

Okinawa Governor Vows to Continue Fight Against U.S. Base Construction



Tokyo, May 21 (RHC)-- The governor of Okinawa in Japan has pledged to continue his fight against the construction of a new US airbase on the southern Japanese island, saying he is ready to take his case to Washington.

Takeshi Onaga said Wednesday in the capital, Tokyo, that he was "confident" he could stop the base construction in the Henoko district of the southern city of Nago.

Onaga and local residents are against the U.S. and Japanese governments' plans to relocate the existing U.S. Futenma airbase in Ginowna City to Henoko due to concerns over high levels of aircraft noise, accidents in civilian areas and rampant crimes -- such as rape -- by the US soldiers stationed at the base.

Many Henoko citizens are opposed to the construction of the military base, saying it would also endanger the coral reef, tropical fish and other marine life around the island.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has persistently expressed his support for the project as his government considers it a key component to Japan's military alliance with the United States. Onaga said Abe's

administration takes Okinawans' sacrifices for granted, adding: "The government took our land and tells us to shoulder the burden of U.S. bases."

"We want them to halt the construction and hold discussions," he said. The Okinawa governor argued that the US bases are "obstacles" for the island's economic development.

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