USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

U. S. MILITARY FORWARD PRESENCE IN OKINAWA, JAPAN

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED (FROM - TO)
07-04-2003		xx-xx-2002 to xx-xx-2003

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
U.S. Military Forward Presence in Okinawa, Japan
Unclassified

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
5b. GRANT NUMBER
5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)
Wilhelm, John C. ; Author

5d. PROJECT NUMBER
5e. TASK NUMBER
5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS
U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks
Carlisle, PA17013-5050

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME AND ADDRESS
,

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
APUBLIC RELEASE
,

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
See attached file.

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE	Same as Report (SAR)	34	Rife, Dave RifeD@awc.carlisle.army.mil
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER International Area Code Area Code Telephone Number DSN

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: LTC John C. Wilhelm

TITLE: U. S. MILITARY FORWARD PRESENCE IN OKINAWA, JAPAN

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 07 April 2003 PAGES: 34 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The U.S. military maintains a strong forward presence in the Asia-Pacific Region with roughly 35,000 personnel in Korea and 48,000 in the Japanese Islands. Of the 48,000 stationed in Japan, over 26,000 are in Okinawa. What makes that figure so significant? Okinawa comprises roughly 1% of the total land area of Japan, yet it plays host to the largest percentage of U.S. forces. Okinawa's geographic location, host nation support, and infrastructure make it vitally important for U.S. forward presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

The purpose of this paper is to review the strategic importance of our bases in Okinawa, briefly discuss the current policy under the 1996 SACO accords, analyze the current courses of action that are available, and finally make recommendations on future U.S. policy towards Okinawa.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Two people played a critical role in my successful completion of this research project. The first is my faculty advisor COL George Woods, who kept me on the straight and narrow and convinced me that academic endeavors do not have to be painful. The U.S. Army War College is blessed to have not only a proven leader on its staff but also an individual whose talents on the platform make the academic process enjoyable for students.

The second person I must give credit to is Lieutenant Colonel Preston McLaughlin, United States Marine Corps. Preston and I had many discussions about the subject of Okinawa and the experiences we shared, having both commanded battalions on the island. His knowledge on this subject is far superior to mine and he provided me some tremendous insights on U.S. – Japanese relationships.

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U.S. MILITARY FORWARD PRESENCE IN OKINAWA, JAPAN

> You might call this the fourth major betrayal of Okinawa. And in each event, decisions have been made with no regard to the people of Okinawa. In 1879, Tokyo replaced the king of the Ryukyu Islands with a governor appointed from Tokyo. In 1945, when the war with the United States was already all but lost, Tokyo fought a last-ditch campaign in Okinawa–the only part of Japan to see ground combat—in which more than 200,000 people were killed. Then in 1952, Tokyo allowed Washington to extend its occupation of Okinawa for 20 more years.
>
> ? Professor Nairo Kabiram, Ryukyu University, Okinawa

INTRODUCTION

The statement above reflects the sentiments for many of Okinawa's people with respect to the recent agreements, between the U.S. and Japanese Governments, for the relocation of the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS)-Futenma to the northern portion of the island of Okinawa. This relocation is an extension of a previous pact signed in 1996 as part of the Special Action Committee on Okinawa, or SACO as it is referred to, where the U.S. and Japanese Governments agreed in principle to reduce the U.S. military footprint on this tiny southern Japanese island.

To gain a complete insight of where these feelings come from and how the U.S. and Japanese Governments came to draw up the SACO agreements, it is necessary to go back in the historical development of Okinawa. Okinawa is the largest of the Ryukyu Islands chain. Key to this understanding is a thorough awareness of the Battle of Okinawa and the relationship between the U.S. military and the people of Okinawa from 1945 to the present. None of this has any bearing unless there is an accompanying knowledge of the strategic importance of Okinawa as part of the bi-lateral alliance between the U.S. and Japan.

The intent of this paper is three-fold. First, develop a historical perspective of the nature of the relationship between the U.S. and Japan with specific emphasis on that relationship in Okinawa and gain an understanding of the strategic importance of U.S. military access to basing rights and C4ISR capabilities on the island of Okinawa. Second, outline the current policy under SACO and suggest other possible courses of action, offering some benefit and risk trade-off analysis to each, with respect to forward presence in the region. Finally, make recommendations to improve relations with the local people to help alleviate some of the current political and social pressures. Before discussing the aforementioned purpose of this paper, I will provide a brief overview of the development of what has become the Okinawa Prefecture.

This condensed version of the historical development provides some insight into why I am recommending a change to our current policy.

BRIEF DISCUSSION OF OKINAWA'S (RYUKYU ISLANDS) DEVELOPMENT

Okinawa is the smallest of the forty-seven Japanese-Prefectures, strategically located 400 miles south of the mainland of Japan. The archipelago of the Ryukyu Islands stretches for a great distance, but only 47 of the more than 140 islands that make up this chain are inhabited. Most historians agree that travelers coming from: northern Asia down through what is today's mainland Japan, from Southeast Asia through the Philippines or the China coast, and finally coming from Mongolia or Manchuria down through the Korean peninsula were the original settlers of the Ryukyu Islands.[1] The Ryukyu's can be considered a "melting pot" of Asian cultures and the people of Okinawa pride themselves on this diversity. This cultural blending and nonviolent approach to life so adeptly described in this quote, " …their gentleness of spirit and manner, their yielding and submissive disposition, their hospitality and kindness, their aversion to violence and crime"[2], contributes significantly to their views of U.S. military forces on the island as well as their perceived treatment by the government of Japan.

The people of the Ryukyu Kingdom originally flourished as farmers, fisherman, and traders for centuries maintaining peaceful relationships with their neighbors. Okinawa's peaceful traditions and strategic location, not only to those nations within the region, especially Japan, but also to the European nations hoping to expand their trading bases in Asia, made it ripe for hostile takeover. In the early stages of the 17th century, Japan invaded the Ryukyu Islands to ensure their protection from invasion on their southern boundary. Initially the Japanese left no occupation forces behind, only spies to monitor the terms of the treaty and report on any suspicious activities of a foreign military. In the latter portion of the 19th century, Japan deposed the king, established a garrison on the island, and formally established Okinawa as a prefecture.[3] As Japan's interests grew within Asia over the years so did Okinawa's importance for protection of Japan's southern littoral approaches. This importance was never more evident than during the final year of WWII, when the Allied Forces in the Pacific made the decision to secure Okinawa as the final staging area for what would be the ultimate last push into mainland Japan.

The effects from the "Battle of Okinawa" on the local people can only be described as devastating. Before the Allied invasion in March of 1945, the Okinawa people unwillingly assisted in the massive defensive preparations for the Japanese Army's final stance and they suffered tremendous casualties in the actual invasion and subsequent battle. Reports from

various sources range from 60,000 to over 100,000 killed during the 3-month long operation. These were the non-combatants, trapped between an advancing U.S. ground force and a retreating Japanese force. Some of the most horrific stories include accounts of Japanese soldiers killing women and children so they did not give away their positions in caves as well as forcing thousands of Okinawans to jump to their deaths from the cliffs on the southeastern tip of the island.[4] Keeping in mind that these were only the civilian casualties; military casualties for the U.S. totaled more than 38, 000, 12,000 of those being killed or missing and more than 107,000 for Japanese and Okinawan conscripts. Roughly, one-third to one-fourth of the total population of Okinawa was killed in this battle. Equipment losses were severe as well with the Allies losing 34 ships, another 368 receiving damage from attacks, and losing 763 aircraft. The Japanese lost 7,830 aircraft and 16 combat ships not to mention the battleship Yamato, which was sunk before ever reaching Okinawa, along with 7 additional combat ships that were dispatched from mainland Japan to accompany her. Oddly enough, the Yamato was dispatched from the mainland with only enough fuel for the voyage to Okinawa, as her mission was to beach herself and fight until destroyed. The Battle for Okinawa was the most costly and bloodiest battle of the Pacific Theater.[5]

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

> America's position in the Ryukyus is unique: the islands are neither a possession, a colony, nor a trust territory. The archipelago shares the fate of many frontier territories too small and too poor to attract attention in times of peace, but doomed to rise to international prominence during crises among world powers. It lies on the western Pacific Rim, between the maritime world and continental Asia. It cannot escape the consequences of wars and revolutions in larger states nearby: the postwar "Okinawa problem" was produced by events "set in train" long ago by accidents of geography and history.[6]

The U.S. military has maintained forward deployed forces throughout Japan since the end of WWII. Initially these were occupation forces, but gradually this posture changed with regional and world events and with the signing of the Treaties of Peace and Security in September of 1951, between the U.S. and Japanese governments. "With the advent of the Korean War (1950-53), and Japan's new role in Asia as a forward deployment center and repair facility for U.S. forces."[7] This statement, from a Global Security article, sums up the change in the presence of U.S. forces in Okinawa from an occupation mission to a forward based logistical hub and theater rear area for power projection. In addition to the support provided for the

Korean conflict, Okinawa has also served as a staging area for U.S. forces during the Vietnam War, Desert Shield/Desert Storm, and most recently in support of operations in East Timor. Elements of the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force just deployed from their home bases in Okinawa, again headed for a possible conflict in Southwest Asia.

The specific details concerning the size and disposition of U.S. forces are covered under separate administrative agreements between the U.S. and Japan. Article III of the 1951 Security Treaty, between the United States and Japan; set the foundation upon which our forward deployment continues.[8] In reality the number of U.S. personnel on the island of Okinawa can be close to 30,000 depending upon the size of the Navy and Marine Corps contingent that train there and deploy from there on a temporary basis. The Marine Corps has the greatest number of personnel on the island, followed by the Air Force, Navy, and finally the Army with the smallest number of uniformed personnel. It may surprise some people to know that the actual number of U.S. military personnel stationed in Japan actually exceeds the number of personnel on the Korean peninsula. U.S. Pacific Command's homepage provides an executive level overview of the roles and missions for the forces stationed in these two locations and provides links to subordinate command web sites providing details on units and personnel.

From the surrender of Japanese forces on Okinawa on 23 June 1945 until the signing of the security treaty in 1951, the U.S. military was a force of occupation. A U.S. Military Governor General ruled Okinawa following the security treaty in 1951 until its formal reversion back to the government of Japan, on 15 May 1972. From 1972 to the present, U.S. military personnel continue their forward basing there through the aforementioned security treaty between the U.S. and Japan. This treaty was updated in 1997 and recently reaffirmed by the new Bush administration when the U.S. State Department released a joint statement by President Bush and Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi.[9] This joint statement summarizes the general concept of our forward-presence militarily in Japan, but what makes Okinawa so important to this security equation? Okinawa's geographic location and infrastructure, capable of supporting large military operations in the Asia-Pacific region, make it vital to U.S. national interest in the region.

Okinawa is strategically located and positioned at the confluence of the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean. From here, U.S. military forces are postured to respond to contingencies in Korea and other threats in Southeast Asia. This region accounts for over one-third of U.S. trade (in excess of $500 billion per year) and 34 percent of the Gross World Product.[10] The Asia-Pacific region also plays host to some of the largest world economies outside of the United States, that being Japan, Korea, and China. It is also home to some of the world's largest armed forces: the Peoples Republic of China, Russia, India, North Korea, and South Korea.

Further, five of the seven U.S. mutual defense treaties are in the Asia-Pacific Region. From a purely military perspective, the operational capabilities provided at Kadena Air Force Base, Naha Military Port, and White Beach Naval Facility, along with some vital strategic communications "reach-back" assets and strategic intelligence capabilities are but a few other critical infrastructure resources key to the operational success of U.S. forces in the region.

The opening quotation of this paper points to a feeling of animosity between not only the people of Okinawa and the government on the mainland of Japan, but also to an underlying tension about basing of U.S. military forces in general. This tension has been compounded significantly by the unfortunate events over the fifty-plus years U.S. personnel have been stationed here. The tension has increased recently since the brutal rape of a 12-year-old Okinawa girl in 1995, the assault on a 14-year-old Okinawa girl in 2000, and the most recent rape case involving an Okinawa woman in 2001. U.S. service personnel stationed in Okinawa committed all three of these crimes. The crime statistics (See figure one) show the number of criminal cases involving SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement) status people. These data are collected and maintained by the Prefecture Government of Okinawa. While an American may view this as a declining trend over the years this data has been tracked, the local prefecture government uses the data as a point of its negotiation, "bearing the burden" as it is termed, with the central government on the mainland for additional subsidies. An example of this comes from the recent negotiations over the ultimate relocation of the MCAS at Futenma to the northern area of Nago. "The blandishments include an astronomical budget of $1 billion over 10 years to lift the town – one of Japan's poorest – out of its relative underdevelopment. Nago has also been promised a spot on the world stage, as the improbable host city to the Group of 7, the world's leading industrial powers, in July of 2000."[11]

Additionally, the local and international media are well aware of these incidents and never pass up the opportunity to leverage them in the on-going debate of U.S. military presence on the island. There is very little follow-up coverage of any judicial outcomes when service personnel, or their families, are punished or reprimanded for any incidents they are found guilty of committing. This type of media attention is not unusual, even in the United States, but there is no counterbalance reporting with regard to all of the good things U.S. personnel do within the Okinawa community or a reaffirmation of the importance of U.S. military presence within the region. These incidents of personal misconduct are the most visible, both locally and internationally, but are not the only points of contention from the people of Okinawa.

Perhaps the largest single point of debate comes over the specific number of U.S. military personnel stationed here as compared to the remainder of Japan. "There are continuing hard

feelings among Okinawans about the 26,000 U.S. troops, out of 48,000 U.S. military personnel in Japan, stationed on Okinawa. About 75% of land occupied by U.S. military facilities in Japan

	Number of criminal cases involving SOFA status people							Total number of crimes (in Okinawa)	Percentage of crimes committed by SOFA status people
	Brutal crimes	Assaults	Larcenies	White-collar crimes	Immoral conduct	Other	Total		
1972	24	77	51	16	1	50	219	4,656	4.7
1973	37	93	122	14	3	41	310	4,469	6.9
1974	51	82	151	7	1	26	318	4,874	6.5
1975	31	52	110	7	1	22	223	6,394	3.5
1976	49	75	97	5	1	35	262	8,644	3.0
1977	69	76	121	13	1	62	342	10,605	3.2
1978	30	70	130	5	2	51	288	10,115	2.8
1979	43	46	113	5	5	62	274	10,668	2.6
1980	35	44	168	21	1	52	321	11,354	2.8
1981	27	38	130	20	1	37	253	11,578	2.2
1982	19	53	94	9	3	40	218	12,794	1.7
1983	15	38	114	8	0	36	211	13,471	1.6
1984	10	26	75	4	3	24	142	15,139	0.9
1985	13	32	91	3	2	19	160	16,392	1.0
1986	8	15	116	3	0	13	155	13,916	1.1
1987	5	18	69	3	3	25	123	12,704	1.0
1988	6	20	133	3	2	13	177	12,705	1.4
1989	7	21	110	2	0	20	160	10,671	1.5
1990	6	11	60	2	0	19	98	8,185	1.2
1991	10	5	79	0	2	20	116	8,090	1.4
1992	3	2	35	1	2	8	51	7,923	0.6
1993	6	3	141	1	1	11	163	8,987	1.8
1994	5	11	101	0	2	11	130	10,691	1.2
1995	2	6	44	1	3	14	70	12,881	0.5
1996	3	6	24	0	2	4	39	11,078	0.4
1997	3	8	27	0	2	4	44	10,310	0.4
1998	3	8	17	2	2	6	38	7,300	0.5
1999	3	7	22	2	1	13	48	7,989	0.6
2000	4	6	26	0	3	14	53	6,226	0.9
2001	4	6	37	5	2	16	70	5,268	1.3

FIGURE 1: SOFA STATUS CRIME STATISTICS

is in Okinawa, despite the fact that the island represents less than 1% of Japan's total land area."[12] The people of Okinawa are also very well aware of the imbalance of restructuring and draw down that has occurred in other parts of Japan as opposed to their tiny prefecture. They are also aware of the significant reductions in U.S. forward presence in Europe because of the

end of the Cold War. “Over the last quarter century the United States returned just 15 percent of the land it occupied in Okinawa, compared to 60 percent of the property it used on

Prefecture	Number of facilities		Land Area of facilities		Land Area of prefecture (km2)	Percentage of Total Area of Prefecture Occupied by the Facilities (%)
		Rank		Rank		
Nationwide	133		1,010,124		337,873	0.27
Hokkaido	17	2	344,463	1	83,453	0.41
Aomori	6	7	31,991	7	9,235	0.35
Iwate	1	13	23,265	10	15,278	0.15
Miyagi	3	10	45,698	6	6,861	0.67
Yamagata	1	13	1,310	24	7,394	0.02
Ibaragi	1	13	1,078	25	6,096	0.02
Gunma	1	13	5,802	14	6,363	0.09
Saitama	4	8	2,280	18	3,767	0.06
Chiba	1	13	2,102	19	4,996	0.04
Tokyo	7	5	15,785	12	2,102	0.75
Kanagawa	16	3	21,427	11	2,415	0.89
Niigawa	1	13	14,089	13	10,939	0.13
Ishikawa	1	13	1,606	22	4,185	0.04
Yamanashi	1	13	45,967	5	4,201	1.09
Gifu	1	13	1,626	21	10,209	0.02
Shizuoka	4	8	89,145	3	7,329	1.22
Shiga	1	13	24,539	9	3,855	0.64
Hiroshima	7	5	5,226	16	8,477	0.06
Yamaguchi	2	11	5,733	15	6,110	0.09
Fukuoka	2	11	1,414	23	4,839	0.03
Saga	1	13	14	26	2,439	0.00
Nagasaki	13	4	4,562	17	4,092	0.11
Oita	1	13	55,568	4	5,804	0.96
Miyazaki	1	13	1,801	20	6,684	0.03
Kumamoto	1	13	26,097	8	6,908	0.38
Okinawa	38	1	237,527	2	2,271	10.46

FIGURE 2: LAND OCCUPIED BY U.S. MILITARY

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the mainland."[13] Figure 2 shows the overall U.S. military footprint, from the land area used, by prefecture within Japan. It offers further proof to the Okinawans that claim there is an unequal distribution of land area used to support U.S. forward deployed forces.

In 1995, the U.S. and Japanese governments, with representatives from the Okinawa Prefecture Government, formed a Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) to address some of these issues.

SPECIAL ACTION COMMITTEE OKINAWA (SACO)

The SACO agreements, the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process in the United States, and the draw down in the early to mid 90's in Europe shared some very basic goals. The U.S. military took significant reductions in infrastructure, fiscal resources, and significant force structure over a 4 to 6 year period in an effort to reduce operating expenses and the footprint our remaining forces would occupy. This was based on a change or a perceived change to the threat from the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact nations and it allowed the U.S. and its NATO allies to reap a "peace benefit" by drawing down its forces in Europe and reducing the size of their respective military forces. There is one major difference between the BRAC process and SACO; the U.S. is not currently planning any major reduction in military forces currently stationed in Okinawa. There are those who would argue the removal of one Air Force fighter squadron, the 12th Fighter Squadron relocated to Nellis AFB in 1997-98, constitutes a significant reduction. However, this squadron was already planned for return to the United States and the number of personnel associated with its withdraw had little or no impact on the total number of U.S. personnel stationed in Okinawa. Brief highlights on the major initiatives associated with SACO and an update on accomplishments to date are beneficial to this discussion.

Four major categories or goals were developed as part of the SACO agreements. The first initiative calls for an overall reduction of the area used by U.S. forces by approximately 20%. This was to be accomplished through a series of consolidations and/or elimination of bases, housing areas, and training facilities. Some of the these efforts required new construction of facilities on bases that would be retained long term for U.S. or Japanese Self Defense forces and the Japanese government agreed to pay the costs associated with this first category. One of the specific initiatives that came from this category was the proposed relocation of the Marine Corps Air Station at Futenma (MCAS-Futenma). This topic was so controversial, as it sits in the middle of a densely populated section of southern Okinawa, that it became a separate working group under the overall SACO process. Progress in this area has

been steady, with a large area already returned or on a specific timetable tied to construction of new facilities, but a second critical facility relocation is still open ended. The Naha Military Port is planned for relocation onto Camp Kinser, an existing base identified for long-term use. However, final agreement on this location as well as the question of dual civilian and military is yet to be reached. This issue may require the same effort that finally brought resolution on the MCAS at Futenma, establishing a separate working group under SACO.

The second initiative was adjustments to training and operational procedures. Parachute training for Army and Air Force Special Forces personnel was relocated from the main island of Okinawa to an adjacent island called Ie Jima. 155mm artillery live-fire training is now conducted on the mainland of Japan and artillery firing over Highway 104 was terminated unless it was in support of a crisis. Additionally, physical conditioning road marches would no longer be conducted on public roads. These were perhaps the easiest of the four major sections within the SACO agreements and all were implemented quickly.

The third initiative was initiation of noise reduction efforts, all of which dealt with flight operations from Kadena Air Force Base and MCAS Futenma. This effort requires construction of baffling materials, relocation of specific type aircraft to either mainland Japan or back to the U.S., and a limitation of night operations at Futenma. Again, significant progress has been made on most of the requirements in this category with details on unit moves to be worked as part of the on-going negotiations. Construction of noise abatement countermeasures is complete at Kadena and night flight training at Futenma was modified.

The final initiative calls for improvement in the Status of Forces Agreement, between the U.S. and Japan. The specifics on this category are difficult to measure as they center on an intangible variable of information flow that is hard to quantify, a desired change from Okinawa's perspective on handling of U.S. personnel who have been allegedly involved in criminal acts, and finally the question of access to U.S. military facilities in general. Neither side can claim complete success in this category due to the broad nature of items covered by the SOFA agreement and the time it takes to make any changes that are agreed upon as part of SACO. Additionally, each time specific issues are addressed in this category another one arises leaving the door open for criticism.

Some positives have been achieved over the past four to six years. Information flow between the U.S. military and the people of Okinawa has greatly improved with the reestablishment of the Okinawa Area Council. This initiative was originally started back in the early 1960s, but disappeared over the years following Okinawa's reversion back to the government on mainland Japan. The council has senior military representatives from all four

services as well as prominent elected officials and business leaders. They come together monthly to discuss issues relevant to the interaction of U.S. personnel and the people of Okinawa. This dialogue led to the decision allowing civilian emergency vehicles access through U.S. facilities. The SACO committee was scheduled to conclude its work one year after the process began, but it is still in existence. From an Okinawan perspective, they thought there would be a reduction in both the footprint of U.S. facilities and in the total number of personnel stationed on the island. SACO has already reduced the amount of land area used by U.S. forces and will reach its goal of 20% upon completion of the additional construction on bases that are slated for long term use. SACO actually represents the status quo course of action concerning U.S. military presence on Okinawa as part of the overall forward presence in the region. The process will continue over the next decade as the two governments reach agreement on additional details for facility relocations and return of unnecessary lands. This process does not fully address the other major concern from the Okinawans perspective, and that is the total number of U.S. personnel stationed there. Experts have offered other options for resolution of the situation.

Before moving into the discussion of these possible courses of action, I want to offer a few recommendations on what some of our current initiatives should be that may help reduce the tensions we continuously hear or read about from the media. These recommendations are separate actions that can be implemented quickly, as opposed to the other long-term courses of action that will require years to fully implement.

TENSION REDUCTION

Following the unfortunate rape of the young Okinawan girl in 1995, the U.S. military embarked on a vigorous public relations campaign to improve relations between the local people and military personnel. The U.S. stressed what actions it had taken regarding the briefings and education all personnel received upon arrival in Okinawa, concerning the cultural sensitivity and individual responsibility and importance of being a good U.S. “ambassador” associated with their tour of duty on the island. This program needs to be reinvigorated to ensure there is a balanced approach to the reporting of military personnel activities as well as the long-term benefits that the U.S. presence has provided. The U.S. should expand the community outreach programs that are in place. This could include adoption of local Okinawan schools, similar to programs at many installations in the United States, where U.S. military personnel currently volunteer to teach English as a second language. Military units could assist in cleanup and beautification projects in local communities. Before the 2000, G8 Summit that

was held in Okinawa, U.S. military personnel and their families volunteered right alongside their Okinawan hosts in an island-wide beautification project. DoD could donate computers that it currently disposes of through the Defense Reutilization Resource Management Operations (DRMO) sales, which generate very little income for the federal government. All services should adopt strict guidelines concerning assignment to and reassignment from Okinawa of personnel identified as high-risk. Individuals with severe disciplinary and financial problems, as well as those with family problems should be restricted from assignment or reassigned off the island when severe discipline issues arise. In many instances, the family issues are resolved through an early return of dependants process, but this leaves the disgruntled, and in some cases, reprimanded service member in country for the remainder of his or her tour. The suggestions above come from a variety of sources, but specifically I compiled them from my discussions with various people during my twenty-four months of command. These people either had multiple tours of duty in Okinawa or were civilian personnel that had lived there for years, each keenly aware of the ebb and flow of support for U.S. personnel. Regardless of which course of action the U.S. pursues, improving the relationship between the personnel stationed on the island and their local Okinawan hosts should always be a goal.

COURSES OF ACTION (COA)

There are literally hundreds of thousands of pages on the subject of the U.S.-Japanese security relationship, clearly understandable based on the importance of this relationship over the past fifty-plus years. Unfortunately, there seem to be as many opinions on how to proceed, as there are pages on the subject. Almost all of these sources include specific reference to U.S. forces stationed in Okinawa. The topic is virtually impossible to avoid based on the number of personnel stationed there, the media attention any incident of personnel misconduct receives, and the sheer strategic importance that the infrastructure as well as the significance of the geographic location. However, three basic courses of action or strategies emerge when trying to deal with the question of forward presence in Okinawa.

COA 1

The first is a continuation of a strong forward presence in the region, which means continuation of the current SACO process and no reduction of U.S. military personnel only further consolidation of the footprint on Okinawa. This course of action stems from the basic policy established under the Clinton Administration in the 1990s following a study conducted by the Department of Defense, which became known as the “Nye Report”. In the report, Professor Nye’s opening paragraph includes the following statement, “Security is like oxygen: you do not

tend to notice it until you begin to lose it. The American security presence has helped to provide this "oxygen" for East Asian development."[14] His report outlined the differences in post-WWII development of Europe and the formation of NATO as opposed to the Asia-Pacific region where Japan, Korea, and China had unresolved issues and a basic distrust of each other's intentions. For those supporters of the "Nye Report" and a continuation of a strong forward presence, they point to the continuing major causes of possible instability of the Asia-Pacific region. These include, North Korea which has taken on a new level of threat to its neighbors with their renewed interest in nuclear weapons, the unresolved status of Taiwan, and the uncertainty of China's long-term intentions as it struggles with advances in a capitalistic economy while continuing to be a communist form of government. There are countless other "threats" in the region that this group of experts cites as well. Most notably are the recent terrorist threats in the Philippines and Indonesia as well as the other nations with struggling economies and neighbors who argue over ancient territorial rights.

Continuation of current U.S. policy provides the advantages of reducing overhead costs for maintaining forward deployed forces in Japan, as the Japanese government provides a healthy percentage…"which in 1999 covered about 58% of the annual cost of stationing U.S. forces… and the Japanese Self Defense Force (JSDF) provides logistical and rear area support as well.[15] Perhaps the greatest advantage of leaving these forces in Okinawa again comes down to its strategic location. In a crisis situation when response time can make a crucial difference in the early stages of a potential conflict it is important to keep the following in perspective,

> …it takes 2 hours to fly to the Korean peninsula from Okinawa, as compared with about 5 hours from Guam, 11 hours from Hawaii, and 16 hours from the continental United States. Similarly, it takes about 1-½ days to make the trip from Okinawa by ship to South Korea, as compared with about 5 days from Guam, 12 days from Hawaii, and 17 days from the continental United States.[16]

Finally, the infrastructure outlined earlier as part of the description of Okinawa's strategic importance would be extremely difficult to replace or, in the case of the C4ISR capabilities, irreplaceable elsewhere within the region. There are some risks of continuing with the SACO process and not addressing some of the issues raised by the people of Okinawa.

The most significant risk is the possibility that some external event, or "Gaiatsu" in the Japanese language, might cause a major shift in the current tolerance levels of U.S. military presence. This could potentially force the government of Japan to dramatically change its current policies.[17] The event could be another incident on the magnitude of the rape in 1995, or it could be a shift in the political support from the government on the mainland of Japan. The

loss of forward basing access on Okinawa could be devastating to our military capability in the Asia-Pacific region. Shifting military forces to other locations in the region without prior preparations can be extremely costly from an economic and diplomatic sense. For those that argue this is not likely, history offers the recent example of loss of forward presence in the Philippines.

> Especially after the victory of U.S.-led forces in the Gulf War and the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo which brought untold economic suffering to many Filipinos, no one in the Philippines could believe that what happened on September 16, 1991, was possible. Even the U.S. government, I think, including Pentagon and State Department officials could hardly believe it happened. Everyone underestimated the political will of the Philippine Senate, which rejected politically and officially the proposed bases treaty that would have allowed the United States to maintain its nuclear forces, troops and facilities in the Philippines for another ten years.[18]

The quote above comes from an article written in 1992 by a professor at the University of the Philippines. The author was reflecting back on the historical development of the Philippines and its relationship with the United States. U.S. military facilities became a part of life for the Filipinos living outside of Clark AFB and Subic Bay Naval Base. Many worked on the installations or developed businesses that supported, directly or indirectly, the personnel stationed there. So how could a nation that counted on U.S. military assistance for security politely ask them to leave? The U.S. failed to address some of the issues that were being raised by Filipinos and counted on its "hegemonic" position to get what it wanted. To put it simply, it was politics! A more recent example of losing access to vital area of military interest, and in this case a bit closer to home, is the recent decision to close the Vieques training range in Puerto Rico. You could almost argue that the U.S. has sovereignty over the region as Puerto Rico remains a U.S. protected territory, but the political storm created over environmental concerns and safety hazards forced a political decision to cease training there. The Navy will have to invest more than four hundred million dollars through 2009 to improve training facilities in the United States in order to replace the loss of access to the island of Vieques.[19] What the U.S. does not need is a repeat of the situations in the Philippines and Puerto Rico.

COA 2

The second course of action comes as a compilation of thoughts from three "experts" in foreign relations who have written several articles on the subject of U.S. and Japanese security relations. Chalmers Johnson, President of Japan Policy Research Institute, and E.B. Keehn,

University Lecturer at the Japan Research Center of Cambridge University, co-authored a 1995 article in response to the Department of Defense report or the “Nye Report”. They highlight the key portions of the report and then counter with what they consider an outdated and bankrupt strategy for security within the region. Perhaps the most telling line in the article states, “Unsettling though it may be to some American policymakers, the position that Japan should remain a perpetual servant of U.S. power and naturally accept U.S. interests as preeminent is an idea whose time has passed, if it was ever plausible.”[20] These gentlemen go on to argue that the U.S. dominance over the Japanese and other nations within the region, has stifled development of security and that the loss of access in the Philippines had no bearing on their overall security. They offer that the U.S. needs to work with the Japanese government to eliminate the current bi-lateral security arrangement, remove U.S. forces from the region, and allow the Asian-Pacific nations to develop their own security arrangements.

Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, takes the Johnson/Keehn position on force reductions in the region one step further calling for Congress to reduce the defense budget. In his 1999 article, he states the basis for the current policy was the Cold War justification that is no longer valid. Perhaps his most telling argument comes from this statement, ”The United States now is expected to dampen potential conflicts that lack even a tangential link to America’s own security.”[21] He offers a very similar argument to Chalmers and Keehn with respect to the loss of access in the Philippines and calls for a new security arrangement in the region establishing a balance of power between the Asian nations, thereby making a U.S. forward presence unnecessary. He feels that in some cases U.S. troops that are forward deployed act as “tripwires” for immediate American involvement in potential situations, especially in the case of those stationed in South Korea. He feels this position undermines the United States ability to weigh its national interests and analyze options thereby maintaining freedom of action.[22] His report provides a more in-depth analysis with specific details on the security concerns of major nations in the region and he outlines the U.S. new role should be that of a disengaged “honest broker”.

Both articles point toward a larger more engaged Japanese Defense Force and in both cases, they outline the need for revision of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. Article 9 states that the Japanese government formally renounced war as a method of resolving conflicts and it has specifically limited the size and roles of the Japanese military since the end of WWII. Those roles and the size of the force have changed over the years allowing the Japanese military to participate in humanitarian operations within the region as well as providing naval forces in support roles as far west as the Indian Ocean as part of the Global War on terrorism.

The single greatest advantage of this course of action would be the potential savings in the recommended reduction of the DoD budget. Reducing the overall U.S. force structure, as part of a planned withdraw of U.S. forces from the Asia-Pacific region, would provide billions in savings according to Chalmers, Keehn, and Bandow. Even though the government of Japan heavily subsidizes the U.S. base operating expenses, the daily operations and maintenance costs are still a significant expense. A second advantage would be the fostering of a continued debate within the Japanese government over Japan's role in its own security and possible amendments to the aforementioned Article 9. Both articles point to a security relationship that should be built on the model used with Germany, where Japan is an equal partner in the security of the region. Finally, they argue that this would shift the focus of U.S. efforts off the military to more emphasis on economic and diplomatic solutions to potential situations. The opinion of those supporting this camp believe the economic relationships within the region are the real source of stability and a reduced U.S. military presence would enhance that effort.

Perhaps the greatest weakness or risk associated with this strategy comes out of the example of the Philippines both authors used as an argument for withdrawing forces. Both articles point out the loss of forward deployed forces in the Philippines had little or no impact on the overall security in the region. In Chalmers and Keehn's article they state, "…the closing due to the eruption of Mount Pinatubo and the actions of the Philippine Senate—of its two largest overseas bases, Clark Air Base and Subic Bay, produced not even a shiver of instability."[23] Mr. Bandow's argument is not quite as terse, "The United States has suffered no damage from the demise of its bases in the Philippines, which had long before become expensive anachronisms."[24], but it carries the same meaning. The counter argument to these statements is there continues to be a strong U.S. military presence within the region, but what happens if the U.S. loses access to the bases in Okinawa? Additionally, time has a funny way of changing perspectives when it comes to security. What a difference a little more than a decade has made when it comes to the security in the Philippines and nearby Indonesia. The recent events in East Timor and the activities of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group, as well as the hotel bombing in Bali, hint that the lack of U.S. forward presence this far into the region gives rise to those that would not normally threaten such actions if the U.S. military were still there. A further retraction of U.S. forward presence in the region could potentially spawn further terrorist activity or send mixed signals to China over the situation in Taiwan. There is one major point that these two camps agree on and that serves as a point of departure for a third course of action.

COA 3

The significant changes from the Cold War strategy of containment to engagement and enlargement as well as the recent shift to fighting the Global War on Terrorism has both sides calling for a review of the security architecture within the Asia-Pacific region. Each side agrees that there are threats to U.S. interests but they differ on the severity of the threat as well as the level of importance to the U.S. The third course of action must start with a review of the strategic situation within the region analyzing the threats and U.S. interests and then developing a force structure around that analysis.

The current number of personnel within the Asia-Pacific region, approximately one hundred thousand, came from the previous National Military Strategy of fighting two Major Regional Contingencies (MRCs) at the same time. The U.S., Japan, and South Korea were also facing a severe communist threat from the former Soviet Union and its Cold War allies of China and North Korea. Russia and China now share common interests in the region for political stability and continued economic growth and it is doubtful if they will allow North Korea's recent actions to threaten that stability. If the new security construct for the region is based on threat and U.S. forces being postured for rapid response to potentially unstable situations, then we need to begin developing alternatives.

This would start with specific basing/stationing rights with other allies in the region, preparations by DoD to assess the capabilities in Guam and on the West Coast of the United States, and changes to our philosophy of forward presence through unit rotations. We must also take into consideration exactly what Joint Vision 2020 calls for, "a deep understanding of the cultural, political, military, and economic characteristics of a region" which must be established and maintained.[25] The goal is to maintain forward presence in the region and access to critical infrastructure on the island, not to just arbitrarily keep thirty thousand personnel stationed there. The U.S. and Japan can make some modifications to the SACO agreements that will further reduce the footprint of military forces in Okinawa. The U.S. should negotiate new fiber optic cable easements for command and control infrastructure that leads to the elimination of additional areas utilized for un-manned communications facilities. We should analyze further options for coalition U.S. and Japanese Self Defense Forces use of bases as well as consolidation of U.S. military services onto joint use bases. The recent announcements about the next round of base closings in the continental U.S. speak to this exact point.

The major advantage of this option comes from addressing the concerns raised by the people of Okinawa while maintaining access to the strategic infrastructure. This would increase U.S. military flexibility for smaller scale contingencies in the region, improve training

opportunities for our forces with our other allies in the region, and it reduces the risk associated with the large concentration of forces in a small geographic footprint. It also helps the government of Japan in dealing with some its own economic issues and the discussion would lead to (more of sense of true partnership) between the two nations. It potentially frees up additional manpower for the current Global War on Terrorism, which is expected to go on indefinitely.

This position does increase the logistical requirements to support a more dispersed force; potentially increases risk associated with massing a larger size force if necessary, and may require short and long term investments in infrastructure that does not currently exist. Some of that expense may be mitigated through negotiations with other nations in the region, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines, if we have access to facilities for logistical support while operating in their area.

RECOMMENDATION

> The security strategies of the United States and Japan are mutually reinforcing, reflecting the criticality of each country to the other's defense posture in the Asia-Pacific region…The revised guidelines reflect continuity in the bilateral security partnership, reaffirming the security commitment to regional stability that both countries share.[26] From its inception as part of the security treaty in the early 1950s until today, the role of the U.S. military forces on Okinawa remain unchanged; they are part of the forward presence staged to respond to any potential contingency in the Asia-Pacific region as well as demonstrating U.S. commitment to security obligations.[27]

Reflecting on the continued importance from the statements above the U.S. should modify its current policy with regard to SACO and forward presence on Okinawa and pursue the third course of action outlined above. There is no immediate personnel number that is the right solution without an accompanying analysis of the overall threats to U.S. and Japanese interests. What is clear is that the loss of access to Okinawa bases would severely hamper U.S. military operations in the Asia-Pacific region, undermining the stability that supports the continued economic development that is so vital to U.S. national interests. By understanding the historical development and cultural aspects of the people of Okinawa, we can better accommodate their concerns over our continued presence.

Each of the courses of action has some advantages, and other then some sort of total withdraw like what occurred with the Philippines, a comprehensive strategy would take time to implement. If the U.S. is moving to a new operational construct as part of its overall transformation efforts than this is the perfect time to tie that to a change in forward presence in

the region. Rapid changes to basing in Okinawa without plans for follow on economic stimulus to replace the lost revenues, from a U.S. military draw down, would only add to the rhetoric of Okinawa's "burden" of what the U.S. military has meant.

Beginning in the next fiscal year DoD will begin an initiative of a Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFH). Okinawa could be a perfect place to initiate that project. The III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) is already a designated Joint Task Force capable headquarters from the PACOM Commander, why not designate the commanding general of III MEF as the first SJFH and place all U.S. forces and personnel under his direct command and control? If the U.S. is truly embracing joint operations in the transformation process, then the security analysis that must accompany the new strategy for the region, must also include the synergistic capabilities of a transformed U.S. military. The Air Force has already established aerospace expeditionary forces that are capable of deploying to crises on short notice and the Marine Corps and Navy are working jointly to improve their expeditionary capabilities as well. When the Army completes its development of the Stryker Brigade that capability would also be factored into the security analysis, again offering possibilities for change in the definition of forward presence. If we have access to critical infrastructure for crisis response, continue with joint and combined exercises with allies in the region, and follow through on the planned transformation of DoD, what then makes the permanent forward basing of so many personnel necessary?

Perhaps this quote sums up best what our forward presence role continues to mean. "On a day-to-day basis, thousands of soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen demonstrate American values, capabilities, and resolve. The presence of these forces overseas is a visible signal of U.S. commitment to other nations and their peoples."[28] Again, the question must be asked; does this require so many U.S. personnel stationed in Okinawa or can the U.S. and its other allies and potential allies devise a new strategy. General Jones, the former Commandant of the Marine Corps and current Combatant Commander of U.S. European Command, suggests adopting a new strategy of "island hopping" as if a "frog" from "lily pads". If the infrastructure exists and the interests of security are being met, the U.S. can and must look to a reduction in the number of personnel stationed in Okinawa.

WORD COUNT=7,536

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