

1997

## Host Nation Support, Responsibility Sharing, and Alternative Approaches to U.S. Bases in Japan

Paul S. Giarra

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Giarra, Paul S. (1997) "Host Nation Support, Responsibility Sharing, and Alternative Approaches to U.S. Bases in Japan," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 50 : No. 4 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol50/iss4/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

# Host Nation Support, Responsibility Sharing, and Alternative Approaches to U.S. Bases in Japan

---

Paul S. Giarra

**T**HE U.S.-JAPAN MUTUAL SECURITY TREATY (“The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States and Japan”) provides in Article VI that “for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East, the United States of America is granted the use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan.” These American bases—the aforementioned “facilities and areas”—differ qualitatively and substantively from the highly touted and more publicly appreciated financial host nation support provided by the Japanese government.

As a unique Japanese contribution, provided in kind rather than cash, bases for U.S. forces in Japan exemplify what might be called the balanced asymmetry of the bilateral security relationship. The United States provides the nuclear umbrella of strategic deterrence, offensive power projection, and global intelligence, surveillance, and command and control. Japan, in turn, offers host nation support, complementary forces for its own defense, and bases for American forces.

These bases, in any reasonable calculus, are essential to the current and future security equation of the region. They are vital to the defense of Japan, to the security and stability of East Asia, and to American security and political and economic strategy both in East Asia and globally. The value and indispensability

---

Paul Giarra attended Harvard College on a Navy scholarship, retiring from the U.S. Navy in 1995 after service in P-3 squadrons, aircraft carriers, on major Washington staffs, and as a student in two staff colleges, the U.S. Naval War College and the Japan National Institute for Defense Studies. For five years he was the Senior Country Director for Japan in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He is now a business and government consultant in Washington, D.C., writing and speaking extensively on the U.S.-Japan security relationship, Okinawa base issues, Defense Guidelines, and theater missile defense. Currently he is a Visiting Senior Fellow at National Defense University’s Institute for National Strategic Studies, and also a technical advisor for Universal Studios.

---

**Naval War College Review, Autumn 1997, Vol. L, No. 4**

## 50 Naval War College Review

of the Japanese bases—which represent, aside from the fixed-in-place U.S. forces in South Korea, the last major concentrations of U.S. military power between Guam and the Persian Gulf—balance the powerful American contributions to the security relationship, and they give substance to Japan's role as an alliance partner.

Compared to U.S. bases in Korea, which are provided for the specific purpose of forestalling North Korean aggression, bases in Japan provide strategically irreplaceable flexibility and also numerous options for U.S. military commanders. This is especially important in light of the demise of virtually all the rest of U.S. postwar base structure on the East Asian littoral. The bases are central to the U.S. strategy of national commitment, forward deployment, and regional engagement. They are also the most important element in Japan's burden-sharing contribution to the bilateral alliance. After all, American taxpayers usually fund U.S. military operations, and they could do so in this case.<sup>1</sup> Only Japan, however, can provide the bases. Compared to financial host nation support, even at more than \$5 billion a year, bases for U.S. forces in Japan are far more valuable in supporting American forward presence and military operations throughout the region.

However, on Okinawa and at airfields in the crowded Kanto Plain, around Tokyo in particular, operations at these bases have become subject to vexing political pressure from surrounding communities. It has had a corrosive, restrictive effect, psychological and practical, on the bilateral relationship and on American sustainability. This pressure can be mitigated, debilitating operational constraints prevented, and the strategic value of the installations sustained only if the bases are perceived in Japan in a fundamentally different way than at present. How might this be achieved?

First, the bases must be understood in Japan to be directly essential to the nation's own security. Tokyo will have to internalize and reflect the conclusion that Japanese interests will be put at risk if the usefulness or viability of the bases is allowed to erode. Far too often the bases are construed or described as being important only to the United States, thereby skewing the discussion. Their role in the defense of Japan, especially their effect on regional stability and international security, is often misunderstood, minimized, or overlooked, in both Japan and the United States. This erroneous, minimalist calculation will not change until Tokyo can acknowledge and take credit for the indirect but essential regional role Japan plays in providing these bases and tangibly supporting the United States (and the United Nations) in other ways for the purposes of deterrence, crisis response, regional stability, and international security.<sup>2</sup>

Second, the installations will have to make positive contributions to municipal and prefectural economic development, and there will have to be a clear, matching local perception. This should be possible to a limited but important

extent, especially in Okinawa, where civil economic development has not completely overshadowed the effects of local U.S. expenditures. Opening the bases and integrating them with the civil economic infrastructure is one way to enhance their perceived value, both locally and in Tokyo. As we will argue, this approach, combined with traditional methods, will help to preserve the bases over the long term.

Third, the bases should be integrated into Self-Defense Force operations and plans, with SDF units stationed in what are now exclusively American enclaves. The advantages of this arrangement are numerous; it would positively affect bilateral interoperability and the effectiveness of the alliance. More importantly, it would reverse the tendency of Self-Defense officers and Japanese Defense Agency (JDA) officials to dismiss issues surrounding United States installations as exclusively American problems.

Fourth, the Okinawan base issue in particular is a bellwether of the future of American presence in East Asia and the western Pacific. The base "footprint" in Okinawa can and should be further reduced, in a carefully constrained and deliberate process. However, in doing so it is imperative that any forces and capabilities relocated from Okinawa should move northward to Japan's main islands, not eastward to Guam, Hawaii, or the continental United States.

The history of the U.S.-Japan relationship involves base consolidations, reversions, accommodations, and realignments on both sides as American requirements have waxed and waned. The end of the Cold War has brought changed attitudes and presumptions about the bases and the problems they cause for Japanese communities. Recent events on Okinawa have focused more attention than ever before on these issues; some have said that the scrutiny has put the security relationship itself at risk. How the United States and Japan resolve these problems will affect the health and viability of the security relationship and America's long-term military presence in Asia and the Pacific.

### **U.S. Bases: Strategic Context, Current Circumstances**

As part of a larger whole, Okinawan base issues affect much larger concerns. With the United States and Japan at an important crossroads regarding bases, the Okinawan installations are significant enough politically and with respect to U.S. military capabilities concentrated there to influence the much broader question of the future of American presence.

Despite the progress being made by the bilateral Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO), traditional approaches hold out little prospect for anything more than a temporary patching-over of fundamental problems in Okinawa, or throughout Japan. Given the current formula of incremental returns of base property to Okinawan landowners, rising expectations there for the closure of

## 52 Naval War College Review

U.S. bases are unlikely to be fulfilled without a substantially different calculus in both Naha (the prefectural capital) and Tokyo. For the foreseeable future, U.S. commanders in Okinawa will remain under political siege. Without a reorienting and redressing of the concerns of Okinawans, it can be predicted that Japanese and American policy makers alike will be hard pressed to give appropriate attention to other major issues in the security relationship. Unconventional solutions, however, could not only mitigate Okinawan concerns but have broad applicability to bilateral base issues throughout Japan.

***The Legal Basis of American Bases in Japan.*** Literally and figuratively, the American bases in Japan are a legacy of World War II. When the conflict ended, U.S. and Allied forces occupied Imperial Japanese Army and Navy bases on the four main islands—Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu—and on Okinawa. On Okinawa, more than elsewhere, in addition to occupying existing bases U.S. forces constructed extensive facilities on property expropriated from local landowners.

As in Europe, in Japan the massive postwar American presence diminished only slowly. Any consideration of large-scale withdrawals ended with the onset of the Korean War and the militarization of Cold War containment. The provision of bases was made a Japanese national responsibility with the normalization of relations that marked the end of the occupation of Japan's main islands, by the security treaty signed in 1951, and by the 1954 Status of Forces Agreement, which governed their use and Japan's obligations. The arrangement was further ratified and updated by revisions of each of these agreements in 1960. The Mutual Security Treaty, signed on 19 January 1960, again updated, and made permanent, the 1951 defense pact.

Article VI of the Mutual Security Treaty allows U.S. forces to use facilities and areas in Japan for maintaining regional peace and security:

For the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and stability in the Far East, the United States is granted the use by its land, air, and naval forces of facilities in Japan. The use of these facilities and areas . . . shall be governed by a separate agreement [the Status of Forces Agreement].

Unlike in mainland Japan, the Okinawan base complex was administered as part of an American occupation, which ended in 1972 with the drawdown of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. In the years before that reversion, Tokyo pressed to have virtually all U.S. ground forces eliminated from mainland Japanese bases and consolidated and relocated on Okinawa. Base consolidations and reductions in the U.S. presence occurred periodically during the Cold War, generally paralleling the state of international and bilateral relations.

---

**Major U.S. Forces in Japan  
As of 1 March 1997**

---

Yokota Air Base

- COMUSJAPAN Headquarters
- Logistics/Transport hub
- 374th Airlift Wing

Yokosuka Naval Base

- USS *Independence* battle group
- 9 surface combatants (cruisers, destroyers, and frigates)
- 7th Fleet flagship (USS *Blue Ridge*)
- Major ship-repair facilities

Atsugi Naval Air Facility

- Carrier Air Wing 5 (USS *Independence* air wing)
- Light Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadron 51

Camp Zama

- U.S. Army, Japan Headquarters/9th Theater Army Area Command (TAACOM)
- I (U.S.) Corps (Forward) Liaison Detachment
- 17th Area Support Group (ASG)
- Army Medical Department Activity Japan (MEDDACJAPAN)

Sasebo Naval Base

- Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) Bravo (4 ships)
- 2 minesweepers

Misawa Air Base (northern Japan)

- 35th Fighter Wing (36 F-16 aircraft)
- Fleet Electronic Reconnaissance Detachment (2 ES-3 aircraft)
- Deployed maritime patrol squadron (Navy; 7 P-3C aircraft)

Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS)

- Marine Air Group 12 (EA-6B aircraft and F/A-18 aircraft)

Okinawa

- III Marine Expeditionary Force (3rd Marine Division, less detachments)
- Futenma MCAS (Marine Aircraft Group 36 with CH-53 helos, CH-46 helos, and KC-130 aircraft)

Kadena Air Base (Okinawa)

- 18th Wing (54 F-15 aircraft, E-3 AWACS, KC-135 tankers)
- 353rd Special Operations Group (SOG)

Torii Station (Okinawa)

- 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group
- 10th Area Support Group (ASG)

---

**Source:** *Report on the Security Relationship between the United States and Japan, 1 March 1995*, submitted in compliance with Section 1325 of the FY 95 Defense Authorization Act. (Updated through 1 March 1997.)

---

## 54 Naval War College Review

The use of the bases is not unrestricted. Japan reserves the right to veto major American deployments into the country, operations from it, and major changes in U.S. equipment there. In an exchange of notes dated 19 January 1960, the day the Mutual Security Treaty was signed, Japan stipulated and the United States confirmed that “concerning the implementation of Article VI [of the Mutual Security Treaty, i.e., operations not directly in the defense of Japan]: Major changes of the deployment into Japan of United States armed forces, major changes in their equipment, and the use of facilities and areas in Japan as bases for military combat operations to be undertaken from Japan other than those conducted under Article V of the said Treaty, shall be the subjects of prior consultation with the Government of Japan.”<sup>3</sup>

The seven U.S. bases listed below are also United Nations Command installations. They are supported by a United Nations status of forces agreement with the government of Japan. It is significant that, unlike other U.S. bases in Japan, they can be used, without consultation with Japan, to send United Nations forces to Korea in the event of renewed hostilities there.<sup>4</sup> Troops from countries of the original 1950–1953 UN Command also have access to these facilities, and they occasionally exercise that right.

- Yokota Air Base
- Camp Zama
- Yokosuka Naval Base
- Sasebo Naval Base
- Kadena Air Base (Okinawa)
- Futenma Marine Corps Air Station (Okinawa)
- White Beach (Okinawa)

**Focus on Okinawa.** Both in Okinawa and in mainland Japan, without the overshadowing influence of the Cold War base issues will increase in complexity and contentiousness. As mainland Japanese politics increasingly devolve to the local level, Diet members representing communities near bases find it more difficult to entreat mayors and governors to cooperate or be patient for the sake of national security and bilateral relations. Decades of spectacular growth have both reduced the local economic benefits of the installations in relative terms and placed a higher premium on prime real estate taken up by the U.S. military facilities.

Encroachment is a serious concern. Schools and houses have crowded in on facilities, especially air bases, denying them the buffer zones which, like fences, make for good neighbors. Young U.S. service members, impoverished by the rise of the yen, often cannot afford to shop or eat off base, raising frustration

levels and precluding the long-term advantages of friendly young American faces mixing with curious and hospitable Japanese. The generation of local elected officials who worked out practical solutions throughout Japan during the Cold War is passing from the scene.

Nowhere have base issues been more intensely debated than on Okinawa, the scene of the only fighting on populated Japanese territory during World War II. It was also the site of the biggest base issue of all, the reversion of the Ryukyus to Japanese sovereignty in 1972. Today, the situation on Okinawa is complicated by a number of factors, symptomatic of the complex relationship between Okinawa and the rest of Japan. The first is the minimal Okinawan cultural affinity with the rest of Japan, a land of ostensible homogeneity. Another is resentment over Japanese military excesses during the 1945 battle for Okinawa. Finally, there is a sense of continuing disproportional sacrifice, beginning with horrific civilian casualties during the war, persisting because Okinawa supports a much higher fraction of U.S. forces than does the rest of Japan. (Almost 20 percent of the main island was taken up by U.S. military facilities before the process of reductions administered by the SACO.)

The pressure on U.S. bases in Okinawa intensified with the election of Governor Masahide Ota, a political independent and university professor turned politician. His election marked the end of Liberal Democratic Party control of the Okinawan Diet delegation, and it exemplifies the trend toward more populist pressures on U.S. bases throughout Japan. Although not anti-American, the governor is a dedicated pacifist, equally opposed to U.S. forces and their Self-Defense Force counterparts. He has seized upon perceptions of grievance and long-term neglect by Tokyo of Japan's poorest prefecture to rally support for his program to reduce and eliminate U.S. bases on Okinawa. He has combined this campaign with demands for increased financial assistance for Okinawan development from the government of Japan. Ota's political influence was given a dramatic boost when a young Okinawan schoolgirl was raped by three American servicemen in September 1995.

For Okinawans like Governor Ota, beyond a profound and evenhanded aversion to both Japanese and American military forces lie three uniquely Okinawan ideological convictions: that the prefecture has been victimized by both the government of Japan and the U.S. military; that U.S. bases impede Okinawa's prospects for sharing in Japan's prosperity; and that the removal of U.S. bases is necessary for the prefecture's economic development.

The Okinawan ideological intent eventually to close U.S. bases has, since September 1995, struck a resonant chord throughout Japan, captured the attention of the Japanese media, and shaken the very foundations of the security relationship. In response, both nations have pledged to make progress toward significant base consolidation in Okinawa. The Special Action Committee on



## **56 Naval War College Review**

Okinawa was established in November, and by the April 1996 summit meeting in Tokyo it had announced a plan to relocate Futenma Marine Corps Air Station and return the land to its original owners. Major details of the Futenma relocation are still to be worked out, but a number of other issues had been resolved and significant acreage returned to Japanese control as of the final SACO report in November 1996. Officials on both sides continue to meet frequently to resolve Futenma relocation and other issues, but now at a lower, less politically charged, level.

In the meantime, however, pressure continues on the Okinawan bases. The prefectural government has proposed a plan to phase out the U.S. presence on Okinawa by 2015. As recently as early February 1997, delegations from Okinawa and from the ruling coalition of Japanese political parties visited Washington to consult on the subject and to press the issue in Congress, throughout the executive branch, and with the U.S. military.

As of March 1997, the holders of some three thousand (of the total of thirty thousand) leases for land expropriated for use by U.S. facilities on Okinawa were refusing to renew them upon expiration in May. Only a hundred were actual Okinawan landowners; the rest were political activists from elsewhere in Japan, who had divided up original plots into so-called "postage stamps" of a few square meters each. In April 1997, the Diet approved Prime Minister Hashimoto's unilateral decision to force renewal of the leases. Nevertheless, this remains a serious situation, forcing the central government to strengthen its rights of eminent domain. The contretemps over leases has also seriously curtailed other important security discussions, such as the review of Defense Guidelines (designed to redefine Japan's security contributions, from simply granting permission for American actions to more active, albeit rear-area, logistical, infrastructure, and limited operational support).

### **What Is at Stake?**

For the United States, American forces in Japan and Okinawa are emblematic of the American determination to preserve the advantages and political leverage that come from keeping its military forces forward deployed. Basing U.S. forces in Japan keeps American defensive boundaries on the Asian littoral instead of in the eastern Pacific. Strategically, the United States cannot afford to withdraw significant forces from Okinawa, for which no realistic and viable alternative exists. American influence and political and security policy in Asia depend upon these forces remaining where they are. To agree to remove or reduce those forces would put American credibility at significant risk.

Claims that the utility—and thus the indispensability—of Marine and air forces have lessened are not realistic. This applies especially to assertions that

they could easily be withdrawn to Hawaii or the West Coast of the United States, to be flown back to the region in time of crisis. In addition to their combat potential, those forces are important place-holders. They are, in effect, indicators as well as determinants of the U.S. security stake in the region. Because of their forward location, they have an important deterrent influence on the delicate strategic and psychological balance in and around Japan.

Furthermore, it is quite clear that the other nations of the region want the United States to remain fully engaged, whether to preserve regional stability, retain the balance of power, or provide for Tokyo a non-military option for Japanese security. Even Beijing, perhaps with the most to gain from an American reduction or withdrawal, is at least ambivalent about the U.S. presence, and more often than not is quietly supportive.

As a practical matter, it would be almost impossible to relocate major U.S. units elsewhere. Not only are strategic locations unavailable and available locations misplaced, but the cost of a major move would be astronomical, not borne lightly by either government.

Withdrawal of these forces would do more than complicate the local strategic situation, causing consternation throughout the region and necessitating recalculation of the American role. Their departure also would make much more problematic any subsequent political decision to reintroduce them for deterrence or crisis response in the region. Like aircraft carriers, which are easy to employ because they can move without political complications, forward-deployed forces of all kinds are relatively simple to use in a crisis, because they are already engaged in active defense.

Also unrealistic is the notion that if the Marines were to withdraw eastward, Marine and Navy forces, which would then be separated by an ocean, could still be expected to operate effectively together. Emphasis on Navy-Marine reciprocity—maritime jointness—was strengthened significantly with the emergence of post-Cold War naval doctrine. The new maritime strategy places renewed priority on power projection “from the sea.” The Okinawan bases are part of a scheme of coordinated Navy-Marine Corps forward deployment; they are now more important than ever to the Marine Corps, not less so.

Furthermore, few civilians can appreciate the importance or extent of military contingency plans. Bases in Okinawa, which may seem under-utilized on a normal day, in a crisis would overflow with troops, equipment, and materiel. Based on normal, peacetime patterns, uninformed estimates of their operational utility, which fail to take account of real crisis requirements, produce woefully inadequate descriptions of the continued value of the bases and facilities in question.

## 58 Naval War College Review

**The U.S. Marines.** These observations are particularly applicable to the Marine garrison on Okinawa, which is currently under the most pressure. Those Marines are essential to the security of the United States. First, they are the anchor of the nation's security in East Asia—ready, mobile, powerful, self-sustaining, and flexible both politically and operationally. They are a credible force, and credibility deters aggression. Whether sea based, air transported, engaged in amphibious assault, or in garrison, they are emblematic of the American commitment to the defense of Japan, regional security, and Asian stability.

The Nye initiative—bilateral discussions in 1994–1995 that reasserted the primacy of the U.S.–Japan security relationship—underscored the commitment of the United States and the credibility of the U.S.–Japan alliance by arresting the perceptions of imminent troop reductions, which otherwise would have signaled withdrawal and disengagement. Failure to do so would have empowered Beijing and disillusioned the region. Likewise, future reductions in Japan-based Marines would negate the bilateral progress in the U.S.–Japan security dialogue and the regional political and diplomatic successes of 1994–1996, which strengthened both stability and the continuity of U.S. leadership.

Forward deployment in Japan amplifies the political and military impact of the Marines. With an amphibious ready group based at Sasebo, they are only days away from crisis spots by sea; by air they are only hours away. Transporting the same force from Hawaii or the continental United States could take weeks by sea and days by air, especially if more than one contingency were under way.

Important too is the fact that forward-deployed Marines are the first line of defense. They can respond to crisis without delay or political debate, projecting power, forcing entry, and enabling the flow of reinforcements. The early stages of the 1991 Persian Gulf crisis offered a powerful example of such strategic benefits: Marines from Okinawa (as well as elsewhere) were quickly in place to deter Iraq from attacking into Saudi Arabia. Perhaps most important, these forward-deployed Marines are convincing. The same Marines today are preventing the renewal of the kind of strategic vacuum in the South China Sea that followed the U.S. withdrawal from the Philippines. The relative calm of the Senkaku Islands dispute—in contrast to the Spratlys in 1994—can be attributed to the presence of U.S. forces nearby.<sup>5</sup> Only the Marines are sufficiently self-sustaining and flexible enough to respond to demands of broad geographic and functional diversity without dependence upon established facilities and extensive logistical support ashore. However, that expeditionary capacity comes at a price. Because Marine formations organize, deploy, and operate as balanced entities, redeploying even one element of the ground-air-combat support team away from Japan would impose significant operational and readiness penalties.

Marines are also assigned a major wartime role, as theater ready-reserve and crisis-response assets. In that connection, the Marine expeditionary force in the Pacific (III MEF) is crucial with respect to the Korean Peninsula. Its amphibious capabilities complicate North Korean planning and increase the effectiveness of the U.S. deterrent in Northeast Asia. On the other hand, reductions to III MEF or its relocation, let alone demobilization, would encourage recklessness in Pyongyang. No American president, in fact, is likely to propose such reductions while the potential for war on the Peninsula is near present levels or while the misreading of strategic American intentions might have such significant regional ramifications.

***Japanese Interests.*** What is at stake for Japan? U.S. forces in Japan are critical to that nation's defense as well. The support, or lack thereof, of the Japanese government for the American bases has important ramifications for the security of Japan and for the bilateral relationship. Most broadly, Japan benefits from the global missions assigned to U.S. forces based in the country. The fact that Japanese support, in turn, is vital to their ability to operate as far away as, for instance, the Persian Gulf animates Japanese foreign policy and tends to align U.S. policies and actions with Japanese interests. They reinforce each other, to Japan's benefit.

At the regional level, deterrence on the Korean Peninsula and stable relations with China are the two most important elements of Tokyo's security policy, and both are underscored by the U.S. military forces based in the country. American expeditionary forces in Japan would also participate in evacuation and other humanitarian operations of importance to Japan. Defense Guideline initiatives are building on this basis for bilateral cooperation. If, on the other hand, Japan could not sustain sufficient public support to cope with peacetime basing requirements, it is unlikely that it would countenance the arrival of the massive reinforcements that would be necessary for a regional contingency—or the defense of the nation.

Finally, other Asian countries are gauging Japan's ability to support the alliance with the United States. They understand the potentially dramatic implications of Tokyo's failure to overcome domestic roadblocks. Ironically, they seem more willing than do the Japanese to acknowledge the broad-ranging implications for both Japan and the region of a change in the status or location of Marines on Okinawa. Policy makers in both countries, under siege on Okinawa base issues particularly, are being distracted from other important matters. If this condition endures much longer, it is likely to damage Japan's credibility as an alliance partner. On the other hand, an actual diminution of Japan's political commitment to U.S. bases would directly challenge the alliance, by undermining Tokyo's major contribution to it.

## 60 Naval War College Review

### Imaginative Compromise

These strategic parameters account for the longstanding and pragmatic U.S. policy of incremental base consolidation and land reversion. By that approach, the United States will continue to look for ways to return property to its original owners; strategic considerations, however, must come first. This constraint on the U.S. side has meant in practice limiting changes to "footprint, not forces." Given the local circumstances, there is not nearly enough flexibility in this entirely appropriate but circumscribed policy to fulfill Okinawan expectations.

Present approaches alone will not overcome the obstacles to progress which exist in Okinawa, Tokyo, and Washington. Too many practical considerations stand in the way of continuing incremental land reversion. Furthermore, such conventional solutions can provide only minimal adjustments before they would seriously reduce the strategic value of the bases. Nor will they satisfy Okinawan ideological or political demands. Consequently, a number of factors make an unconventional approach advisable.

First, Okinawan circumstances are not solely ideological. Practical local obstacles have forestalled real progress on important land and base issues for years. There is no consensus among Okinawans on the bases; since the employment of Okinawans on U.S. bases is not inconsequential, there is even a sizable, largely silent constituency in favor of the status quo. With their members' livelihoods at stake, the base employees' unions want the installations to remain, and they did not participate in major demonstrations against the United States in the fall of 1995.

Also, rents for expropriated lands paid to Okinawan landowners are very significant to the recipients, especially when the land has little intrinsic value. Owners of otherwise worthless land depend upon these payments, sometimes exclusively, and they do not want the land returned. Even when the property does have value, there is seldom consensus on its future use among the hundreds of landowners of large tracts. These resist return as well, since rent received is better than the certain impasse that would follow reversion. The former Makiminato housing area is a case in point: U.S. buildings were razed and the land returned, but disagreement among Okinawan owners has forestalled development for more than a decade.

Another obstacle to traditional solutions is the U.S. requirement that the return of functional facilities must be contingent upon provision of a suitable replacement by the government of Japan. This is the case, for instance, at Naha Military Port, for which no natural alternative exists on the island. Just north of Naha, in Urasoe, plans are underway for an artificial harbor, but there is little support for military relocation there.

These local but important factors strengthen the case for an unconventional approach. Indeed, the inherent contradiction between Okinawan practical motivations and the political and military realities, and the conflict between local ideology and regional strategy, can be resolved by imaginative compromise. The basis for such compromise exists in the considerable store of natural good will that endures on Okinawa. It is significant that Marines held a day of reflection on Okinawa after the September 1995 Okinawan rape incident, and that the October 1995 demonstrations against U.S. bases did not call for an end to the security treaty. More to the point, on two occasions Okinawan demonstrators prevented the burning of an American flag by protesters from the mainland.

There is room for compromise, given sufficient imagination and certain fundamentally positive political preconditions. First, the security relationship has to be kept healthy enough to withstand the inevitable strains of working out solutions. Second, the Japanese government must accept and subscribe to the fact that U.S. bases and troops must remain indefinitely. Third, while the Special Action Committee on Okinawa produced acceptable short-term results and generated credibility for subsequent measures, its one-year term was not nearly long enough to provide real solutions; the process of resolution must be extended considerably. Fourth, Japan's central government will have to work out its presently ambivalent relationship with Okinawa, which only came under Japanese rule in 1879. Finally, there are no cheap solutions: the bill will include prodigious effort, time, and, most significantly, capital—the majority of which must come from the Japanese.

### **Integration of the Bases**

It is possible to sketch a new, unconventional approach to what Japan and the United States might undertake to advance their shared goals. In the long run, American bases can no longer remain the exclusive enclaves they have been. They must be made more generally relevant to the mainland Japanese, the Okinawans, and the government of Japan. These bases have to be seen locally less as the problem and more as the solution, with respect, for example, to development plans and economic expansion. As a general prescription for future base relations, this suggestion is not commonplace, but neither is it radical. There are examples of effective combined civil-military use of bases in both the United States and in Japan; Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii and Misawa Air Base in northern Japan are among them. Actually, Misawa is a tri-use base, shared by the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF), the U.S. Navy and Air Force, and Japanese domestic airlines.

## 62 Naval War College Review

The concept of shared access is most applicable to airfields and port facilities, where runways and pier space can be shared. It is especially plausible in cases where large facilities, such as Naha Military Port, must be maintained for surge operations during periods of crisis or war but are under-utilized the rest of the time. During normal operations in peacetime, their basic facilities should be made available for commercial operations. Civilian access would have to be structured carefully so that military planners and commanders could depend upon unfettered use of the facilities during intensified military operations. Nevertheless, there is no reason why Kadena Air Base, for instance, could not host a considerable number of civilian flights, or why Futenma could not become a regional air cargo hub while remaining a Marine Corps air station. As a port facility (though not as an industrial park), Naha Military Port can be the focus for greatly expanded maritime traffic in and out of Okinawa. That concept is both a complement and a viable alternative to other Okinawan development schemes. It might be pursued before much more time and effort are invested in relocating the U.S. port facility at Naha to the new artificial harbor at Urasoe.

American bases in Japan also have become too exclusive in the strictly military sense. Interoperability between the U.S. military and the Japan Self-Defense Forces is often touted, but it is seldom practiced. U.S. forces and the JSDF rarely operate next to one another, let alone together. In the past, when Japan was relearning how to organize and operate its military after World War II, Self-Defense Force training in the United States was far more common, and the practice of assigning counterparts for American officers was widespread. The present segregation precludes the Self-Defense Forces and U.S. forces getting to know one another, either professionally or socially. The Marines, for whom there is no direct counterpart in the Self-Defense Forces, are especially isolated. Without purposeful integration, the Ground Self-Defense Force is more likely to identify with the U.S. Army instead.

A policy of sharing facilities has advantages for both countries. A significant JSDF permanent presence on U.S. installations would give Japan's uniformed military services, and the JDA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well, a sense of ownership of U.S. facilities that they otherwise see as expendable both politically and operationally. The United States should expect in return routine reciprocal privileges for U.S. forces on JSDF bases. This would enable much more effective planning for surge operations during periods of crisis or conflict. It is easy to imagine the potential for increased bilateral doctrinal coordination, training opportunities, and commonality of maintenance, repair, and supply.

Crisis and wartime roles for bases will have to be explained more fully to the public, to the prefectural government, and to the government of Japan. Currently, for example, Okinawan assertions about the reduced utility of Futenma and

Naha Port go unchallenged. Without a more effective public argument for the crucial role these and other similar facilities play during crisis and war, nothing will mitigate the growing consensus that they are expendable. It should be possible to make the public case without compromising war plans or other critical information.

U.S. facilities that can revert to JSDF custody should be handed over without delay. This applies particularly to Okinawa's training areas. If the Japanese government is prepared to guarantee the preservation of these tracts and satisfactory access for training purposes to U.S. forces, there is no reason why they cannot be removed from the U.S. books, in addition to the significant acreage already returned in the SACO process.

Consolidation and reversion plans that make sense and are already recognized as acceptable need to be accelerated. The U.S. communications facility at Hansa is a good example of how delays in Japanese funding can hold up the relocation and reversion of U.S. facilities. Funding for the relocation of Hansa's antennas would quickly solve the issue of Yomitan Auxiliary Airfield, which otherwise cannot be released for development because of the potential for electromagnetic interference with U.S. military communications.

Marine artillery training could be relocated to Korea, as well as elsewhere in Japan. Korea is where the Marines are most likely to fight, and the Seoul government can help to relieve pressure on Okinawa. Doing so would also remind the Japanese government that although Japan's security relationship with the United States is an exclusive one, there are other allies in the region who are prepared to cooperate. Equally, air traffic control restrictions that impede the flow of civilian flights are a point of contention, but they can be revised. Peacetime military aircraft operating and training areas and airfield operating procedures could accommodate civilian aircraft much more readily than at present. If JASDF restrictions at Naha Airport cause delays for civilian airliners there, then JASDF operations must be made more flexible.

As for U.S. Air Force assets, some units at Kadena Air Base, such as reconnaissance aircraft, might be relocated fairly easily to other U.S. air bases in Japan; not all of these units are an integral part of the operations of the 18th Wing. Also, the Special Forces battalion at Torii Station can be relocated to a Marine Corps base, or even elsewhere in Japan. It is very important, however, that the "First of the First"—1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group—remain in-theater, forward deployed and co-located with the C-130s of the U.S. Air Force 353rd Special Operations Group. As a package, both could be relocated to southern Honshu, in order to consolidate C-130 support at Iwakuni Air Base, where other Okinawa-based C-130s are being moved from Futenma.



## 64 Naval War College Review

Some observers, Japanese and American, insist that the fewer Marines on Okinawa the better. Modernization and technological advances may promote the trend toward fewer troops in any given unit, but fewer Americans does not necessarily equate to a better environment. Presently, many Marine units and individual Marines rotate to Okinawa only for short tours, generally for six months to a year. A better solution might be to make a larger fraction of Marine unit assignments to Okinawa permanent. Individual Marines would come to Okinawa for longer tours, two or three years, rotating as replacements to units continuously assigned to the island. Their families would accompany them.

Of course, this would mean a net increase in the total number of American "military" personnel—for this purpose, dependents count as Marines. More family housing would be required, but the quality of life would improve for Americans and Okinawans alike. The political and financial costs to Washington and Tokyo, including more realistic local housing and cost-of-living allowances for U.S. service members, would be more than offset by the benefits of stability, the influence of family socialization, improvement in troop morale and behavior, and by the benefits to community relations. The Marine Corps could keep the same number of Marines forward deployed, with less disruption to the rest of the force structure. Local military command and management continuity in Okinawa would be improved, and previously rotating units would become available for other essential missions, such as crisis response and Standing Joint Task Force duties.

Whatever the eventual number of U.S. forces on Okinawa, there must be a better screening process for U.S. servicemembers assigned there. The standard overseas screening regimen is not sufficient to reduce the likelihood of off-duty misconduct. There is precedent for this in the way troops were processed for duty in Berlin during the Cold War. The rigorous "Berlin screen" recognized the unacceptable consequences of infractions there, and distinguished between troops eligible for duty in Germany in general and those who could serve in Berlin.

Command attention is essential in this regard, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps has decided to increase the seniority of the III MEF commander to lieutenant general (three-star) rank. This is an effective practical step (and taken for a variety of reasons unrelated to this article), but it should be complemented by detailing a Marine general officer to concentrate exclusively on community relations. This might facilitate imaginative solutions to difficult problems and thereby defuse long-standing animosities. This officer should start by implementing the very benign recommendations of the Shimada Commission chartered by Prime Minister Hashimoto, such as the replanting by U.S. forces of areas denuded by artillery fire. Another Shimada Commission proposal

would be to permit students on their way to school to transit base facilities. Even the Soviets in Berlin allowed Americans such privileges.

---

### Shimada Commission Recommendations

---

- Soldiers plant saplings in barren training areas
  - Enhance community relations
  - Traffic passage through American bases
  - Examination of the possibility of returning some restricted coastal waters
  - Use of on-base fresh-water sources by local communities
- 

There is pressure on U.S. bases throughout Japan, not just on Okinawa. Ideological pressure may not be as significant a factor to the north, but encroachment, noise, and a diminished public sense of military requirements are problems everywhere. While local economic development is not generally an issue elsewhere in Japan, integration of U.S. bases with the JSDF and with local economies would give Japan a verifiable stake in their longevity and preserve them for the long term. On the Kanto Plain, for example, Yokota Air Base could be developed as a major civil air cargo hub for Tokyo while preserving its basic logistical functions and vital surge capacity for the U.S. Air Force. Civil access to Atsugi Air Base could help relieve some of the severe pressure directed at that combined JSDF/U.S. forces base.

Mayor Richard Gordon of Olongapo City in the Philippines is proving what can be done to develop military facilities after the United States departs. However, in retrospect, there was no reason that Subic Bay economic development could not have taken place with the United States as a full partner. American bases in Subic Bay could have been part of the solution, rather than the problem, for local industrial development. Mayor Gordon always was a strong supporter of the U.S. military presence in Subic Bay. Most likely he would have preferred to carry out his plans with the U.S. military, rather than after the bases closed. Innovative solutions might have made the difference in the Philippine Senate's final vote on the U.S. bases. We need to learn from our departure from the Philippines, so that what happened there does not occur in Japan.

Neither the United States nor Japan can afford to overlook any solution that will strengthen the U.S.-Japan security relationship. Base issues are matters that will never be perfectly resolved, but unconventional approaches can overcome ideological barriers and remove practical obstacles. Healthy and productive base relations are an especially important factor in the moral and psychological environment necessary for the continued effectiveness of the bilateral security

## 66 Naval War College Review

relationship. We must make the attempt to preserve the stabilizing U.S. presence that is vital to both nations' international interests.

---

### Notes

1. Japan's annual host nation support contributions to the United States currently amount to more than \$5 billion, including the approximately \$1 billion yearly average for the Facilities Improvement Program. This accounts for approximately 70 percent of the non-salary costs for U.S. forces in Japan.

2. "The use of facilities and areas by the United States armed forces under the Unified Command of the United Nations established pursuant to the Security Council Resolution of July 7, 1950, and their status in Japan are governed by arrangements made pursuant to the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security." Security Treaty Exchange of Notes, 19 January 1960.

3. Exchange of notes between Nobusuke Kishi, Prime Minister of Japan, and Christian A. Herter, Secretary of State of the United States of America, 19 January 1960.

4. U.S. Forces Japan Command Briefing, 22 February 1996.

5. For a discussion of these South China Sea issues, see Henry J. Kenny, "The South China Sea: A Dangerous Ground," *Naval War College Review*, Summer 1996, esp. pp. 97-100.

---

Ψ

---