



*Your best source for antiwar
news, viewpoints, and activities*

Osprey Aircrafts in Okinawa

Posted By [Allen Mendenhall](#) On August 8, 2013

The U.S. military was planning to increase the number of CV-22 Osprey transport aircrafts – tiltrotor helicopters that look like massive, flying crabs – in Okinawa Prefecture, which the U.S. has occupied since the end of World War II. The plans were foiled when a U.S. military helicopter crashed on Monday during a routine training exercise.

Okinawa Prefecture consists of 41 municipalities among the several islands along the southernmost coast of Japan. In January, local officials from the Okinawa Prefecture, including several mayors, who have grown accustomed to being ignored by politicians in Tokyo and Washington, traveled to Tokyo to express their exasperation with the deployment of these aircrafts. Their hope is that the recently elected Shinzo Abe, an ardent nationalist, will, unlike his recent predecessors, stand up to the U.S. military and respond sympathetically to the anti-base protests of the Okinawan people.

There is, however, little reason to believe that Abe will be different from his predecessors. Elected last December, he and his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) have moved to remilitarize Japan. It is true that his Defense Minister, Itsunori Onodera, has suggested that the deployment of Osprey aircrafts will unduly burden the people of Okinawa and that he will ask the U.S. to reconsider its decision to station the aircrafts there. But such lip-service is merely protocol; the Okinawans are not fooled.

Abe is no doubt aware that standing up to the American government could cost him his job, [as it did his predecessor, Yukio Hatoyama](#), who was forced to resign when the Obama administration refused to back down to his demands that the U.S. close the unpopular Futenma Air Base on Okinawa. President Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Robert Gates saw to it that Hatoyama, a threat to U.S. policy in the region, was discredited in the Japanese media and [eventually unseated from office](#). In the U.S., meanwhile, media mostly ignored the fact that their Nobel Peace Prize winning president had ousted the leader of one of the U.S.'s strongest allies.

The Obama administration could not have done it alone, at least not without provoking media backlash. Politicians from both parties in Tokyo helped by reaching out to the Obama administration and by pressuring Hatoyama to resign so that [another Washington pawn](#) could take office. Japanese politicians have long been aware of the political benefits of supporting U.S. military policies and activities in the region, including having someone to blame when military adventurism on behalf of Japan results in mistakes or, say, helicopter crashes.

These same politicians, both within and outside Abe's party, are seeking to undermine that country's pacifist constitution by revoking Article 9, which renounces war and prohibits Japan from maintaining armed forces. Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso has even suggested that politicians in Japan can learn from the way in which the Nazis changed the Weimar Constitution rapidly and without prohibitive public oversight. Media in both the United States and Japan are treating that comment as a "gaffe" rather than a slipped confession about the true intent not just of one politician, but of the political classes in general. Ironically, the alleged gaffe came within days of the announcement that, in Yokohama, the government would unveil a warship larger than any Japan has produced since WWII.

Although the Okinawan people have a voice in some Japanese newspapers, the American people remain mostly ignorant about the situation in Okinawa. Perhaps recent events might change that. The helicopter crash this week raises concerns about the safety and security of Okinawans who have long complained about the dangerous military activities taking place on and around U.S. Marine bases there. The incident brings back memories of 2004, when a U.S. helicopter crashed into a university building in Okinawa.

It's time to raise awareness about the plight of the Okinawans in general and the deployment of Osprey aircraft in particular. This week's helicopter crash is a reminder of how reckless the American military has been in Okinawa. From rapes to crime to pollution, the U.S. military has wreaked havoc throughout the prefecture.

Asked about this week's helicopter crash, local mayor Hiroshi Toyama said, "We knew it was going to happen sooner or later." The question is, why hasn't anyone been able to prevent foreseeable accidents like these? The answer is in something Murray Rothbard said not that long ago: "[T]he State is far more interested in preserving its own power than in defending the rights of private citizens."

Allen Mendenhall is a writer and an attorney who has written about Okinawa for Chronicles, Antiwar.com, Counterpunch, Taki's Magazine, Liberty, and Michigan State University International Law Review. Visit his website at AllenMendenhall.com.

Read more by Allen Mendenhall

- [Obama Out of Okinawa](#) - December 21st, 2010
-

Article printed from Antiwar.com Original: <http://original.antiwar.com>

URL to article: <http://original.antiwar.com/mendenhall/2013/08/08/osprey-aircrafts-in-okinawa/>