

Where is Yanbaru?

The wide forest area in the northern part of Okinawa island is called Yanbaru. Its subtropical natural forest and mountain streams provide habitats for over 5,000 species of wild life and more than a thousand species of plants. Out of these, some 11 animals and 12 plants are native to Yanbaru alone. Many of them are listed in the endangered species Red List, such as the Yanbaru Kuina (Okinawan Rail) or Noguchi Gera (Okinawan Woodpecker). It's such a valuable storage of wildlife that even the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) requests its preservation. This same area is now also a World Natural Heritage Site and National Park nominee, and in the middle of all this, is the village of Takae.



Takae in Higashi village and the U.S. military bases

Higashi is one of the villages in Yanbaru, and the small district located in the northern part of it is called Takae. Its population is approximately 150 people, 20% being teenagers and younger. The kids are happily growing up in Peacefulness of the surrounding beautiful mountains and rivers. However, adjacent to this natural area is the U.S. marines' Northern Training Area (Jungle Warfare Training Center), which totals up to 7,800 hectares. America started using this training area in 1957, a few years before U.S. went down in to the quagmire of the Vietnam War, mainly for the purpose of guerrilla warfare training. Originally there were 22 helipads scattered around the training area. Takae residents have been forced to suffer from the ear-breaking sound of the propellers, as well as facing the possibility that helicopters might fall out of the sky. Even so, six of the existing 22 helipads are being relocated and have been scheduled for construction in a pattern that completely surrounds Takae, the closest being only 400 meters away from the nearest residence. Currently, one of the six helipads has been completed. The new helipads will have a diameter of 75m cutting into this pristine forest. Although these may appear as individual spots on a map, when military helicopters fly around between these spots, the spots quickly become lines cutting across the canopy.



Why are the helipads planned to be located in Takae? What is the SACO agreement?

SACO is a term that always appears when discussing U.S. military bases in Okinawa. In 1995, right after the tragedy of three American soldiers raping a local girl, approximately one hundred thousand people in Okinawa demonstrated against the U.S. military's presence. In 1996 as a response to this, U.S. and Japanese governments established SACO (Special Action Committee on Okinawa), which aimed at "reducing the impact of the activities of U.S. forces on communities in Okinawa." However, the actual and hidden intention of this committee was "restructuring and re-strengthening of the bases."

The pretext of returning half of the Northern Training Area to Okinawa came with two preconditions that had been agreed on by both of the governments.

1. To provide the estuary region of Uka river in order to ensure access from the Training Area to the ocean.
2. Relocation of helipads to the remaining Training Area. The latter point resulted in the six helipads to be built around Takae.

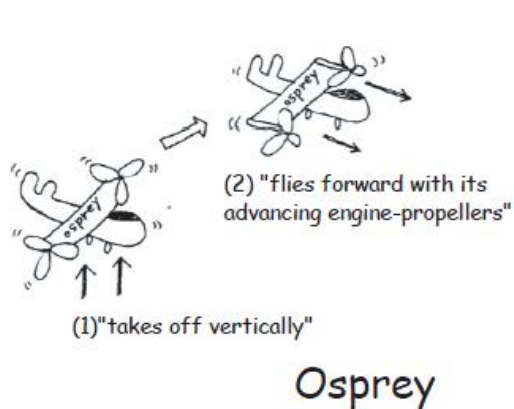


Osprey flight drills around Takae

In 2012, the new MV22 Osprey was deployed as a replacement of the large transport helicopter CH 46. Even now, not only have the deafening roars become a source of worry, low-altitude flight exercises occasionally cause branches to tear and be blown onto the prefectural highways. No light flight drills during the middle of the night are also part of routine. The current situation is already becoming dangerous. Osprey is capable of both vertical take-off and landing as well as high speed horizontal flying due to its unique ability of changing the direction of its two large propellers, located at each side of its wings. However, this advantage also comes with risks, seeing as maintaining the balance of the aircraft while performing this critical change makes it more challenging to operate than a conventional helicopter. In the case of engine trouble while in heli-mode (see picture 1), seeing as there's no auto-rotation system installed for safety, it would likely fall right out of the sky without further ado. In the case of an emergency landing while in flight-mode (see picture 2), the over-sized propellers are designed to rip into the ground, tear themselves into pieces and scatter all over in a way that doesn't damage the hull of the aircraft.

During take-off and landing, it gives off a tremendous roar as well as a powerful air blast directed vertically downwards (approx. 217°C). In America there has already been a fire accident related to Osprey. Seeing as these helipads will be located around Takae which in turn is located in the forest of Yanbaru, there's no telling as to what consequences these activities will have on the ecosystems. What may happen to the people and vehicles travelling around the prefectural roads adjacent to these helipads and to the neighboring residents? Even in America have there been movements aimed at stopping further production of these airplanes due to the danger they pose. However, in America, as many as 2000 companies involved in the military defense industry depend on the continued production of Osprey for their livelihood and thus for economic reasons the production has been allowed to continue.

In 2012, the Okinawan prefectural assembly and all the municipal assemblies united in opposition of deployment of Osprey. The prefectural governor too announced his opposition. Nevertheless, Japan acted the same way as they did with the nuclear radiation opposition, saying things like "it's safe" and "it won't cause many accidents" while proceeding with their original plan of deploying Osprey.



Okinawa's water is being contaminated!

There are five dams within the Northern Training Area. These are crucial to the people living in Okinawa seeing as they provide as much as 60% of the total water supply on the island. In 2007, more than 10,000 wasted ammunition shells were found in these dams. Also, it has been revealed recently that the U.S. forces spayed defoliant (Agent Orange) around the area during the Vietnam War. If the helipads are constructed, jungle training too will possibly see a further increase, thus overall adding to the anxiety concerning contamination of the water in these dams.



Money and Bases = Carrot-and-stick

Although having shown clear opposition against the construction of helipads in his election manifesto, upon being elected and installed as the new mayor of the Higashi Village district in 2007, he made a complete turn-around and then apologized to the people saying "I am aware that I broke the promise". Behind his change of mind was this: The Japanese government enacted a bill for facilitating and realigning the U.S. forces, providing subsidies to affected municipalities in return for accepting the U.S. bases. In this case, the Japanese government didn't even try to hide the implementation of the so-called "carrot-and-stick" policy.

Some say that Okinawa should accept the U.S. forces seeing as they bring economic advantages. However, the reality is that the majority of those provided subsidies tend to end up in the pockets of private companies from mainland Japan, thus contributing little to bolster local economies. What's more, accommodating the U.S. forces adds to the economic burden on the local governments seeing as they are required to spend budget also on the maintenance of roads and buildings used exclusively by the military. Although some also say that there are certain employment opportunities thanks to the U.S. bases, despite 74% of all U.S. bases in Japan being located in Okinawa the income and unemployment rates are the worst among all the prefectures in Japan. This doesn't add up. The more the common sense belief of that "we can't live without the bases" is being passed around, the more easily are the people controlled. Furthermore, the "carrot-and -stick" policy is creating chaos within the municipalities and separation of the people.



Takae at the moment...

Residents of Takae formally opposed the helipads twice upon learning about the scheduled construction. Thereafter, we paid the related institutions a visit where we appealed them to

revise the plans. However, we were shown neither the respect of being given a proper explanation nor room to talk things over. Ignoring our voices, the Defense Bureau proceeded with their construction plans and initiated work on July 2, 2007. From this day onwards, we have been dedicated to sit-in and protest activities as well as spreading awareness about our situation. Seeing as only a few households are actually able to participate in the sit-in activities, we are still short on hands. Why don't you participate in the movement by sitting in with us? If there's anything unclear, any questions please feel free to contact us. Takae offers quiet mornings, bird song, star-spangled night skies and so much more.

We need everyone's attention!

Even today as you're reading this, sit-in protest is taking place in Takae. This area of great nature has become the forefront for the nation heading towards warfare potential, Japan. This is not a particular issue of Takae; the same situation might occur at any time anywhere in Japan and in other parts of the world. The U.S. military and Japan's self-defense forces are steadily combining by wasting our taxes to realign the forces (budget of 3,000 billion yen).

So as if only to enable us to guard the future of our children, and to ensure a peaceful future for all, we request your kind attention to this issue!

Come to Takae!

*Participate in the movement by sitting in with us!
You can see and feel what is really going on in Takae.

Contact with "No Helipad Takae Resident Society"

e-mail: info@nohelipadtakae.org

Postal Address: Takae 85-12, Higashi Village, Okinawa JAPAN
zip 905-1201

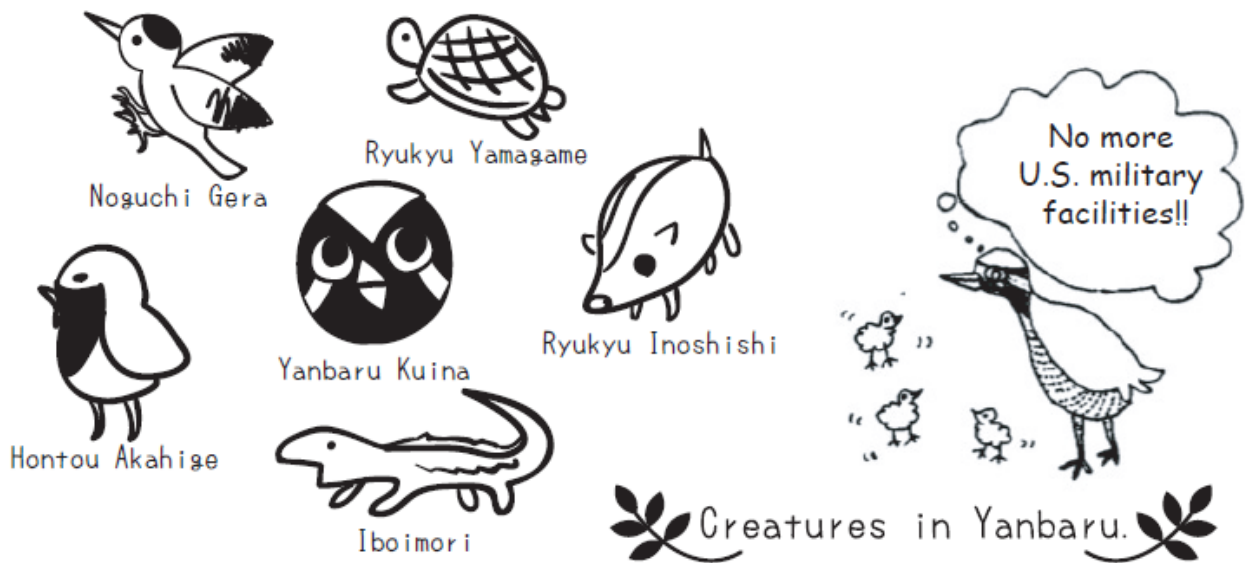
TEL and FAX: +81-980-51-2688

NO Norsk bokmål (Norge) ?

Finally, the words of a Native American

"In every deliberation, we must consider the impact on the seventh generation".

In other words, not just thinking about the short term present, but also considering the future of our children when making decisions is vital. Every single little decision we make will affect how our future lives turn out. What will our children be inheriting from us? We simply can't help but wish that it will be peaceful days among the tranquil treasures of nature.



TAKAE Thereafter.

July 2, 2007-October 1, 2013



Outrageous! Japan sues protesting Takae residents



Taking us to court to eliminate the resistance simply for not going along with whatever the country imposes?! If they get away with this in Takae, who's to tell they won't try get away with it in other places too?! If we lose even our freedom of speech, then where will we be? This trial concerns more than just Takae.



A flawed provisional injunction – why even a child?

On November 2008, ODB (Okinawa Defense Bureau, a subordinate agency of Ministry of Defense) filed 15 residents and supporters a provisional injunction with the Naha District Court for obstructing the construction. Out of these 15 was an eight-year old child who hadn't even been at the sit-in site once (although at a later date charges were dropped). Against this governmental decision, a team of 24 volunteer lawyers was organized to protect our rights. The litigation documents the government submitted to the court were

very faulty. As we pointed out at the court, there were multifarious mistakes found in the documents such as scrambling of the names and faces of the accused.



SLAPP lawsuit (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation)

Like this, a powerful institution like a company or country uses its power to intimidate the weaker into shrinking back from their demands. While in America this kind of lawsuit is made illegal by law, in Japan there has still been no way to prevent the SLAPP cases. As regards the Takae case, surely Japan filed a SLAPP lawsuit against the residents using its judicial powers, without even trying to set up negotiations or dialogue.



About the lawsuit – why just two?

December 2009, in the court ruling put forward by the Naha District Court, sit-in as an expression of protest was found to be a legitimate action. Moreover, the ridiculous charges regarding appealing for assistance on our blog and expressing our dissatisfaction at the Defense Bureau were mostly dropped. However, out of the remaining 14, two were petitioned with having obstructed traffic on a public road. The petition was approved by the court. Not that these two had done anything different from the others, it's just that their names stood out as the representatives of the 'Resident Assembly of We Don't Need Helipads' association. As a response to this the residents objected while Japan kept pressing charges against the two. The result was this lawsuit.



Appeal to a second instance court – why just one person?

As was the case with the provisional injunction, the evidence put forth for this lawsuit too were faulty. The judge pointed out that this type of case ought to be dealt with not in a courtroom but in a political arena. Nevertheless, the charges were not dropped, and the judgement fell on March 2012, based on the criteria simply of whether traffic was obstructed or not. The charges against one of the two were dropped, while the other however was found guilty of having partly obstructed traffic. In reality however, there was no difference in their actions. Having received such an unfair sentence, the residents appealed the case to the Fukuoka High Court.



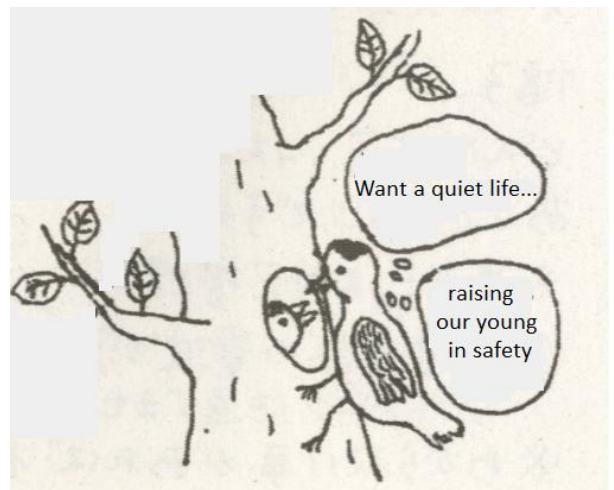
The appeal hearing and the sentence – without even a fair reason –

The appeal to a second instance court was dismissed by the Naha District Court and the judgment fell in disfavor of that same resident. The case has now been appealed to the Supreme Court and awaiting approval.



The outrageous lawsuit still ongoing

It's rather strange that despite the fact that numerous people participated in similar kinds of obstruction activities, just because it's not realistic to be suing everyone, eventually a single person was singled out with charges of obstruction. It seems this lawsuit is all about threatening really. Well if it isn't the court system backing up the threats of the country.



We don't want the helipads to be built. We want to protect the nature of Yanbaru. We don't want the life nurturing forest of Yanbaru to be used as a training ground for killing and war. This judgement was handed down on all people who think this way.

From here on too, let's continue to say that what isn't right isn't right, and what we won't accept we won't accept. May all living things of Yanbaru stay healthy. So that the laughing of children may continue to be heard many many years from now...

A Guide to Participating in Sit-ins

We're against the construction of U.S. helipads and protest against this in the form of sit-ins.

How to get to Takae (by bus)

Highway bus Line 3
 These buses run from Naha airport to Nago bus terminal.

A hand-drawn map of Okinawa showing the route from Naha (那覇) to Takae (高江) via Nago (名護) and Henoko (辺野古).

3 buses a day!
Line 73
 One way:
 Approx.
 1h & 1200yen

From Takae		sat/sun	
7:05	7:15	7:15	7:15
15:45	15:40	15:40	15:40
18:45	18:55	18:55	18:55

From Nago bus terminal

		sat/sun	
5:50	5:55	5:55	5:55
14:20	14:20	14:20	14:20
17:15	17:30	17:30	17:30

How to get to Takae (by car)

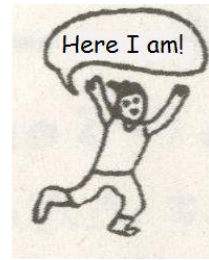
welcome!!
 around 3 hours from Naha

- Naha → Kyoda Highway IC → R58 northward
- Take a right by Ogimi-shioya Bay
- R9 → 2 tunnels → bridge → R331
- Left by Taira (平良) → R70 northwards
- Takae

A detailed hand-drawn road map showing the route from Naha to Takae. Key landmarks include Higashimura Town Hall, Ecopark, Shioya Bay, Hedo Cape, Fire station, Ogimi middle school, Family Mart, Gas station, and Takae's grocery shop. The map also shows Route 58, Route 331, and Route 70. A speech bubble says "It's okay, let's go like this!" with an arrow pointing towards Takae. Another says "Just a lil' longer." near Takae. A third says "it's roughly 1h between Henoko and Takae" with a drawing of a bird.

Clothing & things to bring

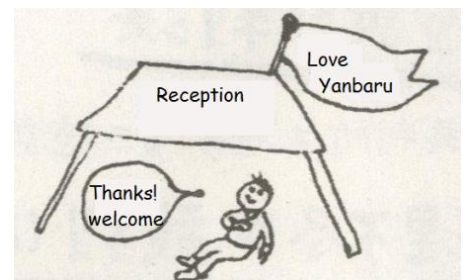
Please bring your own food and drinks (if possible in a water bottle). Although there are convenience stores along the way, we're aiming for zero garbage. Water is a must. Also, you'll need a hat, sun screen, bug repellent, rain wear and a facecloth. When it comes to preparing for the weather it's better to be safe than sorry!



- Valuables are brought at your own risk.
- There are places without cellphone cover.
- If you have any questions please call the Takae Resident Assembly at +81 980-51-2688.

When arriving at Takae

When arriving at Takae's local shop "yama-no-eki", just continue northwards along the same road (R70) until you reach a tent in front of the N4-gate. This is where we receive new volunteers and inform about the contents of each day's sit-in activity.



- Please don't hesitate to ask if anything's unclear ;)