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Reducing the Burden of Military Bases on Okinawa:

Implications of the New Security Environment

Translation of Kyouji Yanagisawa's Remarks

Opening: 10:40 - 23:22

Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to give a simplified explanation of our Bankoku Shinryo Proposal. Following that, I would like to discuss each issue one by one. I would like to thank the East-West Center not only for hosting us, but for your kind introductions as well.

I would like to share my screen and show my PowerPoint. Can everyone see my screen? I have written out subtitles for my explanation. So, I will start with the Henoko project and Futenma.

11:45 First, I will talk about the issues regarding the Henoko Project and then about Futenma. Second, I will talk about US-China strategic competition and the implications for Okinawa. Third, I will talk about the new operational concepts of the US military and the effect on Okinawa. Fourth, I will talk about the Indo-Pacific diplomacy and the effects on Okinawa. For number 5, the person who wrote this is actually not in attendance in this meeting, but I will talk about reducing tensions in the Asia-Pacific region and Okinawa. Finally, for 6, I will discuss the status of the Forces Agreement and Local Governments.

13:16 To start off—and the Governor of Okinawa also mentioned this earlier when he was talking about the 1996 SACO—I want to remind everyone as a frame of reference that it was founded in 1996 and it has been 25 years since then. In addition, next year in 2022, it will be officially 50 years since Okinawa reverted back to Japan. Despite that, though, it has not changed that 70.3% of the land is exclusively used by the US military base. Only 0.6% of the land is used by the citizens of Okinawa. That has not changed the past.

14:16 So now I would like to discuss the dangers surrounding the Henoko project and Futenma. As you are all aware, the Henoko project is a very dangerous one. Regarding Futenma, it is a dangerous situation as well. In 2004, there was an accident at a college nearby by the base involving a helicopter. Even now, at some of the elementary schools and nursery schools nearby, there have been reports of accidents where parts of the airplanes fell and hit the schools. This is happening while the kids are at school. So this is not just necessarily happening in Futenma. This is happening all over the Okinawa military base. We really consider this a very pressing, important issue.

However, looking at the government of Japan and the US for that matter as well, this issue is not being taken very seriously. In fact, the governments are having a difficult time believing this issue is as serious

as it is. However, the Japanese government is in the process of putting measures in place to mitigate the danger surrounding the issue with Futenma. The government considers Henoko to be the best solution available. In my opinion, not only is it not the best solution, it is the worst possible solution they could go for and the way they are going about this is preposterous. It is an impossible option.

There is also the technical issue of being able to reach the sea floor in Oura Bay. As far as building the island is concerned, according to the Japanese government, not only is it estimated to take 12 years to build, but also 930 billion yen to build in entirety.

In April, they finished building Camp Schwab. In terms of surface area, that is only 25%. For the entire Henoko project, the total surface area needed is 206.2 million meters cubed. The construction is running late, and currently only 6% of that is completed. I would like to reiterate that there is a technical issue. While Schwab in the south has already been completed, in the north near Oura Bay, the issue is a lot more complex. Not to mention, in Oura Bay, in the part where the sea floor is the deepest, it is 90 meters to the sea floor. Up until now, when Japan has done construction to build islands, the furthest they have ever had to go to sea level is 70 meters. 90 meters is deeper than they have ever done and past their technological capabilities at the moment. In terms of this project, there are special ships to help build the island, but at the moment they are only capable of being used to go up to 70 meters. Honestly, at this time, we should only consider building up to 70 meters as what is possible for us.

Around 72.15% of the people in Okinawa are against this project. As a completely separate issue, around Oura Bay, they will need more soil. As of now the plan is to take the soil from the main island from the Rambu region of Okinawa. But the problem is that area has many of the buried remains of the people who lost their lives in WWII, so they will be taking the soil from where the remains are buried. If they were to go through taking the soil from where the remains are buried, then the opposition to the project in Okinawa would grow even more severe. That is why I am against this project technologically, politically, and fiscally. I find this preposterous.

Americans view this as a Japanese issue and Japan views this as Okinawa's issue. Biden and Suga collaborated and released a declaration regarding this issue. In that declaration, they said that the Henoko project is the best option. The US can't think of this as only the Japanese government's problem. As a country, the US needs to verify what it is they can do to contribute. At least, that is my opinion.

In addition, regarding the Futenma issue, in terms of frequency of departure and arrival of helicopters from the airport, rather than substantial decreases in flight frequency, we're seeing a trend toward a substantial increase in recent years.

In 2017, there were 13,581 flights. In 2018, there were 16,332 flights. In 2019, there were 16,848 flights. 2020 numbers haven't been finalized quite yet, but we're seeing a trend toward increases in operations. The number of helicopters at Futenma is steadily increasing as well. There's also an increase in the number of imported airplanes from other bases as well. So, in regard to the danger surrounding the Futenma issue, we are seeing the opposite effect. Danger and issues are supposed to decrease, but it is increasing instead. I think it will be very important for both the Japanese and US governments to take immediate action regarding this operation. Thank you so much. That is all from me.

Q&A 1: From Jeffrey Hornung: “I have 2 questions, one technical and one of a broader/strategic nature. Technical: Kansai airport ran into multiple difficulties relating to a soft seabed, yet Japanese engineers were able to overcome that problem and build a very large international airport. Are you suggesting that the issue at Henoko is exponentially worse than that despite the smaller footprint? Broader/strategic: There is a lot of talk about the cost of Futenma/Henoko and the benefits of dispersing forces. I do agree with the operational benefits of dispersal, but there are also costs of having to surge forces from far way and bringing them into a disputed battlespace with likely degraded communications, and vulnerable at integration locations. Did your research team consider the operational costs associated with a dispersed footprint when reaching conclusions about 'costs'?”

1:12:33-1:19:45

Present-day Japan is completely different from Japan in the Korean War and the Vietnam War. With the issue being an issue with missile balance. During the Vietnam War and the Korean War, there was not as much of a threat of attack from China or from North Korea. Nowadays, China—and Korea for that matter—are testing their missiles. So, there is more to worry about. It is really important for the US's will and intent to be stronger than that of China's or else we will not be able to deter them from making provocations of attacks. So, the US's will needs to be stronger than China's but China's is *very far* from weak. If the US's will is not strong enough, then they will not be able to deter China. But on the other hand, if it is too strong, they are going to risk starting another war. So, the situation that they are facing is very complicated right now. So rather than just preserving the base, we need to be flexible and think of diplomatic countermeasures. The US and China really need to be more vigilant about engaging in effective conversations. Otherwise, we will end up in a really risky situation due to relying too heavily on military power. We have to think of the best way to deal with the base in Okinawa to maintain stability and think of ways to reorganize the base.

In addition, there is a technical issue as well. At Kansai airport and Haneda airport, the airports were also built on the sea.

We collected sand and poured it into the ocean to create small islands to build these on top. These two airports are in a similar situation to Henoko airport. Making this land requires drilling and inserting a pole deep into the ground. There is a point at which the ground is soft and concrete. For Haneda and Kansai airport, that point is located at about 50 meters. At Henoko however, the pole needs to be at 90 meters, but we do not currently have the technical capabilities to do that. Therefore, I am in disagreement with this project.

How about doing that instead? (That is, using the resources we have at our disposal rather than spending the resources to make a brandnew island). There is certainly enough space in the surface area. They should focus on using what they have. There is not really any need to build anything new.

Q&A 2: From Hiroshi Meguro [Translated by Dr. Mike Moichizuki as original question was in Japanese]: Asking about a possible compromise to enable the return of Futenma. For example, he asks about Okinawa Prefecture accepting the southern part of the FRF project that has already progressed while stopping the FRF plan in the northern area on the Oura Bay side with the soft sea bed. On this side, construct a wharf or pier type facility or a facility within the Camp Schwab—in other words a southern Henoko facility plus alpha. Meguro-san if there is any consideration of such a compromise among the panelists.”

1:23:08 - 1:26:00

I am sure other people have something to add, but I would like to say my piece. Although the Henoko project has already started, we are having technical issues. The ground is so soft that we have to insert the pole very deep. We have to stack several poles together to reach that hard, concrete point. As a plan B, rather than building a large airport, it might be a good idea to consider using the resources we already have to make a heliport for landing rather than an airport with a large runway. They should use what they already have and what already exists. That should be more than enough for negotiation, but this should have been discussed in further detail on both sides. At the moment, the government is trying to have a dialogue with the governor of Okinawa. It has been a bit difficult to have a breakthrough. That is all from me. If anyone has anything else to add, the floor is yours.