



**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**U.S. MILITARY AVIATION MISHAPS IN JAPAN AND
OKINAWAN POLITICAL CONTROVERSY**

by

Adam T. Bean

December 2015

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Robert J. Weiner
Tristan J. Mabry

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE December 2015	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE U.S. MILITARY AVIATION MISHAPS IN JAPAN AND OKINAWAN POLITICAL CONTROVERSY			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Adam T Bean.				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT This thesis investigates the significance of U.S. military aviation mishaps in Japan. Such accidents routinely create political controversy in Okinawa, but some incidents draw more attention or ridicule than others. This study evaluates the conditions that shape the variation in how damaging aviation mishaps are to the maintenance of American bases, which are crucial to American regional strategy. Using qualitative methods, this research analyzes five U.S. military crashes in Okinawa: the 2004 CH-53 crash at Okinawa International University, the 2013 HH-60 Air Force crash near Camp Hansen, the 1988 CH-46 crash in Kunigami, the 1992 CH-46 crash at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma, and the 1959 F-100D crash at Miyamori Primary School. This study concludes that the four most significant crash factors in Okinawa are whether a crash occurred in a township, whether civilian fatalities/injuries were involved, whether there was a cluster of recent U.S. military accidents, and whether American post-crash public relations was poor. An accident involving MCAS Futenma or the U.S. Marines will be more highly politicized. Thus, a Futenma-based aircraft crashing into the township and killing civilians represents a worst-case scenario. Three crash factors that the U.S. military has the ability to influence are post-crash public relations, crash-site management, and local interagency cooperation.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS U.S. military aviation accidents, American basing presence, U.S.-Japan relations, Okinawan public opinion, political protests, Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, public relations, interagency cooperation, Japanese compensation politics			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 97	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

**U.S. MILITARY AVIATION MISHAPS IN JAPAN AND OKINAWAN
POLITICAL CONTROVERSY**

Adam T. Bean
Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy
B.S., Oregon State University, 2001

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(FAR EAST, SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2015**

Approved by: Robert J. Weiner
Thesis Advisor

Tristan J. Mabry
Second Reader

Mohammed M. Hafez
Chair, Department of National Security Affairs

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the significance of U.S. military aviation mishaps in Japan. Such accidents routinely create political controversy in Okinawa, but some incidents draw more attention or ridicule than others. This study evaluates the conditions that shape the variation in how damaging aviation mishaps are to the maintenance of American bases, which are crucial to American regional strategy. Using qualitative methods, this research analyzes five U.S. military crashes in Okinawa: the 2004 CH-53 crash at Okinawa International University, the 2013 HH-60 Air Force crash near Camp Hansen, the 1988 CH-46 crash in Kunigami, the 1992 CH-46 crash at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma, and the 1959 F-100D crash at Miyamori Primary School. This study concludes that the four most significant crash factors in Okinawa are whether a crash occurred in a township, whether civilian fatalities/injuries were involved, whether there was a cluster of recent U.S. military accidents, and whether American post-crash public relations was poor. An accident involving MCAS Futenma or the U.S. Marines will be more highly politicized. Thus, a Futenma-based aircraft crashing into the township and killing civilians represents a worst-case scenario. Three crash factors that the U.S. military has the ability to influence are post-crash public relations, crash-site management, and local interagency cooperation.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	RESEARCH DESIGN.....	2
B.	SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS.....	4
C.	THESIS OVERVIEW	4
II.	OKINAWA BASE CONSERVATION AND CONTROVERSY	7
A.	CONTEMPORARY OKINAWAN HISTORY.....	7
B.	OKINAWAN BASE POLITICS AND MCAS FUTENMA’S FUTURE	11
C.	LITERATURE REVIEW	14
1.	Historical Review	14
2.	Historical Analysis	17
D.	CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	23
III.	OKINAWAN POLITICIZATION AND COMPENSATION POLITICS	25
A.	DESTABILIZING FACTORS: OKINAWAN ANTI-BASE POLITICS	25
B.	STABILIZING FORCES.....	28
1.	Compensation Politics	29
2.	Japan’s Security Consensus.....	31
3.	Okinawan Local Government.....	33
C.	CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	34
IV.	CASE STUDY ANALYSIS AND FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH AVIATION CRASHES	37
A.	CRASH FACTORS	37
B.	2004 CH-53D CRASH VERSUS 2013 HH-60 CASE STUDY ANALYSIS	39
1.	2004 Marine Helicopter Crash at Okinawa International University.....	40
a.	<i>Aftermath of Accident.....</i>	42
b.	<i>Analysis of Crash Factors.....</i>	48
2.	2013 Air Force HH-60 Crash at Camp Hansen	49
a.	<i>Aftermath of Accident.....</i>	50
b.	<i>Analysis of Crash Factors.....</i>	52
C.	1988 CH-46 CRASH VERSUS 1992 CH-46 CASE STUDY ANALYSIS	54
1.	1988 CH-46 Crash at Kunigami	55

a.	<i>Aftermath of Accident</i>	56
b.	<i>Analysis of Crash Factors</i>	56
2.	1992 CH-46 Crash at Futenma	57
a.	<i>Aftermath of Accident</i>	57
b.	<i>Analysis of Crash Factors</i>	58
3.	1959 Air Force F-100D Crash at Miyamori Primary School	59
a.	<i>Aftermath of Accident</i>	60
b.	<i>Analysis of Crash Factors</i>	62
D.	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	62
V.	CONCLUSION—IMPLICATIONS	65
A.	ASSESSMENT OF HOW AN AVIATION ACCIDENT WILL BE POLITICIZED	65
1.	Crash Site in the Township and Civilian Fatalities/Injuries	65
2.	Cluster of Recent U.S. Military Accidents	66
3.	Poor American Post-crash Public Relations	67
B.	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. PRE-MISHAP PLAN TRAINING	67
1.	Post-crash Public Relations	68
2.	Crash-site Management	69
3.	Local Interagency Cooperation	70
C.	AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	70
1.	Broader Implications on Base Politics and Public Relations	71
2.	MCAS Futenma	71
3.	MV-22 Osprey	72
D.	SUMMARY	72
	LIST OF REFERENCES	75
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	79

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Okinawa, Japan	11
Figure 2.	Okinawa Prefectural Government.....	12

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Crash Factors Chart.....	39
Table 2.	2004 CH-53D versus 2013 HH-60 Crash Factors Chart	40
Table 3.	1988 CH-46 versus 1992 CH-46 Crash Factors Chart.....	55

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATRP	Aviation Training Relocation Program
BLC	Bureau of Local Cooperation
DFAA	Defense Facilities Administration Agency
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MCAS	Marine Corps Air Station
NPR	National Police Reserve
OPG	Okinawa Prefecture Government
OPP	Okinawa Prefecture Police
SACO	Special Action Committee on Okinawa, Special Advisory Council on Okinawa
SDF	Self Defense Force
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Robert Weiner for his advice, expertise, and patience throughout writing this thesis. Dr. Robert Eldridge served as a valuable resource during the early stages of the research process. Graduate Writing Center Coach Chloe Woida provided generous help with organizing and refining the individual chapters of my thesis.

My mother, the English major, deserves special thanks, as she always made my education a top priority. Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife, Colleen, for being the best part of my life.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite political controversy over U.S. bases in Japan, the American presence in the island country has proven its strategic advantages for the United States. Totalling almost 90 military installations from the 1950s to the 1970s, the U.S. presence in Japan was critical during the Korean and Vietnam Wars.¹ With a decreased security threat in Europe, the Obama administration made plans in 2012 to reduce overseas troops in Italy and Germany while the troops in Northeast Asia have not been reduced. The United States has been challenged by the logistical demands of fighting two wars and maintains nearly 900 military installations in 45 countries.² American overseas bases—in Japan and elsewhere—have been labeled “embattled garrisons,” strategically valuable but politically vulnerable.³ The United States needs Japan to remain committed to supporting American basing strategy in Asia. However, the American military presence in Japan, and specifically in Okinawa, is undermined by a contentious history, an anti-military culture, and animosity in the Okinawa-Tokyo-Washington relationship. Due to these factors, there is a high level of general tension between the Okinawans and the American forces.

U.S. military accidents create various levels of political controversy. American incidents are politicized in Okinawa to different degrees, shaping election results and policy decisions, and Okinawan media and political activists play a significant role in crafting public opinion. While uproar over one U.S. military aviation crash might dissipate in a few days, another crash could become a cataclysmic event, leading to unprecedented levels of protest and politicization, potentially affecting U.S.-Japan basing agreements. Using qualitative methods to assess why certain aviation accidents have been

¹ John Feffer, “Pacific Pushback: Can Japan Say No to Washington?” (JPRI Working Paper No. 116, Japan Policy Research Institute, Oakland, CA, March 2010), 1.

² Andrew Yeo, *Activists, Alliances, and Anti-U.S. Base Protests* (Cambridge: Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics, 2011), 3.

³ Kent E. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 9.

more politicized than others, this research analyzes selected U.S. military crashes in Okinawa. The analysis identifies factors characteristic of politically contentious crashes.

A. RESEARCH DESIGN

Answering the question of why some aviation accidents are more politicized than others requires further analysis of the underlying factors associated with aviation accidents and weighing those features against each other. An example of such a crash factor is crash-site location; a crash-site on base property is generally less controversial, leading to less politicization than a crash that occurs in the township. Through this analysis, this research identifies which factors are most susceptible to politicization and which factors the American military presence has the ability to influence. The goal is to gain understanding that may aid in predicting the consequences of potential future scenarios.

After reviewing the case studies, this study concludes that the four most significant crash factors in Okinawa are

- whether a crash site occurred in a township,
- whether civilian fatalities/injuries were involved,
- whether there was a cluster of recent U.S. military accidents, and
- whether American post-crash public relations was poor.

It should also be noted that an accident involving Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma or the U.S. Marine Corps will be more highly politicized than a crash involving a different American base or service. Thus, a Futenma-based aircraft crashing into the township and killing civilians represents a worst-case scenario for the American basing presence. The three crash factors that the U.S. military has the ability to influence are post-crash public relations, crash-site management, and local interagency cooperation. If the goal is to stabilize base relations in Okinawa, then American military forces need to prioritize effective public relations campaigns and interagency operations with local authorities.

This research presents five American aviation mishaps in detail: the August 2004 CH-53 crash at Okinawa International University, the August 2013 HH-60 Air Force crash on base near Camp Hansen, the 1988 CH-46 crash in Kunigami, the 1992 CH-46 crash at Futenma, and finally the 1959 F-100D crash at Miyamori Primary School. These accidents created a variety of political tension and involved a wide array of differently weighted factors. For each crash, a study is conducted of the drivers, local citizens' response, and the aftermath of each mishap. Consideration is given to Okinawan public opinion, the political positions of politicians, the ramifications of their political decisions, and voting results. Okinawan external threats are reviewed and considered against the aftermath of aviation crashes (i.e., is the politicization of a crash different when it occurs following a recent North Korean missile launch). For the purposes of this study, the dependent variable is Okinawan political controversy. This research relies upon first-hand accounts of crashes, government statements, U.S. military press releases, military documents, and scholarly accounts. Election results are evaluated alongside political speeches, local newspaper reports, and magazine articles.

In order to analyze the individual factors associated with the crashes, case study analyses are conducted in pairs. The Futenma-based 2004 CH-53D accident at Okinawa University will be introduced first because it was a highly politicized crash in the township, characterized by poor interagency cooperation, poor U.S. Marine public relations, environmental concerns, and controversy over crash site management. Providing major contrasts, the minimally politicized 2013 Air Force HH-60 accident took place on U.S. base property, included a U.S. serviceman fatality, and represented effective interagency cooperation and post-crash public relations.

Following that analysis, the highly politicized 1988 CH-46 crash at Kunigami will be evaluated, an event that led to four U.S. servicemen deaths and occurred when the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was struggling politically. This 1988 accident added to a rash of American accidents and compelled Tokyo's elites to make a political concession that Washington opposed. For comparison purposes, the moderately politicized 1992 CH-46 crash was selected because it took place after the Cold War, there were no fatalities, and there was an anti-base governor in office.

The final case study, the pre-reversion, 1959 F-100 Miyamori crash, will be reviewed individually. This accident was selected because it represents a worst-case scenario: the death of children and other civilians. A crash of this magnitude today would likely advance unforeseen levels of politicization.

B. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

To limit the scope of this thesis, certain questions are not evaluated by this research. The goal is not to prove or defend the relative impact of crashes, but to assess why there is variation between their impacts. Additionally, while aviation accidents are not the only events capable of generating political controversy (others include crime, other military accidents, and environmental damage), this research will not investigate the relationship between crashes and other catalytic incidents.⁴ Finally, due to time constraints, this study concentrates on five selected aviation mishaps so that crash-related factors can be compared and contrasted. While one crash took place in the 1950s, the other crashes occurred within the past three decades. Over the past half-century, Okinawan political activists have improved their organization, and accidents that are more recent are more relevant to predicting the consequences of a future crash.

C. THESIS OVERVIEW

To address the reasons for tensions on Okinawa, Chapter II provides a historical summary, an overview of contemporary Okinawan base politics, and a literature review of the subject. Chapter III provides an overview of two opposing forces: Okinawan political movements and Tokyo's tool of compensation politics. It also underlines the impotence of Okinawan local government relative to Tokyo's national power and strong pro-American security consensus. Chapter IV delivers case study analyses, comparing and contrasting a variety of factors associated with aviation crashes. A review of five case studies evaluates the circumstances, politicization, and aftermath of each event. The chapter concludes by identifying the factors are most susceptible to politicization and

⁴ Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 86–87.

which factors the American military presence has the ability to influence. Chapter V summarizes the results of the study and provides a reflection on contemporary Okinawa.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

II. OKINAWA BASE CONSERVATION AND CONTROVERSY

With the goal of providing a baseline understanding of the general tension between Okinawans and the U.S. military basing presence, this chapter highlights historical issues and contemporary concerns. It introduces the American basing presence, Okinawa's distinct culture, and the complicated trilateral relationship between Tokyo, Washington, and Okinawa. Next, a literature review highlights the scholarship pertaining to contentious American basing issues. Contemporary external threats and basing issues are catalogued, including debate over Futenma, its continued operation, and the controversy over its potential relocation. The legitimacy of the sustained 70-year American basing presence is examined and various arguments are presented. American basing externalities like service-member crime, accidents, and pollution are introduced to provide an understanding of the negative aspects of the U.S. presence.

A. CONTEMPORARY OKINAWAN HISTORY

Located approximately 400 miles south of mainland Japan, Okinawa is the largest island in the Ryukyu Island chain. In the 17th century, Okinawa served as tributary state to both China and Japan. Commerce brought additional influences to the island, helping to shape a distinct Okinawan culture. The local residents traditionally spoke Okinawan, until the Japanese annexed the island in 1879 and the local populace was forced to speak Japanese. Since the arrival of the Japanese in the 1870s, control over Okinawa has been tenuous. The Japanese controlled the island and enforced their will on the populace until the end of World War Two. To this day, the local population identifies itself first as Okinawan, and not Japanese.

The bloody 1945 battle for Okinawa scarred the local residents, killing one-third of the native population.⁵ The Okinawans were caught in a disadvantageous position between the attacking Americans and the retrenched Japanese. In what was termed the “typhoon of steel,” American naval and air forces bombarded the island with over

⁵ Alexander Cooley, *Base Politics: Democratic Change and the U.S. Military Overseas* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2008), 140.

120,000 tons of ammunition.⁶ During a brutal three month onslaught, the island was devastated by the effects of war as the Japanese 32nd Army, and its 110,000 men, were defeated by the Americans; included in the death toll of combatants were approximately 65,000 Japanese soldiers, 12,500 Americans, and 28,000 Okinawan recruits.⁷ Estimates vary on how many Okinawan non-combatants were killed by American fire or Japanese fire, but the fighting contributed to the long-term bitterness of Okinawans toward the Japanese, the Americans, and to the institution of war. The U.S. Marines, in particular, played a major role in the battle for Okinawa, contributing to a contentious present-day relationship between the Marine Corps and the local populace.

In the early 1950s, U.S. and Japanese leaders negotiated the permanent establishment of American bases in Japan. After defeating Imperial Japan in 1945, the United States had an initial goal of a “liberating occupation” with the intent to “occupy briefly, transform local politics in Wilsonian fashion, and then depart.”⁸ The years immediately following World War Two were dedicated to the considerable task of rebuilding and regrouping war-torn Japan. In 1947, a new Japanese Constitution was enacted, which included a ninth article that forever renounced Japan’s ability to wage war against other states as a means of resolving conflict. With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, however, American leadership actively pursued a policy of rearming Japan as a Cold War ally. Even though the Japanese constitution forbade a military, General Douglas MacArthur ordered Japan to create a 75,000 man National Police Reserve (NPR).⁹ Not labeled a military, the NPR possessed tanks, artillery, and guns; adding to the controversy, former Imperial Army officers rose to leadership positions. The Americans intended to eventually develop the NPR into an official Japanese military, but Japanese leadership had other plans.¹⁰

⁶ Kensei Yoshida, *Democracy Betrayed: Okinawa under U.S. Occupation* (Bellingham, WA: Western Washington Univ., Center for East Asian Studies, 2002), xxxii.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1, 3.

⁸ Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 109.

⁹ Richard J. Samuels, *Machiavelli’s Children: Leaders and Their Legacies in Italy and Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2005), 206.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

In September 1951, Japan finally officially regained its sovereignty when Washington and Tokyo signed an official World War Two peace treaty. In an attempt to avoid military rearmament, Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru struck a balance with the U.S. in which permanent American bases were permitted in exchange for Japanese sovereignty.¹¹ Known as the Yoshida Doctrine, the Americans agreed to provide security for Japan while the Japanese focused on economic development. The Americans were permitted to maintain bases indefinitely in Japan in order to maintain Far East security; the U.S. could project force from these bases without the permission of Japan and could refuse basing rights to any other country. This agreement benefitted Japan because they could ignore the burdens of building a normal military and the partnership proved effective well into the 21st century. Yoshida opposed revising Article 9 because the Japanese lacked an appetite for war and rearmament would have worsened relations with Asian neighbors.¹² Subsequently, Japan was able to embrace a pacifist culture and nationalize its efforts toward unprecedented economic success.

In 1952, Yoshida explained to the Diet that Article 9 could be revised following economic success and increased trust with Japan's neighbors.¹³ In a compromise with the Americans, Japan created a Self Defense Force (SDF) two years later. Following the establishment of SDF air and maritime units, Japan committed to annual military expenditures, and domestic industry began producing tanks, aircraft, and ships. Even though the SDF increased in size during the Cold War, Japan was content to rely on the Americans for national security and unchallenged basing rights. In spite of numerous basing challenges since 1945, Tokyo and Washington have cooperated to preserve a durable existence for American forces in Japan. The U.S. heavily depended on its Japanese bases to support demanding wars in Korea and Vietnam. Additionally, the Americans maintained an East Asian security presence throughout the Cold War and well into the 21st Century.

¹¹ Samuels, *Machiavelli's Children*, 207.

¹² *Ibid.*, 205.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 210.

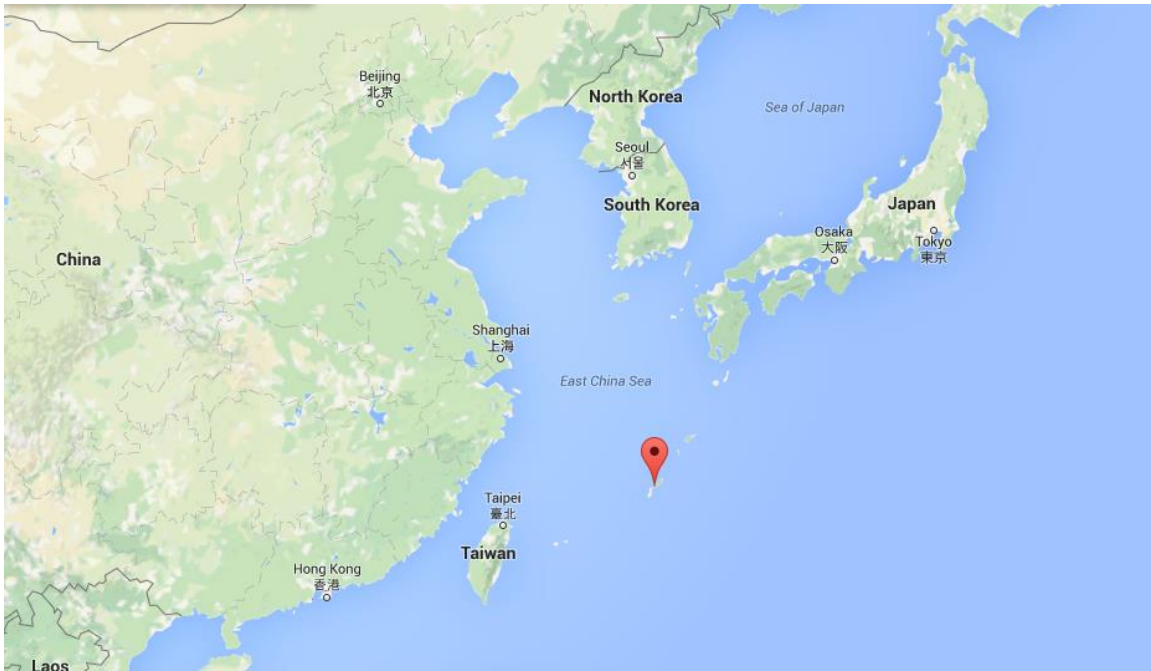
Starting in the 1950s, Japan's national economy soared to unforeseen heights. In what was termed "the Japanese miracle," Japan developed an economy that rose to become the second largest in the world during the 1980s. Japan's Liberal Democratic Party maintained a stranglehold on Tokyo's national political power throughout the three-plus decades of Japan's economic boom. The LDP remained steadfastly committed to supporting the Yoshida Doctrine and the permanent American basing presence. Near the end of the Cold War, Japan experienced an economic recession that plagued the island nation throughout the 1990s.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Tokyo remained committed to maintaining an American troop presence amidst new external security concerns including China's rise, conflict over the Senkakus, and the North Korean nuclear threat. During the North Korean Nuclear Crisis of 1994, Tokyo increased contributions to American bases in Japan by 5.4 percent.¹⁴ The United States aims to build regional relationships in an effort to multilaterally defend against a regional power transition and guard against future contingencies. Though Japan has developed one of the top militaries in the world despite constitutional limitations, Japan also currently provides a highly supportive environment for American bases there, including spending more than four billion dollars annually to support them.¹⁵

¹⁴ Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 198.

¹⁵ Feffer, "Pacific Pushback," 1.

Figure 1. Okinawa, Japan



Adapted from Google Maps. "Okinawa, Japan," n.d., <http://www.google.com/maps/@32.0372172,130.8502579,5z>.

B. OKINAWAN BASE POLITICS AND MCAS FUTENMA'S FUTURE

In large part due to the 70 years of continued American presence, tenuous political relations remain between Okinawa and Tokyo. Okinawans activists are fixated on the presence of American bases, politicizing incidents and accidents. American bases are situated on Okinawan land that was almost entirely taken from private citizens within 15 years of Japan's surrender.¹⁶ Conservatives in the Japanese government view American bases in Okinawa as honoring the security agreement between the two nations, while reformists see an illegitimate occupation. In 1972, amid Okinawan protests against American control reaching unmanageable levels during the Vietnam War, the U.S. returned control of the island to Japan. Located nearly 1000 miles away, Tokyo replaced Washington as the overall authority over Okinawa.

¹⁶ Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Holt, 2000), 51.

More than half of the nearly 50,000 American troops in Japan are Okinawa-based, assigned to 32 American installations on the island.¹⁷ A politically contentious base, Futenma is located in highly populated Ginowan, only five miles from Okinawa's capital city of Naha. Futenma averaged 142 military aircraft takeoffs each day in the late 1990s.¹⁸ Although the U.S. Air Force's Kadena is the largest military installation on the island, it draws considerably less political attention than Futenma. Numerous U.S. military incidents in Okinawa have victimized foreign civilians. Okinawan aviation accidents will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Figure 2. Okinawa Prefectural Government



Source: "Okinawa Prefectural Government," *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, n.d., http://www.japanfocus.org/data/okinawa_prefectural_government.png.

The most politicized American controversy since Okinawa's reversion, the September 1995 rape of an Okinawan girl by three U.S. servicemen led to an agreement

¹⁷ Associated Press, "U.S. Military Helicopter Crew Survives Crash on Okinawa," *Guardian*, August 5, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/05/us-military-helicopter-crash-okinawa>.

¹⁸ Johnson, *Blowback*, 47.

to permanently close the Marines' base at Futenma. Since the preliminary agreement in 1996, the goal of the Futenma plan was to close the base between 2001 and 2003.¹⁹ By 2006, an agreement was reached to close Futenma, build a new Marine base in Nago, and transfer 8,000 Marines to Guam (with Tokyo paying six-billion dollars in relocation costs).²⁰ In the 2006 election for Okinawa's governor, the LDP-backed candidate defeated the socialist, anti-base candidate by a five percent margin.²¹ This election was significant because it illuminated the economic impact of the American basing presence in Okinawa; Tokyo's provision of economic incentives proved stronger than anti-base sentiment. Although Tokyo had earmarked funds for the relocation of Futenma's move to Nago, by 2007, the new governor cancelled the plan and Tokyo increased local community payments.²²

In Okinawa, local media outlets and newspapers have remained anti-base throughout the years, politicizing controversial events and using anti-base rhetoric. The media and anti-base political activists are quick to seize any opportunity to politicize both the American base presence and American military safety record. Even an American helicopter crash in the Middle East or a V-22 Osprey wreck in the Hawaii is liable to make the local Okinawan news. The anti-base contingent seeks to keep the spotlight on local and international American operations.

Even though Japanese citizens have witnessed increased security concerns, not-in-my-backyard politics remain pervasive throughout Japan. The political fallout over gaining approval for a new Marine Henoko facility near Nago has crippled the plans for closing Futenma. Okinawan local government was able to block Henoko construction efforts for 18 years from 1996 through July 2014. Ultimately, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government overpowered opposition from Governor Takeshi Onaga and other political activists. Construction began in July 2014, but after issues with protesters,

¹⁹ Mike Mochizuki, "U.S.-Japan Agreement on Okinawa Is Not a Breakthrough," *Dispatch Japan*, April 11, 2013, 1.

²⁰ Feffer, "Pacific Pushback," 2.

²¹ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 158.

²² *Ibid.*, 159.

weather, and election considerations, assembly was suspended by November.²³ Construction at Henoko has been further convoluted by environmental considerations over “half of one of Japan’s most precious nature zones” full of biological diversity and rare marine life like the endangered sea mammal, the dugong.²⁴ The 2014 reelection of anti-base Nago City Mayor Susumu Imamine complicated Henoko construction, proving how resolute the local residents are in their opposition to the construction project. An August 2014 Pentagon announcement described Futenma remaining operational until at least 2023 or maybe until 2029.²⁵ Today, Futenma represents a microcosm of the American basing arrangement as local activists seek to close the base while Tokyo and Washington collaborate for its relocation on the island. Abe’s insistence on maintaining U.S. bases in Okinawa is contrasted by a divided Okinawan public.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section introduces contemporary debate over the American basing presence in Okinawa including the effects of crime, accidents, and pollution. First, an historical review of Okinawan basing issues is provided with a focus on the highly contentious base at Futenma and dispute over its replacement facility. Second, arguments from scholars will highlight differing opinions over the legitimacy of the American base presence in Japan, American foreign policy, external security threats, and the strategic value of Okinawan bases.

1. Historical Review

According to Kent Calder, geography is a significant driver for relations between the American forces and the local residents because increased contact (and closer proximity for bases to urban zones) leads to greater friction.²⁶ Futenma was built in 1945 and Ginowan city has encroached on the base through the years by building closer and

²³ Gavan McCormack, “Storm Ahead: Okinawa’s Outlook for 2015,” *Asia Pacific Journal* 13, issue 2, no. 3 (January 2015): 1.

²⁴ Gavan McCormack, “Okinawa’s ‘Darkest Year,’” *Asia Pacific Journal* 11, issue 33, no. 4 (August 2014): 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁶ Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 119.

closer to the base's fence-line, including Okinawa International University, constructed in 1972. Thus, Ginowan's high population density around Futenma has exacerbated relations with the U.S. Marine Corps. Mike Mochizuki classifies both the problematic nature of Futenma's urban location, its political significance, and heightened tensions following this 2004 crash: "If a tragedy were to occur, this would have a devastating effect on the alliance," and could dramatically impact not just Futenma, but Kadena, as well.²⁷ Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye expresses similar concerns about the severity of Futenma's continued operation: "Without some relief for Ginowan, another incident could blow things out of proportion and disrupt the alliance."²⁸

Base politics are a major driver of Futenma's future, even though its "actual strategic value is, at best, questionable," says John Feffer.²⁹ Kadena is commonly regarded as the more strategically significant base in Okinawa, depressing the value of its neighbor. Futenma, however, is a viable divert airfield with 9000 feet of runway and is tsunami-protected at 75 meters above sea level.³⁰ In the event of a Korean conflict, Futenma also serves as a contingency United Nations Command (Rear) Airfield.³¹ Kadena and Futenma cooperate to manage air traffic control, flight sequencing, and integrated emergency responses. If Futenma is closed, some analysts believe that the concessions will be pocketed and protesters will reorient their attention toward closing Kadena. Calder explained in 2007 that it would cost over six billion dollars to move (and replace) Kadena and its ammunition supplies from Okinawa.³²

Analysts agree that Tokyo's current leadership is deeply committed to preserving the status quo with American bases. Gavan McCormack concludes that the Tokyo-Washington-Marines relationship is very strong under Prime Minister Abe. He cautions,

²⁷ Mochizuki, "U.S.-Japan Agreement," 3.

²⁸ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 82.

²⁹ Feffer, "Pacific Pushback," 3.

³⁰ Karl L. Swartz, *Great Circle Mapper*, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://www.gcmap.com/airport/ROTM>.

³¹ U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Air Station Futenma*, accessed October 15, 2015, <http://www.mcasfutenma.marines.mil/>.

³² Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 235.

however, that forcing the relocation of Futenma to a new construction site near Henoko amidst civil opposition risks the removal of all American bases. Critics of the Henoko base plan view the project as flawed. Mochizuki cautions Tokyo's insistence on the Henoko relocation plan as potentially weakening, "Okinawan support for more strategically critical bases on Okinawa, like Kadena Air Base."³³ McCormack argues that Abe has moved Japan closer to integration with American forces for future military action by continuing support for U.S. bases in Japan, making plans for establishing the Japanese version of the Central Intelligence Agency and Marine Corps, and increasing Japanese patriotism.³⁴ McCormack concludes that during national elections in December 2014, the American basing issue in Okinawa did not register much attention; with considerable national support, Abe had a "more-or-less free hand to deploy whatever resources of the state he wishes in order to crush opposition and implement his design on all fronts."³⁵

Robert Eldridge debates Okinawa's complicated nature: "The 'base problem' is one of the many strings—the others are economic issues, social issues, historical issues, and a host of other problems—making up this knot. If one yanks on the string labeled 'base problem,' the knot will only get tighter."³⁶ With high levels of general tension between the local residents and American forces, Glenn Hook claims that even though aviation accidents bear a slight statistical risk of harming Okinawan citizens, it "does not represent a low perception of risk for many in Okinawa."³⁷

³³ Mike Mochizuki, "Nago Election Revives Doubts That U.S. Marine Facility at Henoko Will Be Built," *Dispatch Japan*, January 20, 2014, 2.

³⁴ Gavan McCormack, "The End of the Postwar? The Abe Government, Okinawa, and Yonaguni Island," *Asia Pacific Journal* 12, issue 49, no. 3 (December 2014): 1.

³⁵ McCormack, "Storm Ahead," 1.

³⁶ Robert D. Eldridge, "The Okinawa 'Base Problem' Today," *Nippon.com*, February 3, 2012, <http://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a00501/>.

³⁷ Glenn D. Hook, "Intersecting Risks and Governing Okinawa: American Bases and the Unfinished War," *Japan Forum* 22, no. 1–2 (2010): 195–217, doi: 10.1080/09555803.2010.488954.

2. Historical Analysis

Scholars agree that a high level of general tension exists in Okinawa due to the clash of Okinawan culture and the continued operation of U.S. bases. They disagree, however, on the legitimacy of sustained American base presence in Japan, the merits of the high military presence in Okinawa, and American foreign policy decisions since the end of the Cold War. Chalmers Johnson, McCormack, and Feffer are critical of America's motives in Okinawa, questioning the necessity of continued American basing at the expense of Okinawans' democratic rights. On the other side of the issue, Alexander Cooley, Mochizuki, and Eldridge view the American basing presence in Okinawan as a legitimate, functioning partnership between Japan and the United States.

Where some analysts see the continued American overseas bases as fostering effective security partnerships, others like Johnson equate it to American imperialism. Johnson argues that the United States could not have fought wars in Korea and Vietnam without Japanese basing-rights; Japan was not asked permission for these bases because Tokyo was under American control during the outbreak of the Korean War.³⁸ Instead of scaling back in the early 1990s, the United States (in the eyes of Johnson) committed to a "global empire," with foreign bases a leading component of that ambition.³⁹ Feffer acknowledges that the U.S. was fortunate during the Cold War to have nearly 90 bases in Japan and that "Japan remains the anchor of what's left of America's Cold War containment policy when it comes to China and North Korea."⁴⁰ Those critical of American foreign policy equate permanent overseas bases with imperialism. Johnson, for example, approached many issues with a critical eye toward American foreign policy and many of his points are connected to Okinawan resentment.

Analyzing Japan among host nations, Cooley and Daniel Nexon argue that Japan's government has had the ability to negotiate grievances and work directly with the

³⁸ Johnson, *Blowback*, 39.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁴⁰ Feffer, "Pacific Pushback," 2.

Americans to ensure a smooth basing arrangement.⁴¹ These authors counter Johnson by arguing that the United States infrequently asserts pressures akin to ruling over its hosts. By allowing the Americans a permanent presence in their country, Japanese leaders willfully forfeited aspects of their national sovereignty in exchange for security guarantees and other benefits.⁴² Through this bilateral relationship, Tokyo is not without recourse in its partnership with the United States. Although the United States has benefitted substantially from its foreign basing rights, these authors claim that “the U.S. basing network is not a fully-blown empire.”⁴³ Through the years, Tokyo has acquiesced to American requests to become a more active ally, because LDP ambitions “intersected so nicely with [the United States’] own plans to bend [Japan’s] peace constitution and beef up its military.”⁴⁴ Even when the LDP finally (but briefly) lost political power in 1993, the new Socialist prime minister, Murayama Tomiichi, did little to upset Tokyo’s support of America-basing rights: he declared Japan’s SDF as constitutional and labeled the security partnership with the U.S. as “indispensable.”⁴⁵

Analysts agree that Tokyo has been successful in preserving the American basing presence in spite of staunch Okinawan opposition. After Okinawa’s 1972 reversion, Eldridge contends that the majority of Okinawans felt that their daily lives were improved; however, anti-base sentiments and anti-war movements remained commonplace on the island.⁴⁶ During the 1970s, the LDP advocated for national economic success while debate over the American bases in mainland Japan subsided. According to Cooley, anti-base sentiment was confined in the early-1970s to Okinawa, which remained an impoverished prefecture.⁴⁷ By 1982, only ten percent of Okinawans

⁴¹ Alexander Cooley and Daniel H. Nexon, “‘The Empire Will Compensate You’: The Structural Dynamics of the U.S. Overseas Basing Network,” *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 4 (December 2013): 1035–6, doi: 10.1017/S1537592713002818.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 1044.

⁴⁴ Feffer, “Pacific Pushback,” 2.

⁴⁵ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 209.

⁴⁶ Robert D. Eldridge, *Post-Reversion Okinawa and U.S.-Japan Relations: A Preliminary Survey of Local Politics and the Bases, 1972–2002* (Osaka: Osaka Univ. Press, 2004), 67.

⁴⁷ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 191.

avored the status quo of American forces on their island.⁴⁸ In the 1980s, the Japanese government significantly increased their monetary contributions to the American military presence while adeptly managing the political and economic impact of American bases.⁴⁹ Cooley determines that local politics have remained polarized by a desire to rid the island of the Americans and the need to secure Okinawa's economic well-being.⁵⁰

Countering the basing proponents, Johnson (in 2000) defined American bases in Okinawa as constituting "collusion" with Japan against the Okinawans.⁵¹ He also deemed Okinawa undercompensated because only five percent of its gross domestic product came from the bases while Americans occupied 20 percent of the land, much of which was premium real estate.⁵² Although Japan enjoyed tremendous economic growth during the second half of the twentieth century, Okinawa remained the poorest prefecture, prompting Johnson's description of Okinawa as the "garbage dump" of the base-security agreement.⁵³ Equally critical of how Washington and Tokyo have collaborated against Okinawa, McCormack argues: "The state itself, with its monopoly of force and rude contempt for Okinawan wishes came to epitomize violence and lawlessness as it sought by all means to defeat an enemy that was not China or North Korea, but Okinawa."⁵⁴ Disputing the points made by Johnson and McCormack, Cooley notes that "At three key junctures in Okinawan history since reversion—1978, 1998, and 2006—local political candidates who emphasized national unity and base-related economic benefits triumphed over anti-base incumbents and candidates who questioned the U.S. basing presence and the legitimacy of its underlying agreements."⁵⁵ By electing a pro-base governor in those critical elections, Okinawans endorsed the Japanese-American basing arrangement and rejected an opportunity to change the status quo (by electing an anti-base candidate).

⁴⁸ Eldridge, *Post-Reversion Okinawa*, 71.

⁴⁹ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 215.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 156–57.

⁵¹ Johnson, *Blowback*, 57.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

⁵⁴ McCormack, "Okinawa's 'Darkest Year,'" 2.

⁵⁵ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 173.

Cooley claims that Okinawan public opinion is divided over the presence of American bases.⁵⁶

Considerable debate exists among analysts over the strategic value of American forces defending Japan from Okinawan installations. McCormack argues that American Marines protecting Japan from bases in Okinawa is not representative of sound military strategy, but politically motivated as no other prefecture was willing to permanently host the Marines.⁵⁷ In late 1989, only 5.9 percent of Okinawans felt that U.S. bases in Okinawa were required to protect Japan.⁵⁸ Supporters of the American basing arrangements in Japan view the issue from a different standpoint by claiming the bases provide the Americans with a regional presence, yielding soft-power and deterring action. In addition, Okinawa provides the Americans a presence in the East China Sea, only 400 miles from Taipei. Answering McCormack's claim, Mochizuki argues that the Washington-Tokyo alliance does not require an external threat in order to maintain a security partnership; this relationship should maintain deterrence in Northeast Asia by championing "common values, shared effort and shared decision-making."⁵⁹

Analyzing the success of anti-base political movements, Andrew Yeo refers to this tri-lateral relationship as "a two level board game with three players."⁶⁰ Although Okinawan anti-base protesters have not achieved their ultimate goal of eliminating the American presence on their island, they have achieved smaller political victories in transferring KC-130s and Harriers to Iwakuni Air Base, limiting night flights at Futenma, and minimizing jet noise at Kadena.⁶¹ Identifying changes to the global landscape, Yeo states, "the recent surge of anti-base and anti-American protests, even among alliance partners, may be indicative of fundamental changes and resistance to a U.S.-led political

⁵⁶ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 173.

⁵⁷ McCormack, "Okinawa's 'Darkest Year,'" 4.

⁵⁸ Eldridge, *Post-Reversion Okinawa*, 89.

⁵⁹ Mike Mochizuki and Michael O'Hanlon, "A Liberal Vision for the U.S.-Japanese Alliance," *Survival* 40, no. 2 (summer 1998): 133.

⁶⁰ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 2.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

order.”⁶² Feffer argues that the Obama Administration has preserved American basing rights in Japan even though American influence has declined after Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶³ Air bases in Kadena and Yokota enable the U.S. to project power and troops throughout the region alongside the U.S. Navy’s largest base on foreign soil (Yokosuka).

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, analysts have divided opinions over the necessity of maintaining overseas American bases. According to Johnson in 2000, U.S. leadership had erroneously convinced themselves that closing a single American overseas base would lead to instability and chaos, contributing to the U.S. exacting economic pressure on Asian countries as a means of diplomacy.⁶⁴ Some analysts have condemned American strategy following the Cold War where the new aim was to be able to fight two large wars in different parts of the world.⁶⁵ This strategy helped avoid identifying potential adversaries and preserved a rationale for continued American base presence. With Japan paying the U.S. approximately six billion dollars in 2002, Johnson explained that money was the main reason why American troops remained stationed on Okinawa.⁶⁶ He believed that the Americans had “virtually no deterrent effect on China’s decision-making concerning Taiwan, given the nationalistic challenge to China’s sovereignty of any Taiwanese attempt to formally declare its independence.”⁶⁷

A pro-base scholar, Eldridge argues that following the end of the Cold War, the U.S. intended to draw down American forces in Okinawa, but external dynamics prevented large changes including the 1993 beginning of North Korea’s nuclear program and the Philippines’ rejection of continued American presence at Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base.⁶⁸ Additionally, 1992 American budgetary issues barred moving

⁶² Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 6.

⁶³ Feffer, “Pacific Pushback,” 1.

⁶⁴ Johnson, *Blowback*, 229.

⁶⁵ Chalmers Johnson, “Okinawa between the United States and Japan,” JPRI Occasional Paper No. 24, *Japan Policy Research Institute*, January 2002, 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Eldridge, *Post-Reversion Okinawa*, 91.

additional ships to Sasebo, Japan. Eldridge contends that these obstacles contributed to minimal changes to the American overseas basing presence. Adding a different perspective to the strategic assessment of Okinawan bases, Mochizuki argues that the number of Marines stationed in Okinawa could be reduced without damaging the American strategic position in Northeast Asia.⁶⁹ With plans to reduce the Marine Corps by 20,000 members over the next few years, scaling back the Okinawa presence would help the local economies of Hawaii, California, and North Carolina.⁷⁰ Since Guam base construction has faced numerous challenges and the Okinawa problem remains ongoing, the Marines could leave pre-positioned equipment in the region, but reduce the numbers of boots on the ground, assuaging poor relations with Okinawans.

While some view the Americans as a peacekeeping, stabilizing force, others like Johnson have been critical of U.S. foreign policy: “Military crimes, accidents, and atrocities make up only one category on the debit side of the balance sheet that the United States has been accumulating, especially since the Cold War ended.”⁷¹ Between 1972 and 1995, American servicemen committed over 4,700 crimes in Okinawa, including 12 murders of local citizens.⁷² Through the years, the American basing presence has caused environmental damage like noise pollution, water contamination, oil spills, damage to trees, and raw sewage leaks. Johnson describes excessive noise from Okinawan-based aircraft as a distractor for Okinawan citizens and schools, fueling anti-base sentiment with local residents. In 1982, 906 noise-complaint lawsuits were filed by local citizens against Kadena.⁷³ The island of Okinawa has been polluted by jet fuel runoff and toxic substances, mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls.⁷⁴ On numerous occasions, hazardous waste from Kadena has polluted the Hija River, which yields drinking water to the local

⁶⁹ Mochizuki, “U.S.-Japan Agreement,” 1.

⁷⁰ Mike Mochizuki and Michael O’Hanlon, “Rethinking Okinawa Military Relocation,” *Politico*, February 2, 2012, 1.

⁷¹ Johnson, *Blowback*, 5.

⁷² Toni M. Bugni, “The Continued Invasion: Assessing the United States Military Presence on Okinawa through 1996,” *Suffolk Transnational Law Review* 21, rev. 85 (winter 1997): 3.

⁷³ Johnson, *Blowback*, 48.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

population.⁷⁵ Furthermore, military exercises and weapons firings at Camp Hansen have caused forest fires and soil erosion.⁷⁶ Following the 1995 Okinawa-servicemen-rape controversy, McCormack argues that the U.S. was open to relocating the Marines from Okinawa, but Tokyo insisted that the Marines remain on the island.⁷⁷ McCormack posits that Tokyo was unwilling to allow the Marines to leave Okinawa for two reasons: Japanese leaders wanted to maintain their presence, but they did not want the Marines moved to mainland-Japan.⁷⁸ Proponents of the American basing presence acknowledge that these incidents mentioned by Johnson are destabilizing to the basing agreement.

D. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed contemporary Okinawa through the lens of the tri-lateral relationships between Tokyo, Washington, and Okinawa. It explained why considerable general tension exists in Okinawa and how history and culture continue to affect these relationships. General tension in Okinawa subsists because of the high number of American bases on the island, its status as Japan's poorest prefecture, Okinawa's tumultuous relationship with Tokyo, frustrations over the relocation of Futenma, an anti-base media, U.S. military externalities (crime, accidents, pollution, etc.), and debate over the strategic necessity of American bases. The literature review explained differing opinions from analysts regarding contemporary Okinawan basing issues including: America's sustained Japanese basing presence, debate over Okinawa being victimized by hosting a high-percentage of American installations, America's post-Cold War foreign policy, U.S. military crime/accidents/pollution, and debate over Futenma's significance and relocation plans.

⁷⁵ Bugni, "Continued Invasion," 3–4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁷ McCormack, "End of the Postwar?" 3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

III. OKINAWAN POLITICIZATION AND COMPENSATION POLITICS

This chapter analyzes the destabilizing and stabilizing forces acting upon the continued American basing presence. With varying goals, Okinawan social activists are keen to exploit any American incident in order to receive financial compensation, a particular political concession, or the ultimate removal of American forces from their island. These linked but fragmented protests aim to undermine the stability of the basing presence. Japanese national institutions and Tokyo's elites seek to counter these forces, relying heavily upon dividing and weakening local political autonomy. This chapter provides an overview of history and themes pertaining to Okinawan political activism as the primary destabilizing force before outlining the stabilizing influences of Tokyo's compensation politics, the Japanese security consensus, and weak Okinawan government.

A. DESTABILIZING FACTORS: OKINAWAN ANTI-BASE POLITICS

A long, contentious history has played a role in developing Okinawan base politics as a destabilizing force for the American basing presence. The 1945 Battle for Okinawa left the population with a loathing for war and a resentment of the way they were treated by the Japanese. Japan regained its sovereignty in 1951, but Okinawa remained under American control. Thus, the first round of Okinawan political activism was directed toward the American possession of land and continued military presence on the island.⁷⁹ Eventually, this conflict was resolved as landowners signed legal documents with the Americans, receiving cash settlements. During the 1960s, Okinawan activists, political parties, and unions banded together to protest American accidents, crime, and Kadena-based B-52's conducting bombing strikes in Vietnam. In 1972, Okinawan activists strongly supported the decision made by Tokyo leadership to have the Americans cede control of the island to Japan.

Since the 1970s, anti-base activists have included grassroots participants, non-governmental organizations, civic organizations, and local community groups. These

⁷⁹ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 66.

organizations rally support for their various causes and often “resort to informal, contentious politics—including protests, social movements, and other forms of collective action—to influence basing policy decisions.”⁸⁰ Activist groups are motivated by different goals including financial compensation, suspension of new base construction, and eradication of certain American military training practices, reduced crime/accidents/pollution, or the all-together elimination of American forces from their island.

In the 1970s and 1980s, significant anti-base opposition was contained until the 1995 rape scandal. Anti-base protests grew to unforeseen levels, culminating in an October 21 rally where 85,000 citizens rallied to issue their resolution demands.⁸¹ Fueled by anti-base Governor Masahide Ota’s dramatic posturing, Okinawans demanded an account for changes to the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), advocated for improved discipline of American service members, and urged a reduction of bases. Ota linked the rape case to the “historical narrative of Okinawa’s marginalization,” and equated the crime with the 1945 Battle for Okinawa and the prefecture’s inferior status.⁸²

Responding to the 1995 rape crisis, Tokyo created a Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO); the SACO eventually produced a December 1996 report that called for the return of Futenma, a 21 percent reduction of American-held land, and operational changes to the bases.⁸³ Although the Japanese government agreed to these concessions, the crisis passed, and American basing presence was largely preserved. The Americans operational capacity was unaffected by relinquishing ten smaller installations as bases were consolidated, leading to new military housing construction and a new hospital. With Tokyo paying the price for new construction projects, Japanese leaders discovered a new means to invest in the local economy, building support for a tolerated American presence. Furthermore, Futenma remained open due to gridlocked debate over finding a relocation site.

⁸⁰ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁸² Miyume Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa* (London: Routledge, 2009), 159.

⁸³ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 69.

Most victories for anti-base protesters have been modest but include the agreement to relocate Futenma, the 1997 denial of the offshore helicopter platform, and the rejection of Tokyo's 2005 plan to begin construction on the "coral reef" base plan.⁸⁴ In the aftermath of each concession, Tokyo "countered the activists' tactical gains by putting forth new proposals keeping U.S. bases in Okinawa and managing positive alliance relations with the United States."⁸⁵ Following contentious events that have produced significant uproar toward the American basing presence, the Japanese national government repeatedly assuaged concerns by offering concessions that typically lacked strategic value.

An example of a more serious victory for anti-base protesters occurred in 1989 when Tokyo abandoned plans for building a new Marine AV-8B Harrier pad near Aha village. A political concession was made by LDP leaders because of controversy surrounding a string of American incidents, a lack of external threat as the Cold War was ending, and the eroding approval rating of the LDP. During this timeframe, the LDP was plagued by corruption issues and the Recruit scandal forced Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita to resign in June of 1989. The presence of American bases was challenged in the late-1980s because of four unrelated safety incidents: a helicopter crash, a parachute training fatality, an emergency landing in Naha, and a *Newsweek* article that referred to a mishap on the *USS Ticonderoga* in 1965, in which a hydrogen-bomb-loaded American A-4E fell off the deck of the aircraft carrier and sank to the bottom of the sea 500 miles off the coast of Okinawa; the aircraft, bomb, and pilot were never recovered.⁸⁶ These incidents led Okinawan activists to demand safety investigations, declines in public opinion, and requests for the removal of American aircraft from the island. An October 1988 on-base CH-46 helicopter crash, which killed four Americans, occurred at a time when the LDP was struggling politically, and contributed to Tokyo's decision in March 1989 to abandon the construction project.⁸⁷ In this case, protesters politicized a rash of

⁸⁴ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 174.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Eldridge, *Post-Reversion Okinawa*, 85.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 81–82.

American accidents during a politically contentious time and achieved a tangible victory, reducing the number of Harriers on Okinawa. Essentially, the LDP performed damage control by making a calculated political concession with the objective of cooling Okinawan tensions.

Okinawan political activism since 1945 has been labeled as pragmatic protest. Classified according to their motives, Calder identifies three main types of anti-base protests: ideological, nationalistic, and pragmatic.⁸⁸ Ideological protesters are ethically opposed to basing rights and nationalistic protests are characterized by an opposition to American global hegemony. Pragmatic protesters are commonly oriented toward environmental issues, crime, accidents, and social disruption; this type is the most vulnerable to financial compensation and the most distinct to Okinawa.⁸⁹ Pragmatic social movements are incentive-driven in Okinawa because, “such protest reflects local sentiments, thus gaining votes for local politicians, and also induces the central government to heavily compensate an impoverished, relatively remote prefecture.”⁹⁰ Tokyo has consistently used compensation politics to assuage protests and stabilize the American basing presence.

B. STABILIZING FORCES

Although the harrier pad example illustrates how activists can undermine the American basing presence, most attempts at changing U.S. operations fail because they are mediated by Tokyo’s compensation politics, Japan’s strong security consensus, and the weakness of Okinawan governance. With Japanese leaders committed to preventing major changes to the American security partnership, they deploy their substantial resources toward assuaging local dissent and fragmenting Okinawan interests.

⁸⁸ Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 84.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 84–85.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

1. Compensation Politics

Tokyo's use of compensation politics serves the purposes of reducing overall general tension levels in Okinawa and calming political frictions (to various degrees) after catalytic events. Tokyo protects American military operations in Okinawa by dividing Okinawa into factions (by buying-off members of the local population). With anti-militarism commonplace in Okinawa, base stability has been attained through substantial and reliable Japanese governmental payments. Okinawans traditionally welcome aid from Tokyo, but predominantly oppose U.S. forces in their prefecture. Opposition to American troop presence has been mollified through compensation politics described as "politics directed primarily toward advertising and satisfying demands for material satisfaction between grantors and supporters, as opposed to those politics oriented toward attaining nonmaterial goals."⁹¹ Other means of compensation include Tokyo's donations to public works projects, contributions to local interest groups, noise pollution reduction, and accident prevention.⁹²

The largest organization of its kind in the world, Japan's Defense Facilities Administration Agency (DFAA) was established to serve as a mediator between Japanese citizens and the American military presence. The DFAA was abolished in 2007, but its mission was preserved through the Ministry of Defense's Bureau of Local Cooperation (BLC).⁹³ Another viable tool to manage base politics, the Special Advisory Council on Okinawa (SACO) was established after the 1995 rape crisis, as discussed earlier. Following that event, 76 percent of Okinawa news stories pertained to changing the American base status quo.⁹⁴ Calder explained that in 2007 the DFAA was locally-oriented, cooperative with Japan's SDF, and effective at quelling the concerns of

⁹¹ Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 132.

⁹² Kori Kagotani and Yuki Yanai, "External Threats, U.S. Bases, and Prudent Voters in Okinawa," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 14, no. 1 (2014): 94.

⁹³ Yasuyuki Kimura, "The Defense Facilities Administration Agency: A Unique Support Organization for U.S. Forces in Japan," Asia-Pacific Policy Papers Series, no. 16, *Edwin O. Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies*, 2013, 2, http://www.reischauercenter.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/RC-Monograph-2013-Kimura_History-of-DFAA.pdf.

⁹⁴ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 154.

Japanese citizens in large part because of its decentralized organization.⁹⁵ The DFAA and SACO have combined to “fine-tune and accelerate Japanese central government responsiveness to local base problems.”⁹⁶ Yeo agrees that Tokyo’s compensation politics have been successful in dividing Okinawan anti-base sentiment into different factions.⁹⁷

In order for a grassroots social movement to gain traction and lead to policy changes, coalitions must be built nationally or internationally.⁹⁸ Smaller organizations must strategically ally with other, larger groups in order to achieve objectives; “movement brokers” are required to build the scope of the protest and connect protesters with elites.⁹⁹ As social movements increase in size, however, they often struggle to maintain unity of focus with their ultimate goals. Okinawan citizens are divided along economic, geographic, and political lines in their view of the U.S. military basing presence. Where some want Futenma’s return to the Okinawan people, others oppose a replacement base built near their town. Where some want the Americans gone from the island, others are financially invested in the current arrangement. Since the Americans cannot legally negotiate directly with Okinawans, the host-state is at the political center of basing agreements.¹⁰⁰ Leaders in Tokyo have capitalized on opportunities to reinforce divisions among varying Okinawan factions, diluting anti-base momentum and stabilizing American bases. Similarly, Okinawan anti-base activists have been unable to infiltrate or influence decision-makers in Tokyo.

Compensation politics entrenches the pro-base side and therefore makes this an intra-Okinawan issue, not just an Okinawa versus Tokyo one. Significantly, compensation politics both perpetuates and undermines political activism; Tokyo’s compensation methods quell tensions, but also incentivize protesters to remain active. The local representatives of the DFAA/BLC and SACO have stabilized relations with the

⁹⁵ Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 134.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹⁷ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 64.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

local residents. Of course, the compensation politics system has the ability to contribute to general tension based on a change of Tokyo elites' political consensus (a shift from pro to anti-American bases) and the polarization of local Okinawan politics (this could lead to further frustrations with the anti-base contingent).

By interjecting debate over where to move the Marines on the island, Japanese national leaders were able to split public opinion in Okinawa, eroding the strength and cohesion of anti-base activists.¹⁰¹ Tokyo also began spending huge amounts of money in Okinawan communities that hosted American forces, creating a pipeline for creating financial incentives and building allegiances to national goals. Essentially, the Japanese national government took advantage of a crisis by dividing public opinion and sabotaging the anti-base movement. Cooley and Nexon explain: "Tokyo, through a well-funded program of host-nation support, has created a series of internal constituencies (base worker unions, utility companies, construction firms) that benefit from a continued U.S. presence."¹⁰²

2. Japan's Security Consensus

Okinawan anti-base movements have been marginalized by their inability to penetrate the inner-circles of Japan's national government. In spite of numerous contentious events involving American service members in Okinawa, the collaboration of Washington and Tokyo has created a durable status quo. Tokyo has mastered tactics of dividing and dissipating anti-base movements. Yeo defines security consensus as, "the shared perception and intersubjective understanding of the concept of national security held by host-government elites."¹⁰³ With its security consensus embedded in Japanese culture and domestic institutions, Japan has preserved strong national ties to the American alliance.¹⁰⁴ Ideals held by governmental elites are crucial in determining

¹⁰¹ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 83.

¹⁰² Cooley and Nexon, "“Empire Will Compensate You,”” 1039.

¹⁰³ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

whether a foreign military presence is preserved.¹⁰⁵ After studying responses and concessions of Japanese institutions toward anti-base movements, Yeo deems Japan's security consensus as strong and committed to supporting the U.S. military presence throughout times of tribulation.¹⁰⁶ Okinawans who benefit through various forms of national compensation have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo with the American basing arrangement. Yeo argues: "Delays and co-optation through token concessions and economic incentives have helped Tokyo maintain positive alliance ties to the United States at the expense of Okinawan anti-base movements."¹⁰⁷ Peter Katzenstein agrees that "Japan has embraced what looks like a grand strategy of unquestioned security alignment with the United States ... Japan is deeply invested in enhancing its special relationship with the United States."¹⁰⁸

Traditionally, social activists are able to achieve their objectives and change military basing arrangements in countries with a weak security consensus.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, anti-base protests in Okinawa might draw tens of thousands of supporters and have the support of the local politicians including the prefecture governor, but the movement will likely fail unless it sways the opinions of Japanese elites in Tokyo; these elites include leaders involved in national security decision-making and foreign policy.¹¹⁰ In other words, significant concessions (including major changes to the SOFA) will not occur unless the perceptions and values of national leaders change so that they no longer support the Japanese-American alliance. Although Prime Minister Abe is a staunch advocate of maintaining the American basing presence, there is no guarantee that future Tokyo elites will share his resolve.

¹⁰⁵ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 13.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁰⁸ Peter J. Katzenstein, "Japanese Security in Perspective," in *Rethinking Japanese Security: Internal and External Dimensions*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (London: Routledge, 2008), 31.

¹⁰⁹ Yeo, *Activists, Alliances*, 8.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

3. Okinawan Local Government

Calder classifies Okinawa's local government as weak, which contributes to a moderately stable American base presence in spite of staunch anti-Americanism.¹¹¹ American base opposition in Japan is highest in Okinawa (home to 75 percent of American base facilities), but local Okinawan government has had minimal influence on Tokyo base policies.¹¹² Lacking a powerful governor or politically connected members of parliament, Okinawans are politically, economically, and geographically isolated from the Japanese national government. Okinawans believe their culture is distinct from the rest of Japan and voters typically elect non-LDP Diet representatives, disconnecting Okinawa from the dominant Japanese political party. Furthermore, the prefectural governor has a difficult task of balancing the desires of his constituents against Tokyo's national goals. With conflicting interests, Tokyo has consistently pushed national policies in spite of heavy Okinawan opposition. In December 2014, anti-base Governor Onaga took office, remaining committed to his pre-election goals of fighting Henoko construction and removing the MV-22 Osprey from Okinawa. Tokyo's elites did not accept Onaga's political requests. Following in the footsteps of the former-alienated, anti-base Governor Ota Masahide (1990–1998), LDP leadership in Tokyo reminded Okinawa that there is “no need to cooperate with those who have gone over to the enemy.”¹¹³

With Okinawan culture and interests categorically different than those in prefectures on the mainland, governors are faced with monumental challenges. Often, Tokyo will implement policies in spite of opposition from the prefecture's government. Although local politicians have relatively weak power, they still play major roles in either exacerbating or quelling a crisis like an airplane crash. Focusing their research on gubernatorial elections from 1972–2006, Kori Kagotani and Yuki Yanai compare anti-base sentiment and external threats with Okinawan voting patterns. They analyze the contradiction between Okinawans being predominantly anti-base in their ideology and

¹¹¹ Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 124.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ McCormack, “Storm Ahead,” 4.

their election of six pro-base governors (out of 10 elections).¹¹⁴ Okinawan voters supported pro-base politicians during tense-Cold War moments, during times of increased tension with China, and when North Korea has performed missile testing. Kagotani and Yanai's research concludes that North Korean missile testing in 1998 began a trend where Okinawans perceived greater external threats than they did during the Cold War.¹¹⁵ In summary, when Okinawans perceive an external security threat, they are more willing to vote for the pro-base politician, endorsing the candidate who represents the American-Japanese alliance and stronger national security.

Kagotani and Yanai underscore the possibility of catalytic events being game changers as "physical and psychological costs such as airplane crashes, environment and noise pollution, and rape incidents have larger influence on the election outcomes rather than material benefits such as fiscal transfers and base-related subsidies, which is contrary to the conventional view."¹¹⁶ This finding calls into question the ability of Japanese compensation politics to preserve American basing rights during a major crisis. In other words, a crash could unify disparate anti-base actors and become an unpredictable game-changer that Tokyo might not be able to satisfy without making major political concessions.

C. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter examined the destabilizing and stabilizing forces acting on the American basing presence. A historical background on political activism was provided emphasizing the pragmatic nature of Okinawan protests and describing two political concessions made by Tokyo. The 1989 canceled Harrier pad construction project underscores the multiple aligned conditions that merited a political concession from Tokyo. Next, the reader was introduced to the forces that stabilize U.S. forces including compensation politics, Tokyo's strong security consensus, and Okinawa's weak government. With ample economic resources, Tokyo satiates anti-base movements with

¹¹⁴ Kagotani and Yanai, "External Threats," 111.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 99–100.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

various payments and investments. The durability of Japan's security consensus was detailed, highlighting Japanese political elites' commitment to the American basing presence; political activists have been unable to achieve major concessions because of their inability to win over the support of elites. A review of Okinawa's isolated and weak local government was provided to highlight the leadership challenges faced by the Okinawa Prefecture Government (OPG), Diet representatives, and the inability of Okinawa's democratic process to effect change in Tokyo. External security threats were discussed as times of increased threats have led to more voting support for pro-base Okinawan governors. This chapter concludes with a reminder that a catalytic accident or incident has the potential to transcend the capabilities of Tokyo's compensation politics.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

IV. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS AND FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH AVIATION CRASHES

As long as bases remain open in Okinawa, American aircraft will fly over public and private land, risking the devastating consequences of a crash. However, variation exists in the politicization of each accident based on its characteristics and severity. In order to gain insight to on how crashes were politicized, five crashes were selected for analysis. After reviewing these cases, 15 individual crash factors were identified as playing significant roles in the political aftermath of accidents. These crash factors were compared and contrasted in order to determine their individual significance and contribution to politicization. This chapter's presentation of each crash includes a narrative, a summary of the aftermath, and an analysis of crash factors. This chapter determines which crash factors are most inflammatory and which factors the American basing presence can influence.

A. CRASH FACTORS

It is evident that each individual crash carries with it a multitude of factors that can be politicized toward various objectives. The crash factors identified in this study can be roughly grouped into five main categories, including: location, victims, the American force involved, the geopolitical background, and the interaction between the U.S. military and Okinawans. The first is where the crash occurs. Whether it occurs on base, in the township, or whether significant environmental factors all are relevant to how the crash is politicized. The second category involves the injuries and/or fatalities from the accident. A crash that kills or injures civilians is a highly contentious event that risks destabilizing the American basing presence. An accident that kills a U.S. service member, however, can stabilize the political fallout of a crash as Okinawans traditionally are sympathetic to loss of life. Third, the force involved is considered by evaluating the political impact of an accident involving MCAS Futenma or the U.S. Marine Corps.

The fourth category of factors involves the geopolitical context in which a crash occurs. These factors include the pro or anti-base political orientation of Okinawan

leaders, political disconnect between Tokyo and Washington, the prevalence of recent American incidents, and the perceived external threats to Okinawans. Also, Okinawan anti-base activists gained increasing political momentum after two distinct events: Okinawa's Reversion and the 1995 rape crisis. Therefore, incidents occurring after each of these events receive greater anti-base mobilization and resistance. The geopolitical climate is defined by the preceding factors, creating times of increased or reduced political scrutiny for American forces. The fifth category is specific to how U.S. forces respond to a crash and cooperate with local organizations including Okinawan media, political leaders, and emergency responders. Following a crash, the actions taken by U.S. forces play a huge role in inflaming or suppressing a crisis.

The preceding factors are depicted in Table 1. The chart consists of individual crash factors and identifies whether or not each factor is applicable to each accident. Check marks in the crash factor chart represent either a known crash factor or an assessment of representing a significant level of political controversy. Not all crash factors are weighted equally. The factors are arranged in the chart so that, in general, the more checkmarks, the greater the level of political controversy. At the bottom of the chart, the overall level of politicization is assigned as high, moderate, or low.

Table 1. Crash Factors Chart

Crash Factors	2004 CH-53D	1988 CH-46	1992 CH-46	2013 HH-60	1959 F-100D
Crash Site in Township	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Significant Environmental Issue	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Civilian Fatalities / Injuries					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lack of U.S. Military Fatalities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
MCAS Futenma Involved in Accident	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
U.S. Marines Involved in Mishap	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Anti-Base Okinawan Governor			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		N/A
Political Disconnect Between Tokyo and Wash.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Cluster of Recent U.S. Military Accidents		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Decreased External Security Threat			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Post-1995 Rape Crisis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Post-Reversion Okinawa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Controversy Over Crash Site Management</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				N/A
<i>Weak Local Interagency Cooperation</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				N/A
<i>Poor Post-Crash Public Relations</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Overall Level of Politicization	High	High	Moderate	Low	N/A

Not all crash factors are equal. Okinawan political controversy is the dependent variable.

Check marks represent a known crash factor or have been assessed as representing a significant level of political controversy.

Italicized crash factors represent aspects of a crash that American military forces can influence.

B. 2004 CH-53D CRASH VERSUS 2013 HH-60 CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

The first case study analysis compares the Futenma-based Marine 2004 CH-53D accident at Okinawa University with the Kadena-based 2013 Air Force HH-60 crash at Camp Hansen. The 2004 crash was politicized on a high level, involving a crash in the township, poor interagency cooperation, poor U.S. Marine public relations, environmental concerns, and crash-site controversy. Providing major contrasts, the minimally politicized 2013 Air Force HH-60 accident took place on U.S. base property, included a U.S. serviceman fatality, represented effective interagency cooperation, and the post-crash public relations campaign was highly successful. The 2004 crash remains a poignant event in contemporary Okinawa while the 2013 accident faded quickly into memory. Reviewing these accidents reveals a stark contrast in crash circumstances and the American response to the crisis. Some crash factors cannot be controlled, but American forces have the ability to influence others. Table 2 shows the contradictions between these two accidents.

Table 2. 2004 CH-53D versus 2013 HH-60 Crash Factors Chart

Crash Factors	2004 CH-53D	2013 HH-60
Crash Site in Township	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Significant Environmental Issue	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Civilian Fatalities / Injuries		
Lack of U.S. Military Fatalities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
MCAS Futenma Involved in Accident	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
U.S. Marines Involved in Mishap	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Anti-Base Okinawan Governor		
Political Disconnect Between Tokyo and Washington		
Cluster of Recent U.S. Military Accidents		
Decreased External Security Threat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Post-1995 Rape Crisis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Post-Reversion Okinawa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Controversy Over Crash Site Management</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Weak Local Interagency Cooperation</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Poor Post-Crash Public Relations</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Overall Level of Politicization	High	Low

1. 2004 Marine Helicopter Crash at Okinawa International University

On August 13, 2004, a U.S. Marine Corps CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopter crashed on campus at Okinawa International University. Attempting to return for an emergency landing at Futenma, the pilots of the CH-53 crash-landed 330 meters short of the airfield fence-line.¹¹⁷ In spite of degraded flying qualities, the pilots navigated the damaged helicopter away from buildings and nearby homes, preventing “a tragedy on a grand scale.”¹¹⁸ Remarkably, nobody was killed on board the helicopter or in the school administration building that was impacted by the rotor blades. The only injuries sustained were to the aircrew and Marine rescuers.¹¹⁹ The wreck caused damage to the school, nearby homes, and vehicles.¹²⁰ Because the university was on summer break, the campus

¹¹⁷ Robert D. Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash: Local Reactions and Official Responses to the 2004 Futenma Helicopter Accident and its Aftermath (1),” *International Public Policy Studies* 13, no. 1 (2008–9): 137, http://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/11094/7468/1/23-11_n.pdf.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹¹⁹ Fred Zimmerman, “Marines Recount Rescue of Helo Crew,” *Stars and Stripes*, August 27, 2004.

¹²⁰ Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash (1),” 136.

was populated by only a few hundred people instead of the 6,000 customary to the fall semester.¹²¹

Conducting a training flight, the helicopter and aircrew were assigned to Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 265, which was scheduled to deploy to the Middle East the following week.¹²² The CH-53D hauls personnel, cargo, and equipment, providing heavy lift capabilities for the Marine Corps.¹²³ The helicopter is among the largest helicopters in the world, weighing over 20 tons with 72-foot rotor blades.¹²⁴ A safety investigation determined that the crash occurred because a “small retaining device in a sub-component of the tail rotor assembly was missing, leading to a loss of tail rotor control.”¹²⁵ More clearly, an improper maintenance procedure was the accepted causal factor of the mishap. Multiple witnesses reported seeing the tail rotor and associated fin detach from the aircraft in flight and land over 350 meters away from the ultimate crash site.¹²⁶

A group of Marine maintenance workers at Futenma witnessed the crash and immediately ran approximately 500 meters toward the downed helicopter, jumping over 8- and 15-foot tall barbed-wire fences.¹²⁷ Once they arrived to the scene, the Marines pulled a trapped pilot from the wreckage moments before the aircraft exploded. Additionally, the Marines ran into the damaged, smoky university building and ensured no people were trapped inside the offices—all 22 people had previously evacuated.¹²⁸ The Marines established a perimeter around the aircraft wreckage with the intent of protecting the curious local residents from the active fire. Japanese and American police,

¹²¹ David Allen and Chiyomi Sumida, “School Fears Helo Crash Contaminated Soil,” *Stars and Stripes*, September 1, 2004.

¹²² Gregg K. Kakesako, “Marine Choppers Flying Again,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, August 16, 2004.

¹²³ James F. Flock, “Background Brief on CH-53 Helicopter Accident,” *U.S. Embassy Tokyo*, August 27, 2004, <http://japan2.usembassy.gov/e/p/tp-20040827-61.html>.

¹²⁴ “Sikorsky CH-53 D Sea Stallion (Heavy Lift),” Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor, n.d., <http://www.pacificaviationmuseum.org/aircraft/CH53D>.

¹²⁵ Flock, “Background Brief on CH-53.”

¹²⁶ David Allen, “Amid Protests, Wreckage is Removed From Scene of Okinawa Copter Crash,” *Stars and Stripes*, August 18, 2004. <http://www.stripes.com/news/amid-protests-wreckage-is-removed-from-scene-of-okinawa-copter-crash-1.23387>.

¹²⁷ Zimmerman, “Marines Recount Rescue.”

¹²⁸ Allen and Sumida, “School Fears.”

fire fighters, and emergency responders arrived thereafter to extinguish the fire and care for the injured Marines. After hearing of the crash, Marine Lieutenant General Robert Blackman ordered the return of all aircraft to base and Futenma flight operations were suspended for the following three days.¹²⁹

U.S. forces worked directly with the Okinawa Prefecture Police (OPP) in order to secure the crash-site, preserve the area so that a proper safety investigation could be conducted, and ensure the safety of the local population.¹³⁰ According to a U.S. official, the Marines invited the Okinawan police to help secure the area closest to the crash site, but the OPP declined, claiming a lack of available personnel.¹³¹ Even though the Americans were working in partnership with Okinawan authorities, controversy ensued over the cordoned-off the crash site. U.S. military officials cited the SOFA and long-standing agreements between Washington and Tokyo in order to justify their actions.¹³² Brigadier General James Flock explained in an August 27, 2004, press conference that the Americans are the “primary office for handling the wreckage after a mishap” in Okinawa.¹³³

a. Aftermath of Accident

Okinawan activists politicized the Americans actions by claiming the U.S. military demonstrated “an occupation mentality.”¹³⁴ In the days following the crash, OPP authorities made repeated requests to allow their investigators access to the crash site. Although the Marines Judge Advocate General’s representative declined those requests, members of OPP were allowed supervised access to the crash area on August 17 “for the exclusive purpose of recording and observing any and all property damage.”¹³⁵ Some members of the OPP were displeased with this arrangement, prompting an unidentified

¹²⁹ Flock, “Background Brief on CH-53.”

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash (1),” 141.

¹³² Cooley, *Base Politics*, 157.

¹³³ Flock, “Background Brief on CH-53.”

¹³⁴ Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash (1),” 140.

¹³⁵ Flock, “Background Brief on CH-53.”

senior official to tell a newspaper reporter, “We cannot believe the way in which the U.S. military, which caused this huge accident, is handling the situation.”¹³⁶

Six days following the accident, the airplane debris was finally cleared from university property and efforts began to assess the environmental damage caused by hazardous materials including fuel, hydraulic, and oil fluids.¹³⁷ The Marines hired a Japanese firm to conduct an environmental study and committed to pay for the removal of any and all contaminants from the premises.¹³⁸ Officials from Okinawa International University were dissatisfied with the post-crash actions of the Marine Corps. In particular, officials made demands for both a completed aviation accident report and the results of the environmental testing performed on the removed topsoil. Hitoshi Nakasone, a university spokesman, stated, “We believe it is our right to demand these findings, as it is our duty to ensure the safety of our students, faculty and the general public visiting our university.”¹³⁹ Furthermore, university officials were irritated by perceived delays in both the investigation process and excessive trees removed from the crash zone. They also demanded reimbursement of university property including computers, furniture, and office equipment.¹⁴⁰ Nakasone complained of emotional trauma for being one of the 22 people located inside the administration building at the time of the wreck: “Although I am getting a little better, there are others who still have frequent nightmares about the accident and have difficulties in sleeping.”¹⁴¹ Within 11 days of the crash, Marine officials and Defense Facilities Administration Bureau personnel began issuing apology money (or *owabi*); financial compensation for the crash was issued with Washington paying 75 percent and Tokyo paying the remaining 25 percent.¹⁴²

¹³⁶ Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash (1),” 144.

¹³⁷ Flock, “Background Brief on CH-53.”

¹³⁸ Allen and Sumida, “School Fears.”

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash (1),” 145.

Critical of the resumption of flight operations at Futenma, Ginowan City Mayor Yoichi Iha demanded the closure of the American base and said, “The accident proved how dangerous the air station is—it showed us that Futenma is a defective air station, therefore no aircraft operations should be conducted.”¹⁴³ A young, popular, anti-base Okinawan politician, Iha was mayor of the fourth largest city on the island. With Pro-base Governor Inamine Keiichi visiting Okinawan descendants living in South America at the time of the helicopter crash, Iha took the initiative to connect with Okinawans as a prominent public leader.¹⁴⁴ Iha complained that local citizens would live in fear every time they hear a helicopter fly over them and that “The helicopter involved in this accident flew about 300 to 400 meters after it started having trouble until it crashed...during that time it flew over densely populated areas.”¹⁴⁵ Iha’s concern over increased population around Futenma has been echoed by other anti-base activists. Of course, a major accident like the CH-53 crash at the university can lead to unforeseen consequences and significantly change perceptions of basing arrangements. After viewing the crash site the morning after the accident, Mayor Iha addressed the local media at City Hall:

The purpose of the U.S. military investigation is different [from that of the Japanese side]. For them, the most important thing is to preserve the helicopter’s body, and has nothing to do with the damage to residents and structures. What should be given priority is different. This recent happening was a U.S. military accident, but it was also a [local] incident. While it happened on duty, it occurred off-base, and it is strange that the U.S. military is proceeding unilaterally.¹⁴⁶

This quote from Mayor Iha inspired a rift between the U.S. military and Okinawans, enflaming public opinion. By calling into question the integrity of the U.S. military, Iha politicized the crash in order to encourage anti-base sentiment. That same day, the Ginowan City assembly followed Iha’s lead and drafted a protest resolution that

¹⁴³ Allen, “Amid Protests.”

¹⁴⁴ Robert D. Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash: Local Reactions and Official Responses to the 2004 Futenma Helicopter Accident and its Aftermath (2),” *International Public Policy Studies* 13, no. 2 (2009): 16–17, http://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/11094/6720/1/24-02_n.pdf.

¹⁴⁵ Allen, “Amid Protests.”

¹⁴⁶ Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash (2),” 17.

called for a series of demands including the revision of the SOFA, the closure of Futenma, an honest investigation of the crash, and the elimination of any flights over residential areas.¹⁴⁷ The resolution was unanimously passed by the assembly and copies were distributed to the Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro, U.S. military forces, and others.

A meeting between Mayor Iha and Brigadier General Flock led to further anti-base resentment after Flock informed Iha that flights at Futenma would soon be resumed. By August 18, Iha was in Tokyo advocating for the following: Futenma's closure, proper apologies for the accident, compensation for those affected by the crash, restricted flying over residential areas, and assistance for the university.¹⁴⁸ Later that night, Iha briefed Governor Inamine in Tokyo, who had recently returned from his South America trip. While Governor Inamine was away from Okinawa, the OPG was guided by a team including Vice Governors Makino Hiroataka and Higa Shigemasa. OPG leadership conducted meetings with high-ranking officers from the Marine Corps, representatives of the Japanese national government, and members of the DFAA.

Reigniting local controversy around Futenma flight operations, six CH-53Ds departed the airfield on August 22 for their operational deployment to Iraq. Press releases were provided by the Marine Corps only moments before their departure from Futenma. The Marines informed the public that the CH-53Ds were safe to fly because the initial safety investigation concluded that the August 13 mishap occurred because of a mechanical issue that was "solely unique" to the crashed airframe.¹⁴⁹ Governor Inamine "felt betrayed" when he heard that the CH-53Ds were airborne because he had recently lobbied with Lieutenant General Robert Blackman to cancel the flights.¹⁵⁰ Even though the helicopters were transiting to the USS Essex en route to a war zone (i.e., not flying a training mission) and leaving the prefecture, numerous government organizations filed protests denouncing the flights. Mayor Iha publicly stated, "In the midst of all of the

¹⁴⁷ Eldridge, "Anatomy of a Crash (2)," 17.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁴⁹ David Allen, "6 Futenma CH-53Ds Set off for Iraq," *Stars and Stripes*, August 24, 2004.

¹⁵⁰ Eldridge, "Anatomy of a Crash (2)," 25.

protests on Okinawa, this is like pouring oil into a fire” and “Such conduct shows that the military regards Okinawa still under military control, disrespecting Japan’s sovereignty.”¹⁵¹ Reportedly, even Prime Minister Koizumi opposed the departing flights from Futenma.¹⁵² The end result was a further breakdown of the relationship between the U.S. Marines and Japanese hosts as the perception was that the Americans did what they wanted even though the Japanese government opposed their plan.

A major event, over 30,000 protesters gathered in Ginowan City on September 12, 2004, to demonstrate for the closure of Futenma’s base.¹⁵³ Summarizing the viewpoint of many Okinawans following the crash, Nakasone said, “We don’t want the air station to be here any longer.”¹⁵⁴ The aftermath of this crash contributed to a 2006 Japanese-American decision to relocate 8,000 Marines to Guam by 2014.¹⁵⁵ This crash also led to several changes in American-Okinawan cooperation including the formation of a cooperative working group, which aided collaboration between the U.S. military forces, Okinawan authorities, and local emergency responders.¹⁵⁶ The hope of the cooperative working group was to build trust between the U.S. military and the citizens of Okinawa. Other changes after this event included revised flight plans for military aircraft and increased standardization among aviators.¹⁵⁷ For example, helicopters are only permitted to takeoff from the center-mat of the airfield, reducing noise pollution in the township. This change also ensures aircraft reach a safe flying altitude prior to departing the base property, minimizing the likelihood of a crash into a populated area.

All the while, protests were coordinated in Okinawa and various governmental and non-governmental groups were making compensation demands; 31 of the 52 Okinawan communities passed resolutions calling for either Futenma’s closure or a

¹⁵¹ Allen, “6 Futenma CH-53Ds Set off.”

¹⁵² Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash (2),” 24.

¹⁵³ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 157.

¹⁵⁴ Allen and Sumida, “School Fears.”

¹⁵⁵ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 158.

¹⁵⁶ Robert Eldridge, personal correspondence with author, May 31, 2015.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

review of the SACO.¹⁵⁸ The resolution votes, however, were highly divisive based on “competing ideological concerns, policy concerns, and vital political and economic interests.”¹⁵⁹ Specifically, Okinawans were unable to find common ground in regards to the SACO’s 1996 Futenma-to-Henoko relocation plan. Although the crash in Ginowan City had provided momentum to the movement to close Futenma, it had similarly provided those in northern Okinawa with a vivid reminder of the unpredictable nature of flight operations. Consequently, the crash in Ginowan City provided those opposed to moving the Marines to Henoko with an opportunity to politicize and organize their opposition to the relocation plan. In the aftermath of the crash, multiple Okinawan public opinion polls illustrated opposition to the Henoko-plan. On August 20, the *Ryukyu Shimpo* reported that 93 percent of respondents supported the revision of the SACO-plan, but only 6 percent support the Henoko offshore construction plan.¹⁶⁰ On September 14, the *Okinawa Times* published a public opinion poll stating that 81 percent of participants opposed relocating the Marines to Henoko and 70 percent of respondents advocated moving the Marines somewhere outside of Japan.¹⁶¹

Once Governor Inamine returned to Okinawa, he faced a major leadership challenge, and a series of difficult decisions. Traditionally regarded as a pro-base politician, Inamine had to manage pressure from all sides: his constituents, the national government, and the Americans. No longer could the OPG ignore the potential dangers associated with flight operations out of Futenma, but the relocation plan within the prefecture became convoluted.¹⁶² OPG leaders worried that scrapping the SACO’s relocation plan to the northern portion of the island might ultimately delay the closure of Futenma. Thus, Inamine publicly labeled the Henoko project as “the realistic option” and he balanced that position by stating he intended to “use all his strength to work

¹⁵⁸ Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash (2),” 18–19.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁶⁰ “93% [Call For] Review of SACO Emergency Poll of Prefectural People on U.S. Military Helicopter Crash,” *Ryukyu Shimpo*, August 20, 2004, http://www.city.ginowan.okinawa.jp/DAT/LIB/WEB/1/00134_00002.pdf.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash (2),” 22.

toward...realizing the earliest possible elimination of the danger of Futenma Air Station and its earliest possible return (to the Okinawans).”¹⁶³ Later, Inamine settled on a policy of minimizing levels of danger at Futenma by reducing the forces at the base, placing demands for reduced flights, insisting on the relocation of training, improved overall safety procedures, and the cancelation of the Army’s planned Camp Hansen training center.¹⁶⁴

b. Analysis of Crash Factors

The CH-53D crash was a landmark event that redefined aspects of the American basing presence. This accident incorporated a wide array of individual factors associated with airplane crashes and led to several political concessions. Specifically, this accident was the first instance of a U.S. Marine helicopter crashing into the local Okinawan community, highlighting the narrow proximity of Futenma to the township. Although the university is built against the base’s fence line, the accident triggered widespread unrest. Furthermore, the Okinawan pro-base governor was not on the island at the time of the incident. It is plausible that Governor Nakaima’s presence would have helped to stabilize relations between the American forces and anti-base activists. Environmental issues were tied to a host of other problems stemming from the American crash-site cleanup effort.¹⁶⁵ Officials at Okinawa International University were dissatisfied with the actions taken by the Marines to rectify their environmental concerns. Specifically, university officials were angered by how many trees were cut down and how the soil contamination was handled.

The controversy over the crash site management and perceived poor interagency cooperation with local authorities added further political pressure to the crisis. Although no one was killed, the mishap “generated a swell of public criticism among Okinawan local politicians, civic groups, and the media concerning the “occupation”-like behavior

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 22–23.

¹⁶⁵ Eldridge, “Anatomy of a Crash (1),” 136.

of U.S. forces on the island.”¹⁶⁶ Marine Corps public relations and press releases were often flawed and untimely, contributing to increased politicization and heightened tensions. This accident was further exacerbated because it happened after the 1995 rape crisis. In addition, Eldridge contends that this crash was politicized to a higher level because incidents involving U.S. Marines are especially volatile with the Okinawan public due to history, culture, and a lack of understanding regarding the mission of the Marines.

Totaling an overall high level of politicization, the 2004 CH-53D crash introduces numerous factors to the discussion of aviation accidents. It was a major event that led to significant political concessions and altered perceptions of the American basing presence at Futenma. Putting lessons in place from this crash, a 2013 Air Force helicopter accident led to a dramatically different public response and aftermath.

2. 2013 Air Force HH-60 Crash at Camp Hansen

On August 5, 2013, an Air Force HH-60 Pave Hawk Helicopter crashed into the Camp Hansen jungle, killing one of the four airmen on board. The Kadena-based aircraft went down in the Central Training Area, causing a smoke cloud that was seen two miles away by residents of Ginoza.¹⁶⁷ The helicopter was flying a training mission at low altitudes with a second helicopter in the vicinity. There were no injuries to local citizens and there was no off-base damage. A safety investigation determined that pilot error was the reason for the crash; fearing a mid-air collision with a second nearby helicopter, the pilot inadvertently maneuvered the aircraft into the dense forest.¹⁶⁸ Emergency responders from both the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force arrived to the scene to extinguish the small fire and rescue the downed crew.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Cooley, *Base Politics*, 157.

¹⁶⁷ Travis J. Tritten and Chiyomi Sumida, “Air Force Finds Remains at Helicopter Crash Site on Okinawa,” *Stars and Stripes*, August 5, 2013.

¹⁶⁸ Travis J. Tritten, “Pilot Error Caused Okinawa Helicopter Crash that Killed Airman, Air Force Says,” *Stars and Stripes*, January 20, 2014.

¹⁶⁹ James B. Hecker, “Friendship Shines after Okinawa Crash,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 23, 2013, <http://www.kadena.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123361103>.

a. Aftermath of Accident

The news of the crash was covered thoroughly by Okinawan media, and local residents made typical demands for a safety account of the accident. The timing was unfortunate for the American basing presence because it occurred three months after an Air Force F-15C crashed into the ocean. Additionally, protests were active at nearby Futenma as activists were voicing their displeasure over the impending arrival of 12 additional MV-22 Ospreys to the island.¹⁷⁰ The helicopter crash summoned memories of the 2004 university incident, prompting Kadena Mayor Hiroshi Toyama to say, “We knew it was going to happen sooner or later.”¹⁷¹ The accident did not involve the Marines, but it provided more ammunition for anti-base protesters to advocate for Futenma’s closure. At this point in 2013, the relocation of the base remained crippled by both political opposition to the Henoko construction and increasing financial concerns of the move by the Senate Armed Services Committee.¹⁷² Even though it occurred during a politically contentious time, this accident did not yield high levels of Okinawan politicization like the 2004 crash.

Suggesting improved inter-service cooperation since the 2004 university accident, the Air Force and Marines were more successful in their public affairs cooperation with Okinawans. At the recommendation of the government of Japan and in an effort to calm tensions, the U.S. Marine Corps agreed to delay the arrival of the Ospreys “out of respect for the desires of our Japanese partners and hosts.”¹⁷³ This gesture was indicative of joint-forces teamwork and effective Japanese-American partnership. Within hours of the crash, U.S. military representatives hosted a press conference, providing Okinawans with timely and abundant information. At the meeting, local representatives of Okinawan

¹⁷⁰ Tritten, “Pilot Error.”

¹⁷¹ Associated Press in Tokyo, “U.S. Military Helicopter Crew.”

¹⁷² Chico Harlan, “U.S. Military Helicopter Crashes in Okinawa,” *Washington Post*, August 5, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/us-military-helicopter-crashes-in-okinawa/2013/08/05/b008fd40-fdd1-11e2-9711-3708310f6f4d_story.html

¹⁷³ “U.S. Military Helicopter Crashes in Okinawa,” *Reuters*, August 5, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/05/us-japan-helicopter-idUSBRE97407W20130805>.

Police and Fire units volunteered their services to assist American efforts.¹⁷⁴ These Okinawan organizations participate annually in a joint American-Okinawan aircraft mishap response drill. Initiated in the aftermath of the 2004 crash, this exercise has improved partnerships and public relations for the U.S. military. According to a U.S. military public affairs officer who attended the conference, Okinawan media representatives were “thankful and grateful” for the extensive efforts made by the American public relations team.¹⁷⁵ The local media witnessed the cooperative effort between emergency responders and it may have contributed to cooling tensions after the accident.¹⁷⁶

Brigadier General James B. Hecker, the Commander of the Air Force 18th Wing at Kadena, wrote an apology letter to the Japanese people that was published in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*; Hecker also thanked his “good neighbors here in Okinawa” for their sympathies and condolences in regards to Technical Sergeant Mark A. Smith’s death.¹⁷⁷ Explaining to the local residents both the circumstances of the crash and the seriousness of how the Air Force views safety procedures, Hecker was able to accommodate Okinawan demands for an account of the crash. Perhaps most importantly, Hecker explained that the 33rd Rescue Squadron crew that crashed was from the same unit that rallied to support Japan following the earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011. The Kadena-based HH-60s flew 55 emergency response missions supporting what later became named Operation Tomodachi; during these missions, the 33rd rescued 51 people and delivered approximately 1.4 tons of food, water, and supplies to the Tohoku area.¹⁷⁸ Hecker’s account of 3/11 eloquently described the utility of his HH-60 units and their commitment to defending and serving Japan. In the letter, he explained that the Air Force received over 125 condolence and support emails from strangers following the

¹⁷⁴ U.S. Military Public Affairs Officer, personal correspondence with author, August 10, 2015.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Hecker, “Friendship Shines.”

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

accident.¹⁷⁹ He outlined the steps the Air Force was in the process of taking in order to prevent a similar crash from occurring in the future. From a big-picture standpoint, Hecker connected on a human level with the Okinawans, showing respect, gratitude, and honest reflection. The op-ed letter helped to deflate tensions in the Okinawan community, contributing to low post-crash politicization levels.¹⁸⁰

b. Analysis of Crash Factors

For a variety of reasons, politicization associated with the 2013 HH-60 crash dissipated relatively quickly; in other words, this crash could have been a catalytic event, but it was not. Tensions from the crash blew over relatively quickly in Okinawa and Futenma experienced no significant increase in protests or demonstrating.¹⁸¹ As shown in Table 2 it is evident that the 2013 crash provided remarkably different levels of political controversy. Instead of crashing in the township like in 2004, the Air Force accident occurred on base and did not threaten the local residents or the township. The local residents did not see the crash as the accident was contained on base property. There were no significant environmental issues. Since the U.S. Air Force lost an airman in the crash, a voice of sensitivity likely calmed protesters as many Okinawans were sympathetic to the death of one of Japan's 3/11's emergency responders.¹⁸² Consequently, the death of a U.S. airman also contributed to quelling the magnitude of this incident.

Unlike the 2004 university crash, the pro-base governor (Nakaima) was in Okinawa at the time of the accident and not overseas, stabilizing the post-crash aftermath. The public affairs interaction between the U.S. military and the Okinawans was much more effective following the 2013 mishap; information was provided in a more timely manner, a greater sense of cooperation was achieved, and there was no significant controversy over the crash-site management. In large part because of effective public relations and successful back-and-forth communication with the local residents, the

¹⁷⁹ Hecker, "Friendship Shines."

¹⁸⁰ Robert Eldridge, personal correspondence with author, May 31, 2015.

¹⁸¹ U.S. Military Public Affairs officer, personal correspondence with author, August 10, 2015.

¹⁸² Robert Eldridge, personal correspondence with author, May 31, 2015.

public outcry for safety information was satiated, halting the politicization of safety concerns. In the nine years between helicopter crashes, protocols and emergency response plans were established to facilitate more effective operations between the U.S. military and Okinawa agencies. The 2013 crash did not carry with it controversy over the integration of emergency responders or a perceived security-perimeter ordeal like in 2004.

Another key difference was this accident involved a Kadena-based, Air Force helicopter and not a Futenma-based, U.S. Marine aircraft. Contributing to misconceptions of the U.S. Marines in Okinawa, the Japanese public has a better understanding of the purpose of the U.S. Air Force, in large part because the Japanese SDF has an Air Force.¹⁸³ The Japanese, however, lack a Marine Corps and Okinawan culture does not share a similar collective understanding of their mission. Furthermore, the Marines are the majority American presence of the island (leading to increased human interaction and conflict over time), they possess Futenma, and many Okinawans maintain bitterness from the 1945 Battle for Okinawa. Through the years, much of the anti-base protests have targeted Futenma and the Marines more directly than the Air Force.¹⁸⁴

This section highlights the vast differences in aviation factors associated with the Camp Hansen crash when compared to the 2004 university accident. Since the levels of politicization were considerably less following this crash, no significant political concessions were made by Tokyo. Of note, there are several factors that these two post-1995 Okinawan accidents have in common, including no civilian fatalities/injuries, a pro-base governor, national leaders in Tokyo were politically secure, a similar external security threat environment, and a safety environment where there was not a recent plethora of American accidents. Because the difference in these particular factors was negligible, this paired case study does not provide considerable insight to their significance. It does show, however, that other crash factors are relevant and deserve consideration.

¹⁸³ Robert Eldridge, personal correspondence with author, May 31, 2015.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

C. 1988 CH-46 CRASH VERSUS 1992 CH-46 CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

The second case study analysis compares two CH-46 crashes: 1988 at Kunigami and 1992 at Futenma. Causing the death of four U.S. servicemen, the highly politicized Kunigami crash was one of many American incidents in the late 1980s. It occurred when the LDP was struggling politically and contributed to a political concession. Offering variation, the 1992 accident was moderately politicized, occurred after the Cold War, lacked fatalities, and featured an anti-base Okinawan Governor. Although both aircraft were operated by Marines from Futenma, this case study highlights differing factors that could not be examined in the first analysis. The takeaway is that a rash of American accidents can create unmanageable geopolitical scrutiny for Tokyo's leaders, leading to a political concession. Another point of emphasis is that not all crash factors are weighted evenly. Table 3 shows the scoring of applicable factors to this case study.

Table 3. 1988 CH-46 versus 1992 CH-46 Crash Factors Chart

Crash Factors	1988 CH-46	1992 CH-46
Crash Site in Township		
Significant Environmental Issue		
Civilian Fatalities / Injuries		
Lack of U.S. Military Fatalities		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
MCAS Futenma Involved in Accident	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
U.S. Marines Involved in Mishap	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Anti-Base Okinawan Governor		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Political Disconnect Between Tokyo and Washington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Cluster of Recent U.S. Military Accidents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Decreased External Security Threat		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Post-1995 Rape Crisis		
Post-Reversion Okinawa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>Controversy Over Crash Site Management</i>		
<i>Weak Local Interagency Cooperation</i>		
<i>Poor Post-Crash Public Relations</i>		
Overall Level of Politicization	High	Moderate

1. 1988 CH-46 Crash at Kunigami

On October 31, 1988, two Futenma-based Marine Corps CH-46 helicopters collided while flying a training mission near Kunigami, Okinawa. The first aircraft returned to land uneventfully at Futenma, suffering damage to the nose of the aircraft, but there were no injuries to the crew.¹⁸⁵ The second helicopter crashed into mountainside terrain on the American training installation, killing all four Marines on board and causing a forest fire. The reason for the midair collision was unknown. No Okinawans witnessed the accident or were harmed by the crash.

¹⁸⁵ Larry Thorson, "Midair Collision Blamed for Marine Helicopter Crash," *Associated Press*, November 1, 1988, <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1988/Midair-Collision-Blamed-For-Marine-Helicopter-Crash/id-c91beee2b9326c35de000c3b8a348cb5>.

a. Aftermath of Accident

In the immediate aftermath of the accident, protest rallies occurred in nearby Higashi. A resolution was called to suspend helicopter training activity and a protester expressed his anxiety: “No one knows when a big disaster will happen. Let us rise up as one to take back our quiet life and safeguard our lives and property.”¹⁸⁶ As discussed in Chapter II, this crash occurred when the LDP was ailing politically and the U.S. military was plagued by a series of recent military accidents. Occurring at the end of the Cold War, the U.S. increased their forward deployed forces to deter the Soviet Union from action; the Japanese were concerned that increased accidents were indicative of American forces accepting that “some excesses [including accidents] should be tolerated.”¹⁸⁷ The CH-46 mishap was politicized in connection with numerous accidents that the Japanese public viewed as indicating a lack of American discipline. Within a few weeks of the crash, nine stray bullets were discovered in a nearby town after being fired from nearby Camp Hansen.¹⁸⁸ There was also a tear-gas explosion in a public Okinawan area. The Japanese Foreign Minister Sosuke Uno expressed frustration over the rash of recent military mishaps by declaring: “There is a lot of carelessness.”¹⁸⁹ Additionally, Uno speculated what might have occurred if the crash had taken place over a populated area.

b. Analysis of Crash Factors

Although this event occurred before the 1995 rape crisis, this crash produced a high overall level of politicization. This particular accident did not become a landmark event etched into Okinawan’s psyche in large part because it occurred on base and did not directly affect the local residents. The 1980s were characterized by a smooth working relationship between the U.S. military and Okinawa, but a cluster of late-1980s American accidents collaborated with political scandals in Tokyo to create political turmoil for the LDP. The American military presence was undermined by these accidents, compelling

¹⁸⁶ *Ryukyu Shimpo*, “Higashi Rally Protests Crash,” November 3, 1988.

¹⁸⁷ *Tokyo Asahi Evening News*, “Article Views Accidents Involving U.S. Forces,” November 29, 1988.

¹⁸⁸ *Tokyo Kyodo*, “Officials to Investigate Incidents on Okinawa,” November 24, 1988.

¹⁸⁹ Thorson, “Midair Collision.”

the LDP to offer a political concession to anti-American activists. Tokyo's March 1989 decision to abandon harrier-pad construction was made because of a seemingly unending string of disconnected American accidents and the LDP's plummeting popularity.¹⁹⁰ With Upper and Lower House elections scheduled for late 1989, the LDP's decision to limit the number of harriers in Okinawa was made "out of political necessity."¹⁹¹

An extremely rare example of political disconnect between Tokyo and Washington, Japanese leadership made this decision even though American leaders insisted on continuing with the project.¹⁹² After enjoying over three decades of political domination, the LDP was weakened politically in the late 1980s, disrupting Japanese-American base politics relations. In summary, this helicopter crash was not a catalytic event in its own regard; instead, it was a contributing event to a broad collection of political scandals and safety incidents.

2. 1992 CH-46 Crash at Futenma

On October 20, 1992, a U.S. Marine Corps CH-46 helicopter crashed while taxiing across the airfield at Futenma. After completing a training flight, the helicopter pilot lost control of the aircraft as it "turned over while taxiing."¹⁹³ There were no injuries to the flight crew or bystanders. Since the crash occurred on the airfield apron, the accident was well clear of the township and Futenma's buildings. Because this crash was not a politically contentious event, there is a dearth of information on the actual event and its aftermath.

a. Aftermath of Accident

This crash brought further scrutiny to the safety and reliability of the CH-46 airframe. In Okinawa, the helicopter had a poor safety record as this incident was "one of 20 [Okinawan] cases involving the CH-46."¹⁹⁴ Members of the Ginowan City Assembly

¹⁹⁰ Eldridge, *Post-Reversion Okinawa*, 81–82.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁹⁴ Eldridge, *Post-Reversion Okinawa*, 94.

voted for a resolution calling for the closure of Futenma. While this in particular crash was not politicized to a great extent, Eldridge argues that it contributed to strong protests 18 months later at Kadena and Futenma.¹⁹⁵ In early April 1994, an Air Force F-15C crashed, and two days later, another Marine CH-46 split apart after a hard landing at Futenma. A May 1994 *Ryukyu Shimpo* weekly news poll claimed that 70 percent of Okinawans supported the cancellation of American military training exercises.¹⁹⁶ A year later, however, the rape crisis would bring massive protests to Okinawa.

b. Analysis of Crash Factors

With an overall level of politicization assessed as moderate, the 1992 crash offers contrast to the one that occurred four years earlier. Both crashes took place on base in pre-1995 Okinawa, and involved the U.S. Marines operating aircraft out of Futenma. Likewise, many of the LDP's political struggles of the late 1980s continued through the early 1990s, culminating in the LDP's 1993 temporary loss of national political power. Referencing Table 3, multiple crash factors applied to the 1992 crash that were absent in the 1988 incident. The 1988 crash contributed to a political concession, but in spite of anti-base Okinawan Governor Ota being in office, the 1992 accident did not. Similarly, the external threats to Okinawa were actually higher during the Cold War in 1988 than they were in 1992. According to Kagotani and Yanai's survey results, Okinawan public opinion reflects a decrease in perceived security threats from 1988 to 1992.¹⁹⁷ Also, the 1992 crash did not cause any American fatalities like in 1988, as U.S. fatalities serve as a quelling factor following a crash.

According to Table 3, the 1992 accident actually involved one more crash factor than the 1988 one (six to five). So, why did political concessions take place in 1988 and not in 1992? Because not all crash factors are weighted equally, the 1988 political concession was made primarily because of the cluster of recent American accidents in the late-1980s, creating a rift between Tokyo and Washington. The accident occurred in a

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 95.

¹⁹⁷ Kagotani and Yanai, "External Threats," 99.

climate of increased U.S. military operational scrutiny, garnering the attention of various anti-base protests. Due to geopolitical pressures in 1989, Tokyo's LDP leaders made a political concession against the wishes of the United States. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the cluster of recent accidents and political disconnect between the two countries carried more significance than the political leanings of the governor, the external security threat to Okinawa, and U.S. military fatalities. Overshadowing other crash factors, higher politicization levels (and political concessions) can be expected when a rash of accidents occur within a short period of time. Additionally, political concessions are more likely to occur when national elites are politically vulnerable.

3. 1959 Air Force F-100D Crash at Miyamori Primary School

Since 1959, Okinawa has undergone considerable cultural and political change. The Americans were in control of the island in the heart of the Cold War and Okinawans had minimal political influence. Post-reversion Okinawa has its own Prefecture Government, answers to Tokyo, and has considerably more political opportunity. For these reasons, it is unrealistic to compare the aftermath of a 1959 crash to a contemporary one. This F-100D crash is discussed because the horrible circumstances of the accident have been absorbed into Okinawa's historical memory. Since then, numerous events have destabilized the American basing presence including reversion, the 1995 rape crisis, and the 2004 university crash. At each step, the political opposition has improved their organization, mobilize resources, and substantiate political connections in Tokyo. A crash of this magnitude today would lead to unprecedented levels of anti-base politicization.

On June 30, 1959, an American Air Force F-100D fighter jet operating from Kadena crashed into Miyamori Elementary School (currently named Uruma City Miyamori Elementary School) in central Okinawa Prefecture, killing 11 Okinawan students and six other people.¹⁹⁸ At 10:20 a.m., the crash occurred while school was in session.¹⁹⁹ Twenty-seven homes were destroyed and five of the victims were survivors of

¹⁹⁸ Chisato Matsumoto, "Drama about U.S. Military Crash in Okinawa Now in Tokyo," *Asahi Shimbun*, December 2, 2011, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201112020080a.

¹⁹⁹ Tanji, *Myth, Protest*, 79.

the Battle of Okinawa.²⁰⁰ Carrying four bombs, the F-100 impacted the school directly, burning the school down quickly, and causing 121 injuries.²⁰¹ Witnesses observed an engine explosion (the F-100D was a single-engine aircraft) followed by the successful ejection of the pilot, escaping the catastrophe unscathed in his parachute.

a. Aftermath of Accident

The F-100D crash is the most significant aviation accident in Okinawan history, affecting base relations to this day. Contributing to local cynicism, the results of the Air Force safety investigation accident report were never released to the Okinawan public.²⁰² The failure of American forces to communicate the nature of the crash added distrust to a community who lost children, teachers, and homes to the tragedy. There was further animosity over this crash because the Air Force pilot survived the crash after ejecting. If the pilot had stayed with the aircraft longer, he may have been able to steer the jet to a less populated area, and avoid the tremendous loss of life. Calling Air Force safety procedures further into question, a mother who lost a child to the accident decreed: “Flying a jet without carrying out proper maintenance is outrageous...it seems [the U.S. military] does not regard Okinawans as people.”²⁰³ A teacher who endured the horrible accident witnessed “children’s limbs burned off and skin peeled off by the fuel from the plane.”²⁰⁴ Okinawans were deeply affected by the crash and families of the victims experienced lifelong emotional trauma including miscarriages and amnesia.²⁰⁵

Even though it occurred over five decades ago, the crash remains a major part of contemporary Okinawan culture. Hook labels the accident as “the most poignant military accident in the popular memory of Okinawans.”²⁰⁶ A memorial was built on school

²⁰⁰ Glenn D. Hook, “The American Eagle in Okinawa: The Politics of Contested Memory and the Unfinished War,” *Japan Forum* 27, no. 3 (2015): 310–11, doi: 10.1080/09555803.2015.1042011.

²⁰¹ Hook, “American Eagle,” 310; Hook, “Intersecting Risks.”

²⁰² Eldridge, *Post-Reversion Okinawa*, 71.

²⁰³ Hook, “American Eagle, 311.

²⁰⁴ Tanji, *Myth, Protest*, 79.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Glenn D. Hook, Ra Mason, and Paul O’Shea, *Regional Risk and Security in Japan: Whiter the Everyday* (London: Routledge, 2015), 174.

grounds and every year citizens, politicians, and activists gather to commemorate the crash. In a 2007 *Ryukyu Shimpō* poll, Okinawans identified this crash as the seventh most important event in Okinawa's entire history.²⁰⁷ Even today, this accident is commonly politicized and referenced by anti-base protesters in statements to the media and resolutions to the government; efforts are made to draw attention to the suffering of Okinawans at the expense of the continued American basing presence.²⁰⁸ Uruma City's mayor mentioned the elementary school disaster during a 2012 speech with the goal of uniting opposition to the Okinawan deployment of U.S. Marine Corps MV-22 Ospreys.²⁰⁹

Hook describes an Okinawan culture categorically opposed to risk: "The memory of the tragedy has been passed down through the generations, articulating a strong sense of the risk posed by the existence of the bases and the operation of U.S. military aircraft in the prefecture, irrespective of the 'statistically insignificant' risk posed in terms of the absolute number of accidents per flight flown."²¹⁰ The idea that "accidents happen" is unacceptable to Okinawans. After each military accident, demands are made to both account for the improper safety act and conduct a safety review of U.S. military procedures. This particular crash was absorbed into Okinawa's identity, contributing to a historical narrative where Americans are careless and unconcerned with the welfare of the local populace. Furthermore, Okinawan films have dovetailed this disaster with the present-day anti-base movements.²¹¹ Alongside the 2004 Okinawa University crash, the elementary school accident remains at the forefront of Okinawan memory and is politicized to mandate the return of Futenma, the ban on MV-22 Osprey flights, and demands to make Okinawa "an island of peace."²¹²

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 170.

²⁰⁸ Hook, "American Eagle," 310.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 311.

²¹⁰ Hook, "Intersecting Risks."

²¹¹ Hook, "American Eagle," 311.

²¹² Hook, "American Eagle," 312–13.

b. Analysis of Crash Factors

The F-100D crash represents a worst-case scenario: an airplane crash in the township causing the death of innocent civilians. Okinawans had less recourse to mobilize against the American basing presence in 1959, making direct comparisons to contemporary accidents difficult. Still, the 2004 CH-53D University crash draws parallels to the F-100D crash (aircraft crashing into the township with significant environmental issues), but no civilians were killed or injured in the helicopter accident. Both events were also characterized by Okinawan frustration with U.S. military public relations, leading to increased resentment and distrust of the American basing presence.

A crash of this magnitude today would lead to unprecedented levels of Okinawan anti-base politicization because of increased political scrutiny, improved interconnectedness of anti-base activists (communication and networking), and a decreased external threat level (comparing 1959 to today). With current Governor Onaga being an outspoken anti-base politician, he would likely enflame a crisis instead of help Tokyo with damage control. Commemorating the 50-year anniversary of the crash, Ginowan City's 2009 Mayor Iha Yohei revealed artwork of the crash in his office, displaying the caption: "Even today, fifty years later, a U.S. military accident can occur anywhere."²¹³

D. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter presented case study analyses of five aviation accidents and identified specific crash factors. Crash factors were compared and contrasted in order to determine their individual significance and susceptibility to politicization. The overall goal of the chapter was to determine which factors contribute to making a crash a 'big one' and which factors the American basing presence can influence. With the aim of predicting the impact of future accidents, this study concludes that the four most significant crash factors in Okinawa are a crash site in the township, civilian fatalities/injuries, a cluster of recent U.S. military accidents, and poor American post-crash public relations. It should also be noted that an accident involving MCAS Futenma

²¹³ Ibid., 312.

or the U.S. Marine Corps will be more highly politicized than a crash involving a different American base or service. Thus, a Futenma-based aircraft crashing into the township and killing civilians represents a worst-case scenario for the American basing presence. The three crash factors that the U.S. military has the ability to influence are post-crash public relations, crash-site management, and local interagency cooperation. If the goal is to stabilize base relations in Okinawa, then American military forces need to prioritize effective public relations campaigns and interagency operations with local authorities.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

V. CONCLUSION—IMPLICATIONS

This chapter identifies three major ways this research can be used. First, this study provides insight as to how a crash is likely to be politicized by identifying the significance of crash factors. This is a tool for assessing the severity of the politicization of an aviation accident. Second, this research identifies specific factors the U.S. military has the ability to influence. This may be useful in developing public relations response to various American incidents. Third, this analysis also serves as a springboard for future potential research regarding base politics.

A. ASSESSMENT OF HOW AN AVIATION ACCIDENT WILL BE POLITICIZED

This research introduces an assessment tool to retrospectively learn from past accidents. The process that has been applied in this thesis can be expanded and applied to other areas of research. The crash chart depicted in Table 1 serves as a quick reference to gauge the political impact of any accident. In the present, this assessment tool provides an estimate of the preliminary consequences of an event. After reviewing case studies, this research concludes that the four most significant crash factors in Okinawa are a crash site in the township, civilian fatalities/injuries, a cluster of recent U.S. military accidents, and poor American post-crash public relations.

1. Crash Site in the Township and Civilian Fatalities/Injuries

Since a crash outside the township is unlikely to harm local civilians, this section combines the first two factors: crash site in the township and civilian fatalities/injuries. A crash in the township is more threatening to the local populace and susceptible to higher levels of politicization. Such an accident causes psychological damage to local citizens, mobilizes support for political opposition to continued military operations, and places political pressure on Tokyo to mediate increased levels of civil unrest. Fortunately, Okinawan civilians have not been killed by an American aviation accident since 1959, but memories of the Miyamori Elementary jet crash are pervasive in the local population.

The Americans were fortunate that the 2004 Okinawa University crash did not lead to any civilian injuries or deaths.

Due to high population density in Ginowan City, Futenma is the Okinawan airfield with the highest probability of having an aircraft crash in the township (and potentially harming civilians). But the decision was made in 1996 to close Futenma and ultimately a replacement facility is planned to provide greater separation between a densely populated township and aircraft departure and arrival corridors. With Futenma's continued operation, American and Japanese leadership collaborated to initiate the Aviation Training Relocation Program (ATRP) in 2006; the goal of the program was to minimize noise pollution and reduce the number of training flights at Futenma.²¹⁴ The ATRP reduced the likelihood of an accident in Ginowan City by relocating training evolutions to other American installations on mainland Japan and Guam.²¹⁵ Many Okinawans, however, remain threatened by the potential of an American military crash. Accordingly, another crash in the township by an American aircraft is not likely, but it would lead to tremendous levels of politicization, whether that accident involved Futenma or Kadena.

2. Cluster of Recent U.S. Military Accidents

The 1988 CH-46 crash proves that a cluster of American incidents leads to increased social activist mobilization and political scrutiny. With each incident, the level of general tension increases on the island, creating an environment where even relatively mild events can trigger large social reactions. The unrelated and multiple incidents of the late 1980s changed societal perceptions of the U.S. basing presence. This rash of occurrences created a rift between leaders in Tokyo and Washington. Because all accidents are politicized, there is never a good time to have an incident, but it is clearly more damaging to the American basing presence when they occur in bunches. Tokyo's 1989 political concession proves that a cluster of recent accidents can be exacerbated by a time of political vulnerability of national leaders,

²¹⁴ U.S. Marine Corps, "Aviation Training Relocation Program: 'Enhancing Interoperability for the Defense of Japan,'" *III Marine Expeditionary Force*, n.d., <http://www.okinawa.marines.mil/Portals/190/Docs/ATRP.pdf>.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

creating strain between Japanese and American national leaders. Moreover, a crash that presents a multitude of crash factors will be politicized to higher levels when it occurs at a time of heightened Okinawan tension.

3. Poor American Post-crash Public Relations

Comparing aftermaths of the 2004 and 2013 accidents, American post-crash public relations contributed to two radically different outcomes. In 2004, a contentious crash was enflamed by a poor American public relations response. Controversy ensued over how the U.S. Marines secured the crash site immediately after the accident, prompting local residents to equate the Marine actions with an occupation mindset. The Marines coordinated their actions poorly with Okinawan agencies and the aftermath of the crash lacked the element of teamwork or interagency cooperation. Underlying affairs between the U.S. Marines and Okinawans was poor American public relations. Independent of whether or not the actions taken by the Marine forces were legitimate, their public statements were often tardy and inadequate. Instead of being proactive with press releases, the Marines performed damage control. Because of all these inflammatory factors, a massive rift developed between the American basing presence and the local populace. The Marines did not receive the benefit of doubt and miscommunications in the days following the accident furthered resentment.

Nine years later, a less serious crash was contained by an effective U.S. Air Force public relations campaign. American forces learned from the 2004 debacle by providing timely and accurate information to the media. Essentially, the Air Force knew what information the Okinawans wanted to know about the crash and public affairs officers adeptly quelled the crisis. In the aftermath of the crash, the actions taken by the U.S. military were consistent with the information provided in press releases. The Marines agreed to postpone the arrival of the inbound MV-22 Osprey squadron and no significant mistakes were made to propel the incident into a crisis.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR U.S. PRE-MISHAP PLAN TRAINING

This study also functions as a tool for guiding the development and execution of pre-mishap plan training. Referencing Table 1, many circumstances of a crash cannot be

controlled or mitigated. The three crash factors that the U.S. military has the ability to influence are post-crash public relations, crash-site management, and local interagency cooperation. If the goal is to stabilize base relations in Okinawa, then American military forces should prioritize effective public relations campaigns and interagency operations with local authorities.

1. Post-crash Public Relations

Since proper preparation is critical to conducting effective public relations, American forces should practice regular joint mishap training exercises and coordinate capabilities between joint public affairs offices. Referencing the comparative case study of 2004 and 2013 helicopter crashes, public relations play a significant role in either aggravating or suppressing an American incident. Okinawan anti-base movements are well-organized in regards to maintaining historical archives and their specialization of personnel; they have improved their effectiveness through the years, employing activists full-time to destabilize the American basing presence. Therefore, American forces should prioritize improving the organizational quality of their public relations offices. Joint mishap training exercises help American forces formulate a timely, appropriate response to U.S. military incidents. Inter-service cooperation is improved through the execution of joint drills, ensuring effective partnerships between the American services. By instilling a team approach to any U.S. military service incident, petty service rivalries will be avoided and resources consolidated toward effective mishap response. Many of these steps were taken following the 2004 crash and implemented with great success in 2013. Of course, American forces typically rotate their personnel in three-year cycles and each U.S. service should remain vigilant in preparation for the next incident. If the American public relations teams become complacent, their response to the next event could be lacking and inflammatory.

An example of an effective and creative U.S. public response is Brigadier General Hecker's 2013 letter to the Japanese people. He provided a safety overview of the accident, explained what actions the U.S. Air Force was taking to prevent another future

crash from occurring, and referred to the Okinawans as “good neighbors.”²¹⁶ By connecting the squadron involved in the accident with the events of 3/11, he was able to connect the airmen in the crash on a human level with Okinawans. Hecker treated Okinawans with respect and gratitude. The actions taken by Hecker and other American leaders following the 2013 crash helped to satiate Okinawan demands for an account of the crash and minimize political activism. If the U.S. military follows Hecker’s example by providing accurate and relevant information to the public, greater trust and interagency cooperation will be built with Okinawan organizations.

2. Crash-site Management

American mishap response plans should involve coordinated action with Okinawan authorities to minimize the politicization of crash-site management. By training with Okinawan emergency responders, American forces can prevent a future controversy in the aftermath of an accident. The actions taken by the U.S. Marines in 2004 at the Okinawa International University crash-site were misunderstood by many Okinawans, drawing comparisons to an American occupation. Marine maintenance workers responded bravely to the crash by pulling downed aircrew from the burning aircraft wreckage, securing the area, and ensuring local citizens were clear of the nearby administrative building. But the actions taken by the Marines to secure the crash-site were not appreciated by many of the local residents, leading to controversy and increased tensions. Although attempts were made by the Marines to incorporate local emergency responders with the crash-site management, anti-base activists politicized a lack of American cooperation with Okinawans.

Following the 2004 crash, the U.S. military revamped protocols and emergency response plans in order to facilitate more effective operations with Okinawa agencies. In large part due to the 2013 crash being on base property, it did not carry with it controversy over the integration of emergency responders or a perceived security-perimeter ordeal like in 2004. Indicative of effective partnerships, Okinawan fire and

²¹⁶ Hecker, “Friendship Shines.”

rescue units volunteered to help in any capacity with the American effort to manage the crash-site at Camp Hansen.

3. Local Interagency Cooperation

This category is interconnected with post-crash public relations and crash-site management because it serves as another means for the American leaders to coordinate with Okinawans. With the goal of improving relations, American forces should integrate their emergency response plans with Okinawan agencies. The greater the cooperation and training between American forces and local institutions, the more likely that a future incident will be handled with cooperative efforts. American forces can build partnerships with Okinawan organizations (political leaders, media, fire, police, etc.) by remaining active with coordinated training exercises and conducting regular meetings with Okinawan leaders. If teamwork is emphasized, there will be less of an us-and-them component to the American basing presence, stabilizing relations. Furthermore, a greater team focus will promote more efficient joint relations between American services.

Following the 2004 accident, Okinawan organizations began participating annually in a joint American-Okinawan aircraft mishap response drill. By the 2013 crash at Camp Hansen, a familiar relationship had been established between the U.S. military and Okinawan Fire and Rescue agencies. Within the last decade, the U.S. military has prioritized improved partnerships with local institutions, but these efforts must be sustained and adapted. This thesis underlines multiple cases of poor American coordination fueling crises and effective U.S. teamwork subduing the political impact of incidents. By and large, timely and accurate communication is a prerequisite for successful American cooperation with Okinawan agencies. Miscommunications and inconsistencies have sabotaged American damage control efforts.

C. AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research can inform a broader understanding of Okinawa and American base politics in general. It yields knowledge of anti-base movements, the politicization of aviation crashes, and the importance of effective public relations following an incident. This thesis also informs projects with a more narrow focus including individual bases and

specific aircraft. Whether the focus is on Japan or another country where the Americans have permanent military bases, this research can be applied to a multitude of military incidents.

1. Broader Implications on Base Politics and Public Relations

Crime, accidents, and pollution caused by service members destabilize American base politics, testing the partnership of the host nation and Washington. In response to these leadership challenges, the reaction of American commanders is significant because U.S. military actions can exacerbate a crisis by either offending the local residents or by communicating poorly with the public. Any incident or negative byproduct of the American basing presence can be politicized in a similar capacity as an aviation accident. Consequently, future research could use the template from this thesis to similarly evaluate the politicization of U.S. servicemen crime, non-aviation accidents, or pollution. A study of past crimes or incidents in Okinawa would yield further insight in improving public relations. Furthermore, these same principles could be applied in South Korea, Germany, or another American host nation.

2. MCAS Futenma

In the process of this analysis, it is clear that an accident involving Futenma or the U.S. Marine Corps will be more highly politicized than a crash involving a different American base or service. In the near future, a Futenma-based aircraft crashing into the township and killing civilians represents a worst-case scenario. A catalytic event involving Futenma risks undermining American base agreements with Japan. Additionally, anti-base Governor Onaga is liable to contribute to anti-base political mobilization. Debates have been 20 years in the making over when Futenma will be closed or if it should be closed, and the replacement facility is far from complete. There have been numerous aviation crashes through the years in Okinawa, but few have involved the controversial Marine base. In the meantime, Futenma remains operational, base leaders continue to take strides in minimizing threats to the local community, and infrastructure repairs are being performed to ensure safe operations. The U.S. Marines also work actively with the government of Japan and Okinawan leaders with the goal of

fostering effective partnerships. With Futenma a highly controversial base, future research could evaluate whether it makes more sense to permanently keep Futenma open or to continue construction on the fleet replacement facility.

3. MV-22 Osprey

Although Okinawan perceptions are mixed over the alleged unsafe nature of the MV-22 Ospreys, the aircraft bears numerous improvements over the one it replaced, the CH-46. Ospreys are able to climb to a higher altitude in reduced time, minimizing aircraft noise and providing a greater altitude sanctuary by the time it departs the airfield.²¹⁷ The Osprey has the ability to fly as a helicopter or speedily depart as a conventional airplane, contributing to misconceptions about its reliability, but it has one of the strongest safety records in the U.S. Marine Corps.²¹⁸ Because the MV-22 is a politically contentious airplane in Okinawa, an argument could be made that a crash involving this airplane will be politicized at a higher level than another aircraft. Evaluation of Okinawan perceptions of the MV-22 Osprey in comparison to the aircraft it replaced occurs as an area for potential future research. Another angle of research would involve determining if the MV-22 presents more or less of a threat to the township than helicopters like the CH-46.

D. SUMMARY

For 70 years, American military forces have sustained their presence in Okinawa because of effective partnership between Tokyo and Washington. Relations between the U.S. military and Okinawa are undermined by history, an anti-military culture, and animosity in the Okinawa-Tokyo-Washington relationship. Leading drivers in base politics are catalytic incidents, whether it is crime, accidents, environmental damage, or cultural insensitivity. Okinawan social activists are keen to exploit any American incident in order to receive financial compensation, a particular political concession, or the ultimate removal of American forces from their island. Forces that stabilize American basing operations include compensation politics, Tokyo's strong security consensus, and

²¹⁷ U.S. Marine Corps, "MV-22 Osprey: 'An Alliance Capability,'" *III Marine Expeditionary Force*, n.d., <http://www.okinawa.marines.mil/Portals/190/Docs/MV-22%20Info.pdf>.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Okinawa's weak government. The durability of Japan's security consensus was detailed, highlighting Japanese political elites' commitment to preserving the basing status quo. Okinawan political activists have achieved few political victories because of their inability to win-over the support of Tokyo's elites.

In order to predict the consequences of potential future scenarios, this study investigated why certain aviation accidents in Okinawa have been more politicized than others. With airplane crashes distinct, they are politicized to various levels by social activists. This research conducted case study analyses of individual crash factors to determine which features are more significant than others. Through this analysis, this study identifies which factors are most susceptible to politicization and which factors the American military presence has the ability to influence. Although there are many crash factors that are outside the U.S. military's ability to control, the post-accident public affairs campaign plays a vital role in either enflaming or quelling a crisis. Therefore, American basing rights will be threatened by future incidents, but effective public relations quell crises and preserve support for American bases.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Allen, David. "Amid Protests, Wreckage is Removed from Scene of Okinawa Copter Crash." *Stars and Stripes*, August 18, 2004. <http://www.stripes.com/news/amid-protests-wreckage-is-removed-from-scene-of-okinawa-copter-crash-1.23387>.
- . "6 Futenma CH-53Ds Set off for Iraq." *Stars and Stripes*, August 24, 2004. <http://www.stripes.com/news/6-futenma-ch-53ds-set-off-for-iraq-1.23534>.
- Allen, David, and Chiyomi Sumida. "School Fears Helo Crash Contaminated Soil." *Stars and Stripes*, September 1, 2004. <http://www.stripes.com/news/school-fears-helo-crash-contaminated-soil-1.23743>.
- Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus. "Okinawa Prefectural Government." N.d. http://www.japanfocus.org/data/okinawa_prefectural_government.png.
- Associated Press in Tokyo. "U.S. Military Helicopter Crew Survives Crash on Okinawa." *Guardian*, August 5, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/05/us-military-helicopter-crash-okinawa>.
- Bugni, Toni M. "The Continued Invasion: Assessing the United States Military Presence on Okinawa through 1996." *Suffolk Transnational Law Review* 21, rev. 85 (winter 1997).
- Calder, Kent E. *Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007.
- Cooley, Alexander. *Base Politics: Democratic Change and the U.S. Military Overseas*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2008.
- Cooley, Alexander and Daniel H. Nexon. "'The Empire Will Compensate You': The Structural Dynamics of the U.S. Overseas Basing Network." *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 4 (December 2013): 1034–1050. doi: 10.1017/S1537592713002818.
- Eldridge, Robert D. *Post-Reversion Okinawa and U.S.-Japan Relations: A Preliminary Survey of Local Politics and the Bases, 1972–2002*. Osaka: Osaka Univ. Press, 2004.
- . "Anatomy of a Crash: Local Reactions and Official Responses to the 2004 Futenma Helicopter Accident and its Aftermath (1)." *International Public Policy Studies* 13, no. 1 (2008–9): 135–145. http://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/11094/7468/1/23-11_n.pdf.

- . “Anatomy of a Crash: Local Reactions and Official Responses to the 2004 Futenma Helicopter Accident and its Aftermath (2).” *International Public Policy Studies* 13, no. 2 (2009): 15–25. http://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/11094/6720/1/24-02_n.pdf.
- . “The Okinawa ‘Base Problem’ Today.” *Nippon.com*, February 3, 2012. <http://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a00501/>.
- Feffer, John. “Pacific Pushback: Can Japan Say No to Washington?” JPRI Working Paper No. 116. *Japan Policy Research Institute*. March 2010.
- Flock, James F. “Background Brief on CH-53 Helicopter Accident,” *U.S. Embassy Tokyo*. August 27, 2004. <http://japan2.usembassy.gov/e/p/tp-20040827-61.html>.
- Google Maps. “Okinawa, Japan.” N.d. <http://www.google.com/maps/@32.0372172,130.8502579,5z>.
- Harlan, Chico. “U.S. Military Helicopter Crashes in Okinawa.” *Washington Post*, August 5, 2013. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/us-military-helicopter-crashes-in-okinawa/2013/08/05/b008fd40-fdd1-11e2-9711-3708310f6f4d_story.html.
- Hecker, James B. “Friendship Shines after Okinawa Crash.” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, August 23, 2013. <http://www.kadena.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123361103>.
- Hook, Glenn D. “Intersecting Risks and Governing Okinawa: American Bases and the Unfinished War.” *Japan Forum* 22, no. 1–2 (2010): 195–217. doi: 10.1080/09555803.2010.488954.
- . “The American Eagle in Okinawa: The Politics of Contested Memory and the Unfinished War.” *Japan Forum* 27, no. 3 (2015): 299–320. doi: 10.1080/09555803.2015.1042011.
- Hook, Glenn D., Ra Mason, and Paul O’Shea. *Regional Risk and Security in Japan: Whiter the Everyday*. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Johnson, Chalmers. *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*. New York: Holt, 2000.
- . “Okinawa between the United States and Japan.” JPRI Occasional Paper No. 24. *Japan Policy Research Institute*. January 2002.
- Kagotani, Kori, and Yuki Yanai. “External Threats, U.S. Bases, and Prudent Voters in Okinawa.” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 14, no. 1 (2014): 91–115.
- Kakesako, Gregg K. “Marine Choppers Flying Again,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, August 16, 2004. <http://archives.starbulletin.com/2004/08/16/news/story5.html>.

- Katzenstein, Peter J. "Japanese Security in Perspective." In *Rethinking Japanese Security: Internal and External Dimensions*, edited by Peter J. Katzenstein, 1–31. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Kimura, Yasuyuki. "The Defense Facilities Administration Agency: A Unique Support Organization for U.S. Force in Japan." Asia-Pacific Policy Papers Series, no. 16. *Edwin O. Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies*. 2013.
http://www.reischauercenter.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/RC-Monograph-2013-Kimura_History-of-DFAA.pdf.
- Matsumoto, Chisato. "Drama about U.S. Military Crash in Okinawa Now in Tokyo." *Asahi Shimbun*, December 2, 2011. http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201112020080a.
- McCormack, Gavan. "Okinawa's 'Darkest Year,'" *Asia Pacific Journal* 11, issue 33, no. 4 (August 2014): 1–8.
- . "The End of the Postwar? The Abe Government, Okinawa, and Yonaguni Island," *Asia Pacific Journal* 12, issue 49, no. 3 (December 2014): 1–11.
- . "Storm Ahead: Okinawa's Outlook for 2015." *Asia Pacific Journal* 13, issue 2, no. 3 (January 2015): 1–6.
- Mochizuki, Mike. "U.S.-Japan Agreement on Okinawa Is Not a Breakthrough," *Dispatch Japan*, April 11, 2013.
- . "Nago Election Revives Doubts That U.S. Marine Facility at Henoko Will Be Built." *Dispatch Japan*, January 20, 2014.
- Mochizuki, Mike, and Michael O'Hanlon. "A Liberal Vision for the U.S.-Japanese Alliance," *Survival* 40, no. 2 (summer 1998): 127–34.
- . "Rethinking Okinawa Military Relocation," *Politico*, February 2, 2012.
- Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor. "Sikorsky CH-53 D Sea Stallion (Heavy Lift)." N.d. <http://www.pacificaviationmuseum.org/aircraft/CH53D>.
- Reuters. "U.S. Military Helicopter Crashes in Okinawa." August 5, 2013.
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/05/us-japan-helicopter-idUSBRE97407W20130805>.
- Ryukyu Shimpō*. "Higashi Rally Protests Crash." November 3, 1988.
- . "93% [Call For] Review of SACO Emergency Poll of Prefectural People on U.S. Military Helicopter Crash," August 20, 2004.
http://www.city.ginowan.okinawa.jp/DAT/LIB/WEB/1/00134_00002.pdf.

- Samuels, Richard J. *Machiavelli's Children: Leaders and Their Legacies in Italy and Japan*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2005.
- Swartz, Karl L. *Great Circle Mapper*. Accessed October 15, 2015. <http://www.gcmap.com/airport/ROTM>.
- Tanji, Miyume. *Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa*. London: Routledge, 2009.
- Thorson, Larry. "Midair Collision Blamed for Marine Helicopter Crash." *Associated Press*, November 1, 1988. <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1988/Midair-Collision-Blamed-For-Marine-Helicopter-Crash/id-c91beee2b9326c35de000c3b8a348cb5>.
- Tokyo Asahi Evening News*. "Article Views Accidents Involving U.S. Forces." November 29, 1988.
- Tokyo Kyodo*. "Officials to Investigate Incidents on Okinawa." November 24, 1988.
- Tritten, Travis J. "Pilot Error Caused Okinawa Helicopter Crash that Killed Airman, Air Force Says." *Stars and Stripes*, January 20, 2014. <http://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/pilot-error-caused-okinawa-helicopter-crash-that-killed-airman-air-force-says-1.263138>.
- Tritten, Travis J., and Chiyomi Sumida. "Air Force Finds Remains at Helicopter Crash Site on Okinawa." *Stars and Stripes*, August 5, 2013. <http://www.stripes.com/news/pacific/air-force-finds-remains-at-helicopter-crash-site-on-okinawa-1.234005>.
- U.S. Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Air Station Futenma*. Accessed October 15, 2015. <http://www.mcasfutenma.marines.mil/>.
- . "Aviation Training Relocation Program: 'Enhancing Interoperability for the Defense of Japan.'" *III Marine Expeditionary Force*. N.d. <http://www.okinawa.marines.mil/Portals/190/Docs/ATRP.pdf>.
- . "MV-22 Osprey: 'An Alliance Capability.'" *III Marine Expeditionary Force*. N.d. <http://www.okinawa.marines.mil/Portals/190/Docs/MV-22%20Info.pdf>.
- Yeo, Andrew. *Activists, Alliances, and Anti-U.S. Base Protests*. Cambridge: Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics, 2011.
- Yoshida, Kensei. *Democracy Betrayed: Okinawa Under U.S. Occupation*. Bellingham, WA: Western Washington Univ., Center for East Asian Studies, 2002.
- Zimmerman, Fred. "Marines Recount Rescue of Helo Crew." *Stars and Stripes*, August 27, 2004. <http://www.stripes.com/news/marines-recount-rescue-of-helo-crew-1.23617>.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center
Ft. Belvoir, Virginia
2. Dudley Knox Library
Naval Postgraduate School
Monterey, California