

U.S. Ambassador Faces Protests in Okinawa Visit



Tokyo, February 14 (RHC)-- The U.S. ambassador to Japan, Caroline Kennedy, visited the southern island of Okinawa amid local protests against the U.S. military presence. Kennedy met with Okinawa's governor, Hirokazu Nakaima, who has agreed to relocate a U.S. base from a densely populated urban area to a more remote location.

But a decades-long movement of Okinawa residents has opposed the base altogether and pushed for ousting U.S. forces off the island, citing environmental concerns and sexual assaults by U.S. soldiers.

Since 1972, U.S. servicemembers have been accused of more than 5,800 crimes, including 26 murders and 128 rapes. At their meeting, Kennedy pledged cooperation while the governor urged the United States to address local concerns.

Kennedy faced a protest from a crowd of several hundred. Critics have denounced her visit as an empty gesture as she won't be meeting with the recently re-elected mayor of Nago, the town where the base is to be moved. The mayor, Susumu Inamine, campaigned on a pledge to block construction of the replacement site.



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