an agreement was finally in the works. The newspapers immediately tried to outdo each other to ferret out the details as bits and pieces leaked out – never mind that some of the pieces did not fit into the overall puzzle yet. Nikkei reported on October 10, 2005, that the U.S. and Japanese governments were moving closer to an agreement on Okinawa. The U.S. Marine Corps' III Marine Expeditionary Force at Camp Courtney (Uruma City) would be moved to Guam. The original plan was to only move several hundred III MEF headquarters personnel out, but now the idea was to add thousands more Marines to the plan. In another new development, a plan emerged to transfer some of the F-15s at Kadena Air Base outside of Okinawa, most likely to Air SDF bases in Kyushu and Hokkaido. Kadena reportedly handled approximately 70,000 takeoffs and landings a year, about half of which are by F-15s, so removing a substantial number would lessen the noise impact on the local community. About the same time, Mainichi (October 9) and Sankei (October 10) were reporting that JDA had withdrawn its land-based proposal. But the Agency was not willing to accept the U.S.-backed shoal plan at Henoko. Since the shoal plan (also called the reef plan) originally came from Okinawa itself, a planning group -- Northern Branch of the Okinawa Defense Cooperation Committee -- connected to local business interests, the U.S. reportedly believed there was a high possibility it would be smoothly implemented. JDA believed any sea-based plan would end up in the same deadlock because of the environmental factor: coral destruction and the loss of a mating ground for dugongs. Protestors again would halt the project. The search for a semi-land based plan less intrusive on the environment was thus underway. A coastal plan emerged.

Japanese and U.S. negotiators became increasingly heated in the final phase of their realignment talks, hung up over whether to build a sea-based facility or a semi-land-based replacement to take over the heliport functions

of Futenma airfield. The U.S. side insisted on installing a sea-based heliport in shallow waters off Henoko so as not to affect training exercises. The Japanese side was willing to make minor compromises but would not give up on its coastal plan to build a Futenma replacement that would be mainly ground-based.

In the end, the U.S. government came up with a compromise plan to build a partially ground-based heliport. The gap between the Japanese and U.S. plans was only 200 meters. At the last stage, the U.S. side gave up and accepted the 200 meters difference.

Asahi, in an investigative article in the November 16 edition, revealed how a deal was finally clinched between the U.S. and Japan that resolved the remaining realignment issues of the interim report. On October 26, Defense Agency Director General Ohno received a phone call from Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Lawless, who was visiting Japan for realignment talks. "If you're sure it's possible, we will accept the Defense Agency plan," Lawless told the defense chief. With that call, the Japanese and US governments decided to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in the city of Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture, to Cape Henoko in the island prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago. Lawless was then at the New Sanno Hotel in Minami-Azabu, Tokyo. After hanging up, Lawless reportedly told Japanese and US officials waiting in another room, "The game is over." In the eyes of an official on the Japanese side, it was like a "battle" to negotiate with the US side over Futenma relocation. But for the U.S. side, this official felt it was but a "game," according to Asahi.

The Japanese government had played its strongest card, the environment, according to Sunohara (pp. 181-188). According to Asahi (ibid), the U.S. side in agreeing to reduce the presence of U.S. Marines on Okinawa reportedly received in exchange the Japanese side's reluctant acceptance of the transfer of U.S. Army headquarters from the U.S. to Camp Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture.

Moriya Explains His Proposed Solution

In his interview for *Chuo Koron* (January 2010), Moriya described his activities behind the scene leading up to the October agreement. The predicament he faced can be seen in the following excerpts:

-- The Defense Agency proposed relocation to the training ground of Camp Schwab in the midst of the DPRI (Defense Policy Review Initiative) talks. Why was that?

Moriya: The reasons why we insisted on relocation to the Camp Schwab training ground were: (1) there would be no new base created; (2) protesters could be removed safely; (3) no land reclamation opposed by the environmentalists was required; and (4) local leaders did not have to take responsibility... After the Sobe Communications Site was returned and its functions integrated with Camp Hansen, there were no protests, because this was within an existing military base. Trespassing into a military base is prohibited by law, and violators are subject to prosecution. We thought that it would be possible to stop the protest activities if construction work took place inside Camp Schwab as the relocation site.

On the environmental issue, since the administration of Governor Ota, environmental awareness grew among the residents of Okinawa. But still, some people remained obsessed with reclamation based on consideration for business interests. Otherwise, there would be no benefit for Okinawa in accepting the relocation. However, we need to think of why the construction of the new Ishigaki airport [elsewhere in Okinawa] has been deadlocked for the past 20 years. Protection of the coral reefs has become a major ecological issue. That's why I thought a site in the sea area would never do. Yet, Okinawans were telling us to build the facility in the sea. Their reasoning was the same as that of the contractors, namely, that the local community has given its okay.

Lastly, with regard to (4), an Okinawan leader once told me: "I did not become a local leader to serve the Ministry of Defense (MOD) or national security. Why should I take my political career on resolving the base issues?" That was the background to the whole issue. When local leaders on the mainland were asked to accept the relocation of live-ammunition-firing exercises across Prefectural Highway 104 in Okinawa, they said the same thing. The local leaders never wished to be embroiled in contentious base issues.

During Prime Minister Hashimoto's first visit to Okinawa, local leaders asked the Japanese and U.S. governments not to resolve base issues in Okinawa by going over their heads. Prime Minister Hashimoto promised not to do so. However, in reality, Okinawan leaders refused to cooperate no matter how thoroughly the government explained the plans to them..

My proposal for relocation to the Camp Schwab training ground would indeed restrict U.S. military operations. The total area of the training ground is 7,000 hectares, while the replacement facility for the 480-hectare Futenma base would be much smaller at 135 hectares. The U.S. side argued that even so, if helicopters flew over the training ground, this would affect troop exercises on the ground.

On the other hand, there was a newly built barracks for the ground troops at the Henoko cape inside Camp Schwab. It had been funded by host nation support funds. Demolition of that structure [to make way for the heliport] would be costly. However, the U.S. forces accepted that concept in the end and agreed to demolish the building. Such was the so-called "Camp Schwab barracks plan."

-- At first, the U.S. side opposed both the "Schwab training ground plan" and "Schwab barracks plan" drawn up by the Defense Agency.

Moriya: After the Defense Agency proposed these two land-based relocation plans, contractors in Nago took the lead in proposing a "land

reclamation plan." This came to be known as the "shoal plan," which came about by discarding the "civilian" portion of the earlier plan to build a joint military-civilian airport on the shoals. There is no doubt that behind this idea was the desire to benefit the local economy with land reclamation work. Both the Foreign Ministry and the Cabinet Office took the position: "If the local community says okay, we don't understand why you are opposing it." Most importantly, since the plan appeared to be acceptable to the local community, the U.S. drew up what it called the "Nago lite plan." It was based on the shoal plan and seen as meeting the Marines' requirements. The U.S. presented this proposal as its own. That is why the U.S. was skeptical about JDA's land-based proposal.

Then Director General Yoshinori Ohno of the Defense Agency worked extremely hard in October 2005 to reach an agreement with the U.S. on the "Camp Schwab barracks (L-shaped runway) plan," which would minimize the impact on the beautiful sea off Henoko. He discussed this plan unofficially in advance so that the governor and the mayor would not later complain that the national government negotiated with the U.S. over their heads. At that time, the dominant view in the Foreign Ministry, Cabinet Office, and even mass media was that the Defense Agency would end up accepting the U.S. proposal, so when a compromise was reached to accept the Schwab barracks plan, it surprised many people.

SCC Seal of Approval on New Site for FRF

With agreement on Futenma replacement facility finally locked in, the SCC met again on October 29, 2005, to finalize the decision-making process initialized in its February meeting (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/scc/doc0510.htm>). The Council, attended by Secretary of

State Rice, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, Foreign Minister Machimura, and Minister of State for Defense Ohno reaffirmed the shared view of the security environment, including the surfacing of new asymmetrical threats, and presented recommendations for new roles and missions and capabilities of the U.S. forces in Japan and the Self-Defense Forces. At the same time, the SCC approved recommendations for base realignments “to enhance the alliance’s capability to meet new threats and diverse contingencies and, as a whole, will reduce the burdens on local communities [hosting U.S. bases], thereby strengthening security and ensuring the alliance remains the anchor of regional stability.” The Ministers also reaffirmed that “the U.S. will maintain forward-deployed forces, and augment them as needed, for the defense of Japan and to respond to situations in areas surrounding Japan.”

Among the realignment recommendations was, of course, Futenma. The text read:

Both sides will locate the FRF in an "L"-shaped configuration that combines the shoreline areas of Camp Schwab and adjacent water areas of Oura Bay. The runway portion of the facility will cross Henoko-saki, extending from Oura Bay into the water areas along the south shore of Camp Schwab. The lower section of the facility, oriented in a northeast-southwest direction will include a runway and overruns, with a total length of 1800 meters exclusive of seawalls. Hangers, maintenance, fuel supply pier and related infrastructure, and other aviation support activities required for the operation of the new facility will be located on the areas of the FRF to be constructed within Oura Bay. Furthermore, facilities in the Camp Schwab area will be reconfigured as necessary to accommodate the relocation of Futenma-related activities.

But although the decision reached undoubtedly pleased the negotiators, it was far from satisfactory to local interests in Okinawa. In a subsection titled, “Acceleration of Futenma Relocation,” the SCC indicated

that it had borne in mind the strong request from Okinawa for an early return of the air station, as well as the “preference that any Futenma replacement facility (FRF) be outside Okinawa Prefecture.” Nevertheless, the SCC decided to keep the FRF inside Okinawa, explaining that the rapid crisis-response capabilities of the Marine must be kept in the region.

The Ministers agreed: “Sustaining those capabilities, which consist of air, ground, logistics, and command elements, remains dependent upon the interaction of those elements in regular training, exercises, and operations. For this reason, both sides concluded that the FRF must be located within Okinawa Prefecture, where rotary-wing aircraft currently stationed at Futenma Air Station will be near the other elements with which they operate on a regular basis.” In other words, the bottom line in any relocation of the Futenma heliport function was proximity to the rest of the components that together gave the Marines their rapid-response capabilities. The U.S. could never accept a solution to the Futenma relocation issue that would disperse the core elements in distant locations.

In reviewing the existing offshore relocation plan that had been long delayed, the SCC noted that various alternate sites had been examined and then dropped. The Ministers concluded that the best option in terms of operational capabilities, minimum impact on the environment and on the safety of the neighboring communities was a location along the shoreline of Camp Schwab – “an L-shaped configuration that includes the shoreline areas of Camp Schwab and adjacent water area of Oura Bay.” The recommendation was specific about the runway portion of the facility that “will cross Henoko Point, extending from Oura Bay into the water areas along the south shore of Camp Schwab.” The total length, including runway and overruns, would be 1,800 meters.

Okinawa Balks at New Henoko Plan

But this new iteration of the Henoko plan had never been fully vetted in Okinawa. Faced with the prospect of a new runway partially on Henoko peninsula, instead of entirely offshore, this time even the mayor of Nago and the governor of Okinawa, who had both supported some sort of an sea-based facility, opposed the plan, noting that it would be located a mere 700 meters from a residential area. With Okinawa digging in its heels at the last moment, the situation suddenly looked as hopeless as before.

Once the interim plan for the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan was issued, the government and coalition parties coordinated views and strategy to try to convince local governments affected by the agreement to accept the changes. While relevant cabinet ministers met with the governors of Okinawa and Kanagawa, also experiencing base realignments, senior LDP lawmakers with security policy expertise were charged with persuading base-hosting communities to go along with the realignment decisions, using a carrot-and-stick approach. At the same time, the central government was looking into ways to bear part of the cost of the USFJ realignment, particularly the moving of thousands of Marines from Okinawa to Guam (Nikkei, p.2, November 8, 2005).

Foreign Minister Taro Aso and Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga met separately on November 11, 2005, with Okinawa Governor Keiichi Inamine and Kanagawa Governor Shigefumi Matsuzawa. Inamine flatly refused to accept the agreement, and Matsuzawa also expressed a negative view, particularly since his prefecture was being asked to accept a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to be deployed to the U.S. Navy's Yokosuka base. Foreign Minister Aso explained that such was the only option since all non-nuclear propelled carriers had been or were about to be decommissioned (Ibid).

Nukaga promised to visit Okinawa November 8-9 to offer a detailed explanation to Inamine and to exchange views with relevant mayors. Although the intention of the visit was to incorporate local opinions into the final realignment report, it was clear from Aso's and Nukaga's exchanges with the governors in Tokyo that there was no room for altering the agreement to suite local demands.

The LDP tackled the formidable task of persuading local leaders to change their minds and somehow accept the agreement. Senior LDP lawmaker Taku Yamasaki, who headed the party's national security research committee as well as the Okinawa promotional committee, spearheaded efforts, with the assistance of former defense chief Ohno, who had been involved with putting together the interim report.

On November 8, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe met with U.S. Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer at the Prime Minister's Official Residence. Abe explained the government's tack, stressing, "It is essential that the Japanese government provide sincere explanations to communities at U.S. base relocation sites, especially in Okinawa." Schieffer agreed, stating later, "In order to forge good relations with local residents hosting U.S. military facilities, the U.S. government must make every effort to obtain their understanding."

But convincing Okinawa was not that easy, as Asahi explained in an analytical report (p.4, November 9):

With the agreement between the Japanese and US governments on realignment of US forces in Japan, as contained in the interim report, JDA Director General Nukaga on November 8 traveled to Okinawa to begin full-scale coordination with local representatives. Local governments have all objected to the bilateral agreement for bypassing their inputs, and the process will inevitably face rough going. Although some are calling for a revision of the agreement, there is no sign at all of the US being willing to respond. The Japanese government, finding

itself sandwiched between local interests and the US government, seems to be searching for a landing point of some kind, looking ahead to the final report that is expected for next March.

Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga visited Okinawa November 8-9 to try to persuade base-hosting localities to reconsider their negative stances. He began with a soft-line stance for local understanding by giving carefully detailed explanations, while dangling the possibility of such “carrots” as a package of economic development measures to boost the local economy. He reportedly downplayed the “stick” he was carrying, namely, the transfer of local government leaders' authorization right to the central government if Okinawa remained intransigent (Mainichi, Tokyo Shimbun, both p. 2, November 10, 2005).

According to Sankei (p.5, November 15, 2005), one big “stick” was a plan by the government to pass a special measures law that would mandate the Okinawa governor to transfer to the central government his authority to approve land reclamation at the relocation site for Futenma’s replacement facility. The contingency plan was aimed at preventing a delay in the plan in the event the governor remained opposed and would not allow reclamation of the site. The government reportedly would judge the timing for submitting the bill -- whether it should submit it to the regular Diet session to be convened early the following year or wait until the regular session of the Diet in 2007, while monitoring moves in the prefecture.

Only Nago Mayor Kishimoto showed any sign of flexibility in his talks with Nukaga, saying, "It is not that I am rejecting the agreed-on plan, but it is just that I cannot accept it as is." He brought up the noise of the aircraft as the biggest problem, indicating a strong resistance toward the coastal plan: "(The original plan) is 2 kilometers from the residential area, but the distance has now become shortened to 700 meters. Part of the flight route will pass

over the village. There was no technical study made that considered the environmental impact." The two agreed to continue their dialogue.

In early November, fourteen local assemblies in areas in Japan affected by realignment either adopted or were preparing to adopt resolutions or opinion papers opposing the interim report on the realignment and relocation of US bases and troops in Japan, according to a survey by the Asahi Shimbun (p. 3, November 14, 2005). The Asahi concluded: "There is a large gap between the interim report and the views of local residents, who have been calling for a reduction in their base-hosting burden. Local areas are becoming increasingly distrustful of the government for constantly postponing coordination with them."

Anti-realignment resolutions had already been adopted by six local assemblies, such as Kanagawa's Sagami-hara, Miyazaki's Saito, Okinawa's Kin, Kadena, and Ginoza. The resolutions called for a withdrawal of the interim report, claiming that it is designed to enhance the functions of U.S. bases in Japan by repositioning bases and troops and splitting training to multiple locations.

Kanagawa's Zama, Miyazaki's Shintomi, Sadowara, Takanabe, and Tsuiki also adopted opinion papers opposing the interim report. Ibaraki's Ogawa hosting the Air Self-Defense Force's Hyakuri Base decided to file an opinion paper with the Tokyo District Defense Facilities Administration Bureau (now Tokyo Defense Bureau) opposing the planned relocation of U.S. fighters. The Yamaguchi Prefectural Assembly General Affairs and Planning Committee also decided to submit to a plenary session an opinion paper opposing the interim report calling for the relocation of a carrier-borne unit to the Iwakuni base. Mayor Yoichi Iha of Ginowan, which hosts Futenma, showed no sign of relenting on his position insisting that Futenma be closed and moved out of Okinawa: "(Regarding the relocation of Futenma Air Station to Henoko Point,) it is not what we wanted. Involving many difficulties, the plan will not lead to an early resolution of the issue. We want

the airfield out of the prefecture to pave the way for an early return of the base. We want to see concrete plans to remove dangers first of all." His irresolute stand, which continues to date, has never showed any sign of relenting or of recognizing its impracticality.

A joint Asahi-Okinawa Times poll released on November 15, 2005, found most Okinawans opposed to the Henoko plan to relocate Futenma base. In the survey, respondents were asked if they supported the Henoko plan. Among Okinawans, 72% answered with a resounding "no," with 31% of those respondents citing "environmental damage" as a reason, 29% claiming it "would not lead to reducing the US military presence in Okinawa," 20% saying the government "made the decision without listening to local view," and 15% believing it "will lead to further damage from the bases." Those against the Henoko plan were also asked what they thought would be the most desirable way to resolve the issue of Futenma reversion. In response, 84% picked "relocation to the US, such as Hawaii or Guam," followed by "relocation to the Japanese mainland" at 10%, and "relocation to a Henoko offshore site as initially planned" at 2%.

One can argue that the poll itself offered false choices and leading questions. The better question might have been: Which would you choose -- Futenma as is or the Henoko plan? The question of a Hawaii or Guam choice is misleading since both newspapers know that such a choice is unrealistic in terms of feasibility and practicality.

Carrots or Sticks?

Meanwhile, Taku Yamasaki, former vice president of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), worked in tandem with the government to convince Okinawa to accept the Futenma relocation in return for continued economic assistance to the local region. In an interview (Yomiuri, p. 4, December 30, 2005) on December 29 in the city of Fukuoka, Yamasaki indicated that if the

plan to relocate Futenma to the coast of Camp Schwab was derailed by local intransigence, existing economic development measures for the northern part of Okinawa, including Nago City, would be cut off.

Yamasaki revealed that Nago City's acceptance of the relocation plan and the continued infusion of government subsidies into the area were one set. He said, "The government allocated the budget for economic measures based on the thinking that Okinawa would accept the Futenma relocation plan." Yamasaki also hinted at the possibility of a new package of measures, saying, "Besides the existing rehabilitation measures, if requested, we will do what we can do."

Deadlock Continues Into 2006

Despite such pressure on Okinawa, the deadlock continued into 2006. By February 13, when U.S. Ambassador Schieffer visited Okinawa to press for "working together in a spirit of honesty and cooperation" for the fulfillment of the relocation agreement, it was not clear what the outcome of the seemingly interminable talks would be. Schieffer's concerns were covered by the Stars and Stripes on February 15:

The U.S. ambassador to Japan says "very difficult" negotiations remain between the United States and Japan on a plan to realign the U.S. military on Okinawa. However, Thomas Schieffer said he's confident the details can be worked out and plans will move forward to transfer Marine air operations from Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to Camp Schwab and some 7,000 Marines to Guam and mainland Japan. Schieffer was in Okinawa on Monday to visit with local officials and address the Okinawa Association of Corporate Executives.

“The friendship between our two nations is unique in the world,” he said in a luncheon speech, pointing out that the alliance has “never been stronger” and is the “linchpin of our foreign policy in Asia.”

Part of that transformation, he said, is the October agreement between the United States and Japan to realign U.S. forces in Japan. He called the military realignment report a “broad conceptual agreement” and acknowledged that Okinawan officials have given it a lukewarm reception.

“We’re in the process now of negotiating the details of how this will be done,” he said. “I am hopeful that after completion of these discussions, we can reach an agreement that everyone can support.”

He told the executives that he had met with Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine earlier in the day, and “we are narrowing our differences.” He said Inamine indicated the interim report, to be finalized sometime next month, is acceptable with the exception of the “Futenma question.” The interim report called for replacing MCAS Futenma with an air facility to be built on Camp Schwab and reclaimed land in the shallow waters of Oura Bay. It has been met with near universal opposition by Okinawa officials, who had favored an air base, jointly used by civilian aircraft, to be built on reclaimed land and a reef about two miles offshore, near Camp Schwab.

Schieffer told Stars and Stripes that the proposal to build an airstrip on Camp Schwab is an integral part of the realignment plan, which also calls for the move of some 7,000 Marines off Okinawa, some 6,000 of them to Guam. That would include moving headquarters of the III Marine Expeditionary Force to Guam and consolidating most Marine bases south of Kadena Air Base to existing Marine bases in northern Okinawa.

“[Gov. Inamine] basically told me that he could accept the plan if the Futenma issue could be resolved,” Schieffer said. “So obviously, it’s

coming down to that issue, and it's a very difficult issue. But I'm hopeful that somehow we can listen to folks and come up with some sort of resolution that people can be happy with.”
(<http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=125&article=35042>)

Nukaga Steps In

Almost immediately after the SCC formally fixed the new relocation spot for Futenma along the coast of Camp Schwab, as well as promising that 7,000 Marines (later raised to 8,000) would be transferred from Okinawa to Guam, Prime Minister Koizumi reshuffled his cabinet on October 31, 2005, appointing Fukushima Nukaga to the post of director general of the Defense Agency. Until Nukaga's recent article in the literary monthly *Chuo Koron* (March 2010, particularly pp. 106-108) little was known about his role in the final stage of base realignment, including his involvement in the Futenma wrangle when he was still a senior LDP official. He wrote in his article that as defense chief, he was determined now to put every effort into ending the “danger” of Futenma and reducing the overall security burden borne by Okinawa residents. Nukaga, one of the LDP's defense policy experts, served in 1998 as head of the Japan Defense Agency under Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi and at other times in various party posts related to defense affairs. After his second appointment to head the Defense Agency, this time under Koizumi, he remained in that position until September 2006.

After the SCC sealed the bilateral agreement on October 29, 2005 and Nukaga came in as defense minister, he started formal talks with local authorities in December to convince Okinawa to support the Henoko plan. Since Governor Inamine wanted the central government to talk first to the mayor of Nago, where the relocation site would be located, Nukaga went to Nago several times to seek understanding for the government's proposal.

In the negotiations, Nukaga found that the local residents wanted to go back to the shoal plan on the grounds that a military base near residential areas would be noisy and dangerous due to aircraft flying over their homes. They dismissed assurances that such would not be the case, based on the planned flight pattern. Pursuing their allegation, Nukaga, as he related in his *Chuo Koron* article, discovered that even if aircraft flew overhead, only some 10 houses would be affected by aircraft noise under the new shoreline-base plan. He found from further investigation that most of the “houses” were huts or sheds used for farm work where no one lived and that only a handful of them were actually residences. Aircraft would also be flying at an altitude of 500 meters over civilian areas, which would be quite sufficient to avoid any danger. Still, in order to obtain the local community's cooperation, Nukaga decided that two runways would be built on the replacement site so that no aircraft would fly over the residential area. He decided that the runways would be moved about 200 meters in the direction of the shoal, increasing the area in the water to be reclaimed.

“V-shaped” Runway Plan

Nukaga told Nago Mayor Shimabukuro that his new plan would involve building V-shaped runways. The defense chief explained that one runway would be used only for landing and the other one only for taking off. This plan would be safer, Nukaga insisted, because aircraft would not fly over residential areas. In the end, the Defense Agency chief prevailed and the mayor of Nago approved his plan.

But local civic groups opposed to a Futenma relocation were not convinced with Nukaga's argument. They argued that military flight training mostly involves what is known as “touch-and-go” landing -- landing then immediately taking off without coming to a full stop -- the way the Marines have been training at Futenma Air Station. The civic group also cited a U.S.

government document that indicated that the base would not necessarily restrict use to one of the V-shaped runways for taking off and the other for landing. The opponents of the base suspected that the true motive for the V-shape plan is that it would allow training to occur regardless of wind direction. When the opposition parties questioned the Japanese government about this at a Diet session, the answer was, "It will be possible to use both runways for taking off, depending on what type of training is being conducted," thereby, they concluded, contradicting their original argument. The civic group informed Nago City about this Diet exchange and requested that the mayor rescind his approval of the V-shape runway plan, but to no avail. (see Yumiko Kikuno's essay, "Okinawa – Inside the Siting, on the Internet edition of The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus, February 22, 2010 at: <http://www.japanfocus.org/-Kikuno-Yumiko/3306>).

On April 7, 2006, the director general of the Defense Agency and the mayors of Nago and Ginoza signed a "basic agreement." Since it had been thought that Nago would insist on the "shoal plan," many officials in Tokyo and the Okinawa Prefectural Government were reportedly surprised at the compromise "V-shaped plan." A month and a half later on May 11, the Defense Agency signed a "basic confirmation" with similar contents as the official agreement with Okinawa. Subsequently, the "V-shaped plan" was formally approved by the Koizumi Cabinet.

Nukaga's Negotiation Strategy

How did Nukaga accomplish this sudden turnabout to come up with a plan that was in his mind not only feasible but generally acceptable in Okinawa? Upon taking office, Nukaga analyzed the situation and then made his move. He noted that Okinawa Governor Inamine had announced the prefecture's opposition to the interim report on base realignment and that Nago Mayor Kishimoto, who had previously given conditional approval to the

previous relocation plan, was now balking at the new plan. He then scheduled a series of meetings with local leaders in order to find a way to break the impasse, not only in Okinawa but with communities across the country affected by planned base realignment. The leaders complained that the interim report had been agreed on and issued without having been properly explained to the local governments. Nukaga acknowledged that since the bilateral negotiations by their very nature, having to do with sensitive operational matters, were not made open to the public. He admitted that there had been a tendency for insufficient liaison with local governments to inform them as the talks progressed. He said he understood their concerns.

Nukaga focused first on convincing localities elsewhere in Japan to accept the U.S.-base related changes that were coming, leaving Futenma for last. He made the rounds of seven prefectures and one municipality, meeting eight governors and 38 local heads, working to persuade them to look favorably on the planned changes. When it came to the Futenma replacement facility, Nukaga recalled that in the 1997 talks with Nago city on locating the runway site, the biggest local complaint was concern about aircraft flying over their residents. He realized then and there that if he could work out a plan that eliminated the noise and danger problems from helicopter flying overhead, he would most likely be able to convince the mayors to accept the new plan.

He saw two structural problems to remove if the new replacement plan was to be carried out: 1) the cluster of housing concentrated near Camp Schwab, and 2) an adjacent golf course. He felt that the golf course problem could be easily resolved, for the central government could simply buy the property if the owner was willing to sell. It turned out that the owner was interested in developing a resort complex nearby, and would sell if the land for that could be found. Nukaga discovered publicly owned tracts of land conveniently located that the golf course could purchase.

The mayor of Nago City, though, was not that easy a nut to crack. He told Nukaga that he was not impressed with the land trade-off solution for the golf course, seeing it as too grand. To convince the mayor, Nukaga had to take another approach. As a result, a two-runway concept emerged. After consulting with veteran helicopter pilots, JDA engineers drew up a plan for V-shaped double runways that would allow take offs and landings of aircraft in different directions, thus avoiding a flight path over the residential area nearby. He then presented the plan to the mayor and received his approval to go ahead.

The next obstacle was the governor himself. Entering into negotiations with him, Nukaga argued that since the local government had approved his new plan, the governor, too, should fall in line with its wishes. He intended to meet with Inamine repeatedly if necessary, knowing that he was a tough negotiator on behalf of Okinawan interests. In his argument, he stressed the point that the realignment enables release of a total of 1,500 hectares including Futenma Air Station and would open the door to Okinawa's development plan. He emphasized that he wanted to see that dream fulfilled. Nukaga's pitch was convincing. Governor Inamine not only concurred with the new plan, he also put it down in writing.

Nukaga Meets Rumsfeld

The final step, Nukaga continues, was to convince the United States government. He decided to negotiate directly with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, since working-level talks seemed to be making little progress. Prime Minister Koizumi entrusted Nukaga completely with the formidable task of convincing Rumsfeld to accept Japan's version of the realignment package, particularly the new version for the Futenma replacement facility.

The meeting of the two defense chiefs in the Pentagon lasted for well over three hours, interrupted several times when Rumsfeld left the room to consult with aides. Nukaga made it clear that he had complete authority from Koizumi to seal a deal right there. He stressed to Rumsfeld that he considered their meeting to be the final phase of the process. The stumbling block proved not to be Futenma but the part of the realignment that promised to reduce the U.S. military presence in Okinawa by relocating Marines to Guam. The Pentagon wanted Japan to bear 75% of the cost, but Nukaga pushed for a much lower figure. In the end, Rumsfeld compromised and agreed to the Japan's lower formula. In the end, the two countries agreed that Japan would assume about 59% of the financial cost of the relocation.

On May 1, 2006, Japan and the United States held a 'two-plus-two' meeting of their intergovernmental security consultative committee (SCC) Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Rice, Foreign Minister Aso, and Defense Agency Director General Nukaga attending. In the meeting, the two governments reached a final agreement on the planned realignment of US forces in Japan, titled, "The United States-Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation (Roadmap)" (for the text, see: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/scc/doc0605.html>). Tokyo and Washington agreed to transfer approximately 8,000 Marines in Okinawa and approximately 9,000 dependents to U.S. bases in Guam by 2014. Nukaga's runway plan was also to be constructed on the shoreline of Camp Schwab by 2014. The Futenma replacement facility would have a V-shaped pair of airstrips with an overall length of 1,800 meters including overrun areas. The United States would return five facilities in their entirety, including Futenma airfield and Naha military port, and would also return Camp Zukeran [also known as Camp Foster] in part. However, the report notes that the two governments would work out a detailed implementation plan by March 2007.

Heritage Foundation Backgrounder, December 16, 2009 (Bruce Klingner)

The U.S.-Japanese Roadmap for Realignment is a comprehensive, interconnected package of force posture changes on Okinawa and the Japanese main islands. The plan is composed of 19 separate initiatives that strengthen the U.S.-Japan security arrangement based on the three pillars of "commitment to common strategic objectives; updating the roles, missions, and capabilities of both partner nations' militaries, and a realignment of both militaries to better enable an enduring presence of U.S. military partner forces in Japan." The major provisions for U.S. force realignment on Okinawa are:

- Redeployment of U.S. Marine Corps air units from Futenma Air Station to a replacement facility to be constructed in the less populated area adjacent to Camp Schwab;

- Reduction of U.S. force levels on Okinawa by relocating 8,000 Marines and 9,000 dependents to Guam;

- Japan's provision of \$6 billion of the estimated \$10 billion cost to relocate to Guam;

- Consolidation of remaining U.S. Marine units in less heavily populated areas in northern Okinawa; and

- Return of several U.S. bases south of Kadena Air Base to Okinawa control.

The Okinawa realignment initiatives are interconnected. The relocation of 8,000 Marines to Guam, consolidation of Marine forces, and land returns south of Kadena depend on "tangible progress toward completion of the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) and Japan's financial contributions to fund development of required facilities and infrastructure on Guam."

Cat and Mouse Game

Defense Facilities Administration Agency Director General Iwao Kitahara briefed Okinawa Governor Inamine on the final agreement on May 4. Nukaga later also sought Inamine's support for the Futenma relocation plan by explaining that such steps as relocating Okinawa-based US Marines to Guam and returning US military facilities would help reduce Okinawa's burden.

Inamine cautiously told the press on May 2, "I would like to respect Okinawa's stance (of seeking a relocation site outside the prefecture except for the Henoko offshore plan)." Inamine also expressed his intention to look for ways to prevent a relocated base from becoming a permanent fixture and to call for emergency measures to quickly eliminate Futenma's risks based on the agreed plan. His statement was seen as new conditions to replace such previous ones as placing a 15-year time limit on the use of the alternate facility by the U.S. military.

Governor Inamine on May 3 met with DFAA Director General Iwao Kitahara (Yomiuri, p.1, May 5, 2006) at his office for a briefing on the final realignment report. He laid out his new conditions in a negative setting. Regarding the final realignment report, the governor said, "We appreciate it on the whole," but he rejected the planned relocation of Futenma airfield to the coastal area of Camp Schwab. As an emergency measure to eliminate the airfield's danger, Inamine proposed building a temporary heliport in an inland area on the premises of Camp Schwab. Kitahara answered, "We'd like to obtain Okinawa Prefecture's understanding on the relocation plan that has reached an agreement between the Japanese and US governments."

After the meeting, Inamine held a press conference, in which he clarified his generally positive view of the final report, noting that it incorporated an agreement to move about 8,000 US Marines from Okinawa to Guam and return Futenma airfield in its entirety. "On the whole, I highly

appreciate the final report as alleviating our base-hosting burden in a way that visible to the prefecture's people." But he was setting the stage for another period of protracted negotiations on the exact modality of the replacement facility.

The city of Nago and the village of Ginozason, which would host the Futenma replacement facility basically agreed to the final report's plan for the Futenma relocation to Camp Schwab's coastal site. Inamine, however, continued to refuse to accept it, and to side with what he said was Okinawa Prefecture's basic stance of seeking to move the Marines out of Okinawa. He continued to hark back to the earlier agreement between the prefecture and central government to relocate Futenma to a site in waters off Henoko.

Inamine did not say, however, that he would stand in the way of the new plan's implementation, apparently deferring to Nago, which had accepted the new site. He stressed instead that the original purpose of relocating Futenma was to eliminate its danger, adding, "Aside from the relocation issue, the most important thing is to adopt emergency measures." Noting that it would take at least eight years to complete the construction of the V-shaped airstrips, the governor called for building a temporary heliport inside Camp Schwab for provisional use.

Nukaga, meanwhile, planned to hold up a cabinet decision on the new relocation plan until he had obtained Inamine's consent to the final agreement. He assumed that such would come when Inamine and Prime Minister Koizumi met. Nukaga wanted to make sure that Okinawa's intentions were reflected in the cabinet decision. A senior government official noted May 1 (*ibid*): "A cabinet decision does not require Okinawa's agreement. But because there is an agreement with Nago, the central government is seeking the understanding of the prefectural government." The government to avoid a local backlash felt that it must win Okinawa's concurrence before making a cabinet decision.

As a result, with the Prime Minister's approval, the government decided to postpone giving cabinet approval to the government's plan to implement US force realignment until after the 4th Pacific Islands Summit that would begin in Okinawa on May 26 (Asahi, p.2, May 25, 2006). The postponement was to avoid open confrontation at the summit which Prime Minister Koizumi would attend. The Defense Agency-drafted implementation plan, floated in Okinawa, was receiving strong resistance. Open confrontation between the central government and Okinawa would make it extremely difficult for a set of bills on Japan's cost sharing of U.S. force realignment, including the move of Okinawa-based US Marines to Guam to clear the Diet unless the session were extended substantially.

The draft plan defined the relocation site for Futenma Air Station as "waters connecting Cape Henoko, Oura Bay, and Henoko Bay," and avoided specifying that the dual runways would be V shaped. The description reflected consideration given to Okinawa, which was reluctant to specify a "V shape." The government wanted to ready the actual runway construction plan by October, and it assigned to a consultative panel of Okinawa and Nago officials the task of studying the project. But Okinawa, which had been calling for a temporary heliport to be built on land, reacted strongly to the draft plan. On May 22, Vice Governor Hirotaka Makino conveyed Okinawa's views again to Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Masahiro Futahashi (Ibid).

Koizumi Cabinet Adopts Realignment Plan

Finally, on May 30, the government convened the cabinet-level Security Council of Japan (SCJ) to approve implementation of the final agreement reached between Japan and the United States on the planned realignment of US forces in Japan (Asahi p. 1, May 30, 2006). The SCJ decision was later that day formally adopted in a full cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Koizumi and attended by Foreign Minister Aso,

Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga, Finance Minister Sadakazu Tanigaki, and Minister of State for Okinawa Affairs Yuriko Koike. The ministers approved a basic policy on the US force realignment plan, including the construction of two runways in a V-shape at Camp Schwab in Nago City, Okinawa Prefecture, to relocate the functions of Futenma Air Station there, and the transfer of 8,000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam -- steps intended to alleviate the burden on Okinawa. Sensitive to the upcoming summit meeting between Prime Minister Koizumi and President Bush scheduled for June 29, the government rejected Okinawa's call for changes to the plan in order to give precedent to the bilateral agreement over local consent.

However, the government wording in the initial draft only stated that the planned relocation of the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture would be "based on a plan approved in the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee (two-plus-two ministerial)." The early draft did not specify the bilateral agreement to relocate Futenma Air Station to the cape of Henoko in Nago City. The initial ambiguity obviously reflected the demand by Okinawa Prefecture to scrap the coastal relocation plan.

When it heard of this move, the Foreign Ministry reportedly was greatly upset with the Defense Agency, claiming that deliberately omitting reference about where to relocate Futenma Air Station "fails to reflect the Japan-US agreement," a Foreign Ministry official said. Foreign Minister Taro Aso pressed the agency to revise the draft accordingly and it was rewritten. The incident revealed, interestingly, that all along the Defense Agency had taken the lead on this issue, to the extent that it had bypassed interagency coordination (Sankei, p.2, May 29).

Key points in the basic policy on US force realignment

- Take economic stimulus measures in compliance with requests from local governments bearing additional burdens.
- Bear the due cost for relocating US Marines to Guam to swiftly realize the relocation.
- Improve the efficacy of defense-related outlays. Review the Midterm Defense Buildup --Program once the estimated cost becomes clear.
- Swiftly map out a Futenma alternative facility construction plan based on the plan approved by the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee.

The same day, the cabinet approved a second decision on U.S. force realignment that would allow Japan to share the cost with the U.S. of the redeployment of Marines from Okinawa to Guam, as well as the relocation of Futenma airfield. The cabinet also repealed its previous 1999 decision that had adopted the now-revised "Henoko offshore plan" and incorporated a package of economic measures for affected local communities in Okinawa.

Fierce Okinawa Reaction

Okinawa was adamant, with Yoritaka Hanashiro, chief of staff in the governor's office, saying: "We cannot accept the Japan-US agreement. This point should be reflected [in the government's decision]." Okinawa was also opposed to repealing the 1999 cabinet decision, with Hanashiro warning, "We don't know if the government will continue the economic package for local communities in the prefecture's northern districts" (Asahi, p.1, May 30). However, in rejecting Okinawa Prefecture's call for changes to the plan, the government revealed that it was willing to give first consideration to the alliance and to its commitment to implementing the final agreement. Tokyo was also aware that Governor Inamine was leaving Japan on June 4 for the

United States to plead Okinawa's case. This move prodded the government to expedite the decision (Ibid).

Okinawa immediately raised a strong objection to the cabinet's endorsement to the central government's policy of implementing the US force realignment plan (Mainichi, p.6, May 30, 2006, evening ed.). The prefectural government complained that the central government had failed to observe a basic confirmation exchanged between Okinawa and the Defense Agency (JDA) on May 11. The governor's statement indicated that the prefecture had been expecting more economic measures from the state ([http://www3.pref.okinawa.jp/site/contents/attach/11561/comment\(060530\).pdf](http://www3.pref.okinawa.jp/site/contents/attach/11561/comment(060530).pdf)) Nago City, which had accepted the Futenma relocation plan, indicated it was becoming increasingly distrustful of the central government because of the lack of an explicit promise to continue economic stimulus measures for the northern part of Okinawa.

Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine, visiting Tokyo on May 30, criticized the cabinet's approval at a press conference: "(The basic) confirmation states that thorough consultations will be held with each concerned area, but this sort of effort has not been fully made. I will emphasize this point from now on" (Ibid). When asked whether his government would take part in a consultative body – an arena for the central government and local municipalities to discuss such matters as a construction plan for an alternative facility for the Futenma airfield -- Inamine would not commit himself, only saying: "I will make my decision after discussing the matter with those municipalities affected by the realignment plan." He also stated that the prefecture would persist in its own counterproposals, such as building a temporary helipad on the camp's premises (Nikkei, p.2, May 31, 2006).

On the proposed consultative body, Vice Okinawa Gov. Hirotaka Makino told reporters earlier in the day: "We won't respond to talks if the talks are based on the coastal plan." He implied Okinawa's refusal to

participate in the new consultative organ even if the central government asked the prefecture to do so (Mainichi, op cit).

Meanwhile, the governments of Japan and the United States held senior working-level talks starting June 14 in Hawaii to draw up a detailed implementation plan for U.S. force realignment. It was the first such consultations since the SCC (two-plus-two) sealed the final report on May 1. The realignments, including the relocation of Futenma, are scheduled for completion in 2014. The two governments in the talks agreed to establish a team to sort out a set of implementation procedures and overcome specific problems, based on the Road Map (Sankei, p.4, June 9, 2006). The working group ultimately produced a construction plan for the Futenma replacement facility and then presented it to a consultative body, with representatives from the central and local governments. Representatives from the U.S. Marine Corps and the Defense Facilities Administration Agency also played a central role in the team.

Public Cool Towards Realignment Agreement

How did the public react to the realignment pact? A poll carried out by the Yomiuri Shimbun in mid-June (Yomiuri p. 2, June 23, 2006) found only 50% of the Japanese public positively evaluating government-to-government agreement to realign U.S. forces in Japan. Those with a negative view about the pact accounted for 38% of the whole.

The agreed realignment includes relocating Futenma airfield in Okinawa Prefecture to another location in the prefecture and redeploying US Marine Corps troops from Okinawa to Guam. In the survey, respondents were asked if they thought these realignment steps would alleviate Okinawa's base-hosting burden. In response, 52% said "no" and 36% said

“yes.” As seen from these figures, Okinawans were not the only Japanese with negative views about the realignment results.

In the realignment process, Japan is to pay in part for the redeployment of Marines to Guam. Japan will also build new facilities for U.S. military use at its own expense. In the survey, people were asked if they thought the government had given sufficient explanation to the public about Japan’s cost sharing. An overwhelming number, 87%, said “no,” showing that the general public did not feel the government had fulfilled its responsibility. Only 8% felt they had been well-informed by the government.

Koizumi-Bush Summit

On the morning of June 29, Prime Minister Koizumi met with President Bush at the White House for about 90 minutes. The two leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation to prevent North Korea from launching a ballistic missile, as well as to resolve the abductions of Japanese nationals by the North and deal with Iran's nuclear programs. They released a joint statement on a "bilateral alliance for a new century," which declared that Japan and the United States would cooperate not only on bilateral security but also on global matters. They proudly heralded their success of the realignment as follows:

The two leaders welcomed the establishment of common strategic objectives of February 2005 as well as the conclusion of watershed agreements to transform the alliance for the future. These agreements, including the most significant realignment of U.S. and Japanese forces in decades, constitute historic steps forward that make the U.S. military presence more enduring and effective, and ensure the capabilities necessary for the alliance to cope with diverse challenges in the evolving security environments. The two leaders agreed that full and prompt implementation of these agreements is necessary, not only

for Japan and the United States, but also for peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region (<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/summit0606.html>). Reports of their summit talks are strangely silent on Futenma, however.

Okinawa Remains Opposed, Despite More “Carrots”

Following the U.S.-Japan realignment agreement, the central government planned to establish a consultative body during the summer of 2006 with the Okinawa prefectural government, and affected municipalities to discuss the specifics of relocating Futenma Air Station and a package of economic measures for base-hosting communities. But the establishment of the body was delayed when Governor Inamine refused to participate. Desiring to map out detailed plans by October and then compile a budget for the needed expenditures, the government even considered establishing the new body without Okinawa actually attending. Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro and other local heads were initially willing to join, but Governor Inamine declared: "I will not join the consultative body if it discusses the government's plan alone." He remained adamant that he would not cooperate unless the new body also considered Okinawa's counterproposal for a temporary heliport inside Camp Schwab (Asahi, p.4, June 28, 2006).

Nago was unhappy with the idea of establishing such a body without the Okinawa government, however. Given that the central government had discontinued its economic assistance to the northern part of Okinawa, the prefecture also strongly hoped to discuss a new economic package with the central government, but it wanted such talks to be separate from those on the Futenma relocation plan. In other words, it wanted the economic subsidies no strings attached.

Tokyo was willing to sweeten the pot substantially, but the subsidies would definitely be linked to the level of Okinawa's cooperativeness on the realignment plans. In an effort to smoothly implement the agreed plans to realign U.S. forces in Japan, including the transfer of Futenma to Henoko in Nago City, the government and the ruling camp were working out a package of economic development measures for Okinawa, reported Nikkei (p.2, July 3, 2006). The eye-catcher in the package was a proposed construction of the nation's largest distribution center as a hub for goods imported from China, Taiwan and other countries to be assorted and briefly kept at a port facility to be constructed in Urasoe City. The Cabinet Office planned to include the feasibility-study cost in its fiscal 2007 budgetary request in August. The government was willing to incorporate such measures in the next five-year economic plan for Okinawa due out in March 2007.

The catch was that the land and financing depended on the implementation of the realignment plan. The agreed plan between Japan and the U.S. included a commitment to return the U.S. military's Makiminato Service Area, which is adjacent to the new port facility to Japan. Including the warehouses used by the U.S. military, the government estimated the total construction cost for the new facility at billions of yen.

Political Calculations

Okinawa leaders hoped that the government would shift its attitude with the changeover of the prime minister in September and before the Okinawa gubernatorial election in November. Behind Okinawa's reluctance to join the new body also lay the gubernatorial election. Learning of Inamine's intention not to run for reelection, the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito began looking for a candidate who would be more cooperative. There was an additional calculus in Okinawa's political circles: If Inamine sat at the negotiating table to realize the government's plan, it

would be read by Okinawan voters as a snub of their anti-base sentiment, and any candidate seen as Inamine's successor would not be able to win the race.

The LDP Okinawa chapter confirmed at its June 24 convention a policy course of aiming for the early construction of an alternative Futenma facility -- a step closer to the government's plan. But the opposition parties, such as the Democratic Party of Japan, Japanese Communist Party, and the Social Democratic Party selected candidates to run under the anti-Futenma relocation banner. If an opposition candidate won the race, the relocation plan would again stall. The government and Okinawa drew up a scenario based on a victory by a ruling-party candidate in the gubernatorial election (Ibid).

Indeed, the ruling-party-backed candidate did win, but alas, things did not change. Okinawa continued to play hardball even after it eventually joined the consultative body with the central government. After Shinzo Abe took over as prime minister after Koizumi and Governor Hirokazu Nakaima took over from Governor Inamine, Okinawa began talking about the need for renewed negotiations because the governor "pledged to review [the agreement] during the election" and "Okinawa and Nago had not agreed with the national government." The prefecture resumed complaining about danger and noise from Futenma and demanding the replacement facility be moved farther offshore. Recollecting this period, Moriya in his recent article was bitter about the tactics used by the local governments to undermine every agreement. He complained: "To me, this act of overturning the previous agreement and calling for new negotiations, which could be regarded as double dealing, was nothing but a tactic to postpone the Futenma relocation issue."

CONCLUSION

On February 17, 2009, Japan's Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signed an accord on the planned relocation of US Marines from Okinawa to Guam. It is said that currently, there are approximately eighteen thousand Marines (most of whom belong to the III Marine Expeditionary Force [MEF]) stationed in Okinawa (The number may actually be less due to dispatches of forces to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan). The new accord reconfirmed the willingness of the two countries to actually implement the relocation as stipulated in the Roadmap. On May 13, 2009, the Japanese Diet officially endorsed the accord as a government-to-government treaty.

After its victory in the Lower House election last August 30, the DPJ has put the implementation of such obligations into a holding pattern as it reviewed and presented other options for the relocation of Futenma, some farfetched. Some of the options presented in early negotiations, such as Kadena integration, were vetted and rejected. At this writing in early May 2010, the Hatoyama administration, having sorted through the options, ironically, seems to have returned to a variation of the Henoko plan -- a combination of the once rejected "shoals plan" and the 1996 option of a QIP -- quick installation platform -- a pier-like runway supported by posts driven into the sea bottom. Takushoku University Professor Satoshi Morimoto, one of Japan's foremost security affairs experts, noted on NHK-TV ("Nichiyo Toron", May 9, 2010) that the QIP method was studied twice, in 1998 and again in 2005, but rejected for neither meeting the U.S. military requirement nor bringing economic benefits to the local community. There is a second part of the new proposal involving relocation Okinawan Marines for training at Tokunoshima, an island in Kagoshima Prefecture 120 kilometers away, but this idea does not seem feasible -- it may be too far away for helicopters -- and the islanders are dead set against the plan.

Tokyo, May 9 Kyodo -- The following is the gist of Japan's official draft plan for relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture.

The Japanese government:

-- proposes modifying the existing Japan-U.S. plan to relocate the Futenma Air Station to reclaimed land on the coast in Nago, Okinawa, to transfer it instead to a pile-supported facility to be built some 500 meters southwest from the coastline with only one 1,800-meter runway.

-- proposes transferring some of the training of Futenma's helicopter unit to Tokunoshima Island, Kagoshima Prefecture.

-- promotes transferring some of the training held by U.S. forces in Okinawa to Self-Defense Forces bases elsewhere in Japan.

-- calls for the return of part of "Area Hotel Hotel," a water area east of Okinawa Island used for drills, and of the bombing and shooting ranges on Kumejima and Tori-shima, located west of the main Okinawa island.

Already there are press rumors that the new relocation plan is unacceptable to the U.S., citing the vulnerability of a QIP runway to terrorist attack and high winds and waves generated by Okinawa's frequent typhoons. The plan is already being protested in Okinawa, as well as in Tokunoshima. But perhaps the plan may be negotiated and altered to the U.S.' satisfaction, and through Tokyo's persuasion, the anger of the Okinawans somehow be assuaged and grudging acceptance achieved. In that case, the original agreement to transfer 8,000 Marines to Guam then can move forward, and the process of closing Futenma can finally begin, significantly lightening Okinawa's security burden. Still, looking back at the past 15 years of the series of negotiations and broken agreements centering on the relocation of Futenma Air Station, there unfortunately seems to be little cause to assume that such an optimistic scenario will come true.

Damage already has been done to the Hatoyama administration and even to the alliance by the inability of the Futenma issue to be satisfactorily resolved. Professor Gabe put it succinctly in an op-ed to the Ryukyu Shimpo: “The Democratic Party of Japan opened a Pandora’s box.” What he means is that “The U.S. military bases, a Pandora’s box for the Japanese people, have been moved to a stage where it will now be difficult for them to remain in Okinawa contrary to the will of the people.” He continues: “[Opening the Pandora’s box,] has let escape a Japanese nation that feels it has no stake in security, a government lacking a vision or strategy, and a deep-rooted sense of discrimination against Okinawa.... The validity of the alliance relationship has begun to be shaken substantially.” (Ryukyu Shimpo, p. 3, May 7, 2010) This is a severe indictment from a usually reserved scholar of the current administration not only for mishandling the Futenma issue but also contributing to an undermining of the very foundation of Japan’s security, the U.S.-Japan alliance. The words of another respected scholar from Okinawa, Seigen Miyazato, are ominous: “The option of having Okinawa bear the base-hosting burden no longer exists (Ryukyu Shimpo, p.3, May 8, 2010).”

But the erosion may have started long before the DPJ came into power. As my research shows, the long delay in returning a dangerous base to Japan that should have been closed at least a decade ago can be traced to a tangled web of competing political and commercial motives at national and local levels. An examination of the some 15 years of negotiations and renegotiations reveals a number of recurring themes: (1) the dangers of lack of initial clarity (in the original SACO statement) that led to ambiguous resolutions, relocation plans that proved to be unfeasible; 2) political and interest-group distortion of strategic concepts, turning the issue of alliance versus local interests into a zero-sum game; (2) tradeoffs between operational optimality and alliance stability resulted in a replacement facility that little

resembled the original function and purpose of the base to be reverted; (3); the incentives of the Okinawans to keep the issue perpetually in play, never solving it and quite willing to change the goal post whenever it suited their political fancy; and (4) the need for decisive leadership and U.S.-Japan national-level cooperation.

This final factor may be critical in order to transcend the morass of narrow interests vying to profit as much as possible, either politically by those wishing to deny the Futenma replacement facility from being constructed or commercially by those who maneuvered behind the scenes to profit from construction of a new facility as large in scale and as costly as possible. The U.S. side was not always helpful, for there also was at times a tendency on the part of the U.S. forces in Japan toward “mission creep” – seizing the opportunity to build not a simple heliport as originally planned but a full-fledged second runway in Okinawa with heavy-lift capabilities. Changing the game plan in such ways not only complicated the picture, making implementation problematical, it also created competing forces in Okinawa scrambling to take advantage of the perceived commercial opportunities .

It is easy to sympathize with the residents of Okinawa who rightfully want to see in their lifetimes a significant removal of the admittedly excessive concentration of the U.S. military in their prefecture – as the May 2006 roadmap for base realignment charted. But the immediate victims in this long, unfortunate saga to repeatedly try to close a recognizably dangerous Marine base located in a congested downtown area deemed by all as dangerous have been, of course, the residents of Ginowan City, which hosts Futenma Air Station. Somehow, in the seemingly endless rounds of negotiations over suitable relocation sites and their modalities and the unwillingness of central and local leaders to place priority on pragmatic solutions to close the base expeditiously, Ginowan seems to have been forgotten, one might say even by its local leaders. The cause of the residents

of that city, removing an immediate danger, has seemingly been lost, swallowed up in the complex series of maneuverings, escalating demands, and other devices that focused on amorphous goals, such as removing bases at all cost from the island prefecture, or subverted by commercial motives, such as personal profit from land reclamation or other projects. It would be a travesty, given the sad history of the Futenma negotiations, to see saga repeat itself once again.

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