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International Scholars, Peace Advocates and Artists Condemn Agreement To Build New U.S. Marine Base in Okinawa

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For Immediate Release

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(McCormack also available for interview in Japanese)

Leading scholars, peace advocates and artists from the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia today released the attached statement opposing the construction of the new U.S. Marine base at Henoko, Okinawa, planned by the US and Japanese governments as a replacement facility of Futenma airbase located in the middle of Ginowan City. Their statement urges "support for the people of Okinawa in their struggle for peace, dignity, human rights, and protection of the environment."

Initial signers of the statement include linguist Noam Chomsky, academy award winning film maker Oliver Stone, Nobel Laureate Mairead Maguire, historian John Dower, former U.S. military officer and diplomat Ann Wright, and United Nations Special Rapporteur for Palestine Richard Falk. (See complete list of initial signers on statement. Additional names are being added.)

Speaking for the signers, Joseph Gerson of the American Friends Service Committee, who has worked with Okinawan base opponents and initiated the 1996 "Statement of Outrage and Remorse" following the kidnapping and rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl by U.S. servicemen, said the statement is intended to " rally international support for Okinawans in their inspiring and essential nonviolent campaign to end seventy years of military colonization, to defend their dignity and human rights, and to ensure peace and protect their environment."

Professor Peter Kuznick of American University, who co-authored *The Untold History of the United States* with Oliver Stone, decried Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima's betrayal of Okinawan voters. "During the campaign, Nakaima promised to work for the relocation of Futenma base outside Okinawa. According to the polls, 72.4 percent of Okinawans see the governor's decision as a 'breach of his election pledge,'" Kuznick said, "The deal was made at the behest of the United States and of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. It tramples the rights of the Okinawan people to advance Obama's Asian 'pivot.'"

The statement reviews the oppression and exploitation of Okinawa-- first by Japanese rulers with invasion and annexation, and then by the United States to support its hegemonic interests in the Pacific. It points to the unjust concentration of 73.8% of exclusively U.S. military bases in Japan on less than 1% of the country's land mass. Signers also point to the painful irony that for seven decades Okinawans "have suffered what the signers of the U.S. Declaration of Independence denounced as 'abuses and usurpations,' including the presence of foreign 'standing armies without consent of our legislature.'"

Professor Gavan McCormack of the Australian National University, and co-author with Satoko Norimatsu of *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States*, described the intrusions of militarism that threaten Okinawans' lives and health, " from military accidents, crimes including sexual violence for which U.S. forces are not held fully accountable, to intolerable military aircraft noise and chemical pollution." He said that "Okinawans' courageous and unrelenting struggle to finally end the military occupation and to enjoy real security deserves the support of people around the world."

(Statement Follows.)

STATEMENT

We oppose construction of a new US military base within Okinawa, and support the people of Okinawa in their struggle for peace, dignity, human rights and protection of the environment

We the undersigned oppose the deal made at the end of 2013 between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Governor of Okinawa Hirokazu Nakaima to deepen and extend the military colonization of Okinawa at the expense of the people and the environment. Using the lure of economic development, Mr. Abe has extracted approval from Governor Nakaima to reclaim the water off Henoko, on the northeastern shore of Okinawa, to build a massive new U.S. Marine air base with a military port.

Plans to build the base at Henoko have been on the drawing board since the 1960s. They were revitalized in 1996, when the sentiments against US military bases peaked following the rape of a twelve year-old Okinawan child by three U.S. servicemen. In order to pacify such sentiments, the US and Japanese governments planned to close Futenma Marine Air Base in the middle of Ginowan City and move its functions to a new base to be constructed at Henoko, a site of extraordinary bio-diversity and home to the endangered marine mammal dugong.

Governor Nakaima's reclamation approval does not reflect the popular will of the people of Okinawa. Immediately before the gubernatorial election of 2010, Mr. Nakaima, who had previously accepted the new base construction plan, changed his position and called for relocation of the Futenma base outside the prefecture. He won the election by defeating a candidate who had consistently opposed the new base. Polls in recent years have shown that 70 to 90 percent of the people of Okinawa opposed the Henoko base plan. The poll conducted immediately after Nakaima's recent reclamation approval showed that 72.4 percent of the people of Okinawa saw the governor's decision as a "breach of his election pledge." The reclamation approval was a betrayal of the people of Okinawa.

73.8 percent of the US military bases (those for exclusive US use) in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa, which is only .6 percent of the total land mass of Japan. 18.3 percent of the Okinawa Island is occupied by the US military. Futenma Air Base originally was built during the 1945 Battle of Okinawa by US forces in order to prepare for battles on the mainland of Japan. They simply usurped the land from local residents. The base should have been returned to its owners after the war, but the US military has retained it even though now almost seven decades have passed. Therefore, any conditional return of the base is fundamentally unjustifiable.

The new agreement would also perpetuate the long suffering of the people of Okinawa. Invaded in the beginning of the 17th century by Japan and annexed forcefully into the Japanese nation at the end of 19th century, Okinawa was in 1944 transformed into a fortress to resist advancing US forces and thus to buy time to protect the Emperor System. The Battle of Okinawa killed more than 100,000 local residents, about a quarter of the island's population. After the war, more bases were built under the US military occupation. Okinawa "reverted" to Japan in 1972, but the Okinawans' hope for the removal of the military bases was shattered. Today, people of Okinawa continue to suffer from crimes and accidents, high decibel aircraft noise and environmental pollution caused by the bases. Throughout these decades, they have suffered what the U.S. Declaration of Independence denounces as "abuses and usurpations," including the presence of foreign "standing armies without the consent of our legislatures."

Not unlike the 20th century U.S. Civil Rights struggle, Okinawans have non-violently pressed for the end to their military colonization. They tried to stop live-fire military drills that threatened their lives by entering the exercise zone in protest; they formed human chains around military bases to express their opposition; and about a hundred thousand people, one tenth of the population have turned out periodically for massive demonstrations. Octogenarians initiated the campaign to prevent the construction of the Henoko base with a sit-in that has been continuing for years. The prefectural assembly passed resolutions to oppose the Henoko base plan. In January 2013, leaders of all the 41 municipalities of Okinawa signed the petition to the government to remove the newly deployed MV-22 Osprey from Futenma base and to give up the plan to build a replacement base in Okinawa.

We support the people of Okinawa in their non-violent struggle for peace, dignity, human rights and protection of the environment. The Henoko marine base project must be canceled and Futenma returned forthwith to the people of Okinawa.

January 2014

Norman Birnbaum, Professor Emeritus, Georgetown University

Herbert Bix, Emeritus Professor of History and Sociology, State University of New York at Binghamton

Reiner Braun, Co-president International Peace Bureau and Executive Director of International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms

Noam Chomsky, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

John W. Dower, Professor Emeritus of History, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Alexis Dudden, Professor of History, University of Connecticut

Daniel Ellsberg, Senior Fellow at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, former Defense and State Department official

John Feffer, Co-director of Foreign Policy In Focus (www.fpif.org) at the Institute for Policy Studies

Bruce Gagnon, Coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space

Joseph Gerson (PhD), Director, Peace & Economic Security Program, American Friends Service Committee

Richard Falk, Milbank Professor of International law Emeritus, Princeton University

Norma Field, Professor Emerita, East Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago

Kate Hudson (PhD), General Secretary, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

Catherine Lutz, Professor of Anthropology and International Studies, Brown University

Naomi Klein, Author and journalist

Joy Kogawa, Author of *Obasan*

Peter Kuznick, Professor of History, American University

Mairead Maguire, Nobel Peace laureate

Kevin Martin, Executive Director, Peace Action

Gavan McCormack, Professor Emeritus, Australian National University

Kyo Maclear, Writer and Children's author

Michael Moore, Filmmaker

Steve Rabson, Professor Emeritus, Brown University/ Veteran, United States Army, Henoko, Okinawa, 1967-68

Mark Selden, a Senior Research Associate in the East Asia Program at Cornell University

Oliver Stone, Filmmaker

David Vine, Associate Professor of Anthropology, American University

The Very Rev. the Hon. Lois Wilson, Former President, World Council of Churches

Lawrence Wittner, Professor Emeritus of History, State University of New York/Albany

Ann Wright, Retired US Army Colonel and former US diplomat

(In the alphabetical order of family names, as of January 7, 2014)