

U.S. Base Worker Arrested for Drunk-driving in Okinawa



Tokyo, June 27 (RHC)-- A U.S. employee of the military base on the Japanese island of Okinawa was arrested Sunday on charges of driving under the influence (DUI), amid protests against crimes linked to the heavy U.S. military presence in Japan.

According to a local police spokesman, the 24-year-old U.S. Air Force worker was arrested when he failed to stop at an intersection and collided with a car. The driver of the car was reportedly unhurt. A breath test indicated the American's alcohol level was four times the legal limit, said the spokesman, whose name was not mentioned in the report.

The U.S. Army had banned its troops on Okinawa from drinking alcohol following a drink-driving accident that injured two people on June 6th.

Tens of thousands of Japanese protesters recently gathered outside Camp Schwab Marine Corps Base in Okinawa prefecture to denounce the presence of U.S. troops in their country. Demonstrations have become increasingly intense after a U.S. base employee was recently arrested following the suspected rape and murder of a local woman.

Police found the DNA matching the dead woman's in a car belonging to Kenneth Franklin Shinzato, a former U.S. Marine who worked at the U.S. Air Force's Kadena Air Base in Okinawa.

Shinzato is accused of having raped and murdered 20-year-old Rina Shimbukuro, before dumping her body in the village of Onna, according to local media.

Japanese locals complain about allegations of sexual abuse by the American soldiers, and are involved in a row with the Japanese government over the planned relocation of the U.S. camp on the island. They are against the relocation, and want the camp totally removed.

In March, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Japan would temporarily halt construction work on the relocation of the US-run Futenma air base to the island's town of Henoko.

Japan's Okinawa prefecture is home to 50,000 American forces. U.S. forces were reportedly involved in more than 1,000 sex crimes in Japan between 2005 and 2013.

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