

Japanese Stage Massive Rally Outside U.S. Base in Okinawa



Tokyo, June 17 (RHC)-- Scuffles have broken out between Japanese police and anti-US protesters who were out on the streets to voice their anger at the U.S. military presence on the Okinawa island.

Large crowds of demonstrators gathered outside the U.S. Marine base, called Camp Schwab, in Okinawa Prefecture on Friday to denounce US troops in their country. They also vented their anger at a plan by the government to relocate a contentious U.S. military base in Okinawa.

The angry protesters blocked the main gate of the base and chanted slogans against the relocation plan, holding banners that read, "Marines Out."

A series of violent clashes erupted as police attempted to forcefully break up the gathering. A major sit-in protest with a similar objective has also been organized on Okinawa Island.

Okinawa has become known as the site of enduring tensions with the U.S. forces deployed there. Protests have become increasingly intense after a US base employee was recently arrested following the suspected rape and murder of a local woman.

More than half of the 47,000 U.S. military forces in Japan are stationed in Okinawa. The United States and Japan agreed in 1996 to relocate the U.S. Marines' Futenma base, currently in a heavily populated

area, to a new site in Okinawa.

However, many residents whose prefecture was the only part of Japan to suffer a bloody land battle during World War II want the base and the U.S. military off their land altogether.

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