

October 2009

Attention: Lieutenant General Edward A. Rice Jr.
Commander, USFJ / 5th Air Force
USAF

Requests for Measures Concerning Yokota Air Base

The existence of Yokota Air Base, in manners such as hindering regional urban activity and local development, has great administrative and fiscal impact on the surrounding municipalities.

In addition, as Yokota Air Base is located in a densely populated urban area, the residents of these municipalities suffer endlessly from aircraft noise both day and night, and despite an agreement reached by the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee on measures for the reduction of aircraft noise, the required environmental standards in the area surrounding the base have still not been met. Under these circumstances, if flight training using U.S. Navy carrier-based aircraft is resumed, the living environment of nearby residents will be enormously affected.

Moreover, the residents are always fearful of accidents that may occur at any time. Accidents that should have been avoided at all costs have been occurring at Yokota Air Base, although none of these accidents resulted in a major disaster. These include aircraft parts falling from aircraft, as well as a plastic bottle falling from aircraft, a large-scale fire on the base, and emergency landings by helicopters, etc. due to fuselage and other problems.

With each one of these incidents within a hairsbreadth of becoming a serious, life threatening accident, residents in the vicinity are becoming increasingly concerned about the possibility of future accidents. In addition, concerns over possible terrorist attacks on the base and the spread of new infectious diseases through personnel traveling to and from foreign countries are also causing the residents much anxiety.

Under these circumstances, the governments of cities and a town around the base have organized the "Liaison Council of Municipalities Surrounding Yokota Air Base Concerning Yokota Air Base" since 1983, and have strived to resolve such issues attributable to the base through discussions on the consolidation, downscaling and return of the base and other related subjects.

We understand that the U.S. Armed Forces in Japan has been giving due consideration to policies such as safety and environmental measures, but nevertheless, these efforts, including the exchange of information with nearby municipalities, are still not sufficient as measures for the area around the base.

With respect to the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement and its operation, although a certain degree of improvements in operation have been made following the incident of rape by a U.S. soldier in Okinawa Prefecture and the helicopter crash in Ginowan City, Okinawa Prefecture in August 2004, further review is required.

From the viewpoint of preventing crimes and ensuring safe flights, measures must, of course, be taken such as further maintenance of discipline, a thorough implementation of educational programs, assurance of flight safety, and a bolstering of inspection and maintenance, but in order to solve various base-related issues, including the recent incidents and accidents, it would also be necessary to conduct an appropriate review of the Agreement.

Issues related to Yokota Air Base cover a wide range of subjects including consolidation, downscaling, and the return of the base. We, however, wish to strongly request that no flight training using U.S. Navy carrier-based aircraft be implemented hereafter at Yokota Air Base.

We hereby urgently request a deep understanding of the unendurable conditions faced by the residents and a prompt realization of the attached List of Requests for measures to be taken by Yokota Air Base.

List of Requests

1. In addition to ceasing all flight training using U.S. Navy carrier-based aircraft at Yokota Air Base, we request that necessary measures be taken to resolve issues concerning the base, including the consolidation, downscaling and return of the base.

Yokota Air Base is located in a densely populated urban area. It has various effects on the daily lives of the residents such as sufferings from aircraft noise and anxiety over aircraft accidents, as well as hindering local community development.

If day and night flight training using U.S. Navy carrier-based aircraft is executed, its effects will be enormous and will be significantly detrimental to the peaceful livelihood of residents in the vicinity.

We strongly request for the complete cessation of flight training using U.S. Navy carrier-based aircraft at Yokota Air Base and for necessary measures, including also the consolidation, downscaling, and return of the base, to be taken to protect the safe and peaceful lives of the residents of the vicinity and to help promote local community development.

2. Promotion of measures for noise reduction.

(1) In order to alleviate suffering by residents of the vicinity from aircraft noise, we request strict observance of the articles agreed to at the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee meetings in 1964 and 1993, and for measures to be taken urgently with regard to the following items.

a. Ensure that flight training etc. is not carried out between the hours of 22:00 and 6:00, and to

make utmost efforts to refrain from doing so between the hours from 21:00 to 22:00 and 6:00 to 7:00.

b. Refrain from conducting engine tests or training that may have an impact on the surrounding area between the hours of 17:00 and 7:00.

c. Review operations of the airfield to prevent the generation of noise from flights and/or engine tests on Saturdays, Sundays, Japanese national holidays, Bon holidays, year-end and New Year holidays, and other certain days such as entrance examination dates.

d. Refrain from using helicopters or other aircraft (including Cessna) to perform low altitude flights in areas surrounding the base.

e. Limit helicopter flight training to the airspace above the base that has been provided to the U.S. Armed Forces.

f. Take necessary measures to insulate noise arising from aircraft inspection and other operations.

(2) Develop low-noise technology for aircraft and promote the use of low-noise aircraft.

(3) Take all necessary measures in the use of the Public Address System, the Ground Burst Simulator and other systems, including giving due consideration to the location of the installed equipment, to prevent them from affecting areas outside the base.

(4) Develop and maintain dedicated engine testing facilities which include a Hush House, and ensure that engine testing for aircraft, including inbound aircraft, is conducted at such facilities.

3. Prevention of aircraft accident recurrence, as well as implementation of thorough measures to ensure safety in the operation of the base, and the swift provision of information if accidents or other incidents occur.

Parts fell from aircraft in September 2001, May 2004, and July 2008, and an incident in which a plastic bottle fell from aircraft occurred on July 10, 2008. Since August 2004, there have been successive incidents of emergency landings by helicopters and other aircraft, and a UH-1N made an emergency landing in the Sagami-gawa river area in Kanagawa Prefecture on June 11, 2008. In addition to the frequent occurrence of such impermissible accidents, in January 2009, a major fire broke out, which totally destroyed the building (approx. 3,600 square meters) housing the Defense Finance and Accounting Service Japan. As these incidents are one step away from resulting in a major disaster, we request that the following improvements be made to ensure that similar incidents do not occur in the future.

(1) Conduct a thorough investigation into the causes of the accidents and take thorough measures such as bolstering guidance and training to all personnel who are engaged in the operation of aircrafts to prevent the recurrence of similar accidents.

(2) Provide information both swiftly and accurately including provision of on-site explanations when necessary should unforeseen events such as accidents occur.

(3) Take minute care in the operation of the base to ensure the safety of residents of the vicinity and to relieve their anxieties.

4. Provision of appropriate information to the municipalities in which the base is located.

Information concerning the flight of aircraft and other useful information for the municipalities in which the base is located is requested to be provided in a timely and accurate manner. In particular, the following information is indispensable for our base related measures, and should be provided in detail and without delay.

- (1) Statistical data concerning the frequency of aircraft take-offs and landings, etc.
- (2) Reports on scheduled plans for execution of flight training using U.S. Navy carrier-based aircraft as well as the contents of the training.
- (3) Information related to the implementation of training and flights

Particularly, information on training that uses the Public Address System, the Ground Burst Simulator and other systems.

- (4) Information concerning accidents and incidents originating from the base (content, cause, progress in handling the accident, measures to prevent recurrences, etc.).
- (5) Advance notification concerning changes and plans for facility equipment inside the base (objective, content, timing, etc.).
- (6) Information regarding environmental conditions inside the base, and efforts made to implement environmental protection measures (including bird control, types of waste material and their method of disposal, and control of smoke emitted from waste treatment facilities and boiler facilities that affect the lives of residents in the vicinity).

5. Appropriate review of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement and its operation.

With respect to the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement and its operation, we request that the following items be reviewed for improvement:

- (1) Article 2- and Article 3-related

Efforts should be made for all possible simplification of procedures necessary to allow entry by emergency vehicles, etc., into the facilities and areas used by the U.S. Armed Forces.

- (2) Article 3-related

a. It should be specified that Japanese laws such as the Air Pollution Control Law, Water Pollution Control Law, and Waste Management and Public Cleansing Law shall apply to the facilities and areas and that reports based on these laws shall be provided, in order to ensure the safety and protection of the living environment around the facilities and areas.

It should also be specified that if pertinent local government officials request entry to the facilities and areas, their requests will be met promptly.

In addition, exhaust gas, smoke and other substances in the facilities and areas should be monitored, and the results and contents of improvements shall be made public.

b. Although improvements to the waste disposal facilities at the base were completed in March 2002, test data should be provided and site inspections permitted yearly.

c. We request that top priority be given to ensuring the safety of the residents of the vicinity in the operation of the facilities and areas, with particular care taken to prevent anxiety among the

residents or effects such as damage to their living environment and agricultural products.

In particular, we request the implementation of thorough maintenance and inspection of aircraft to prevent accidents, and that thorough safety measures are specified regarding the transportation and management of dangerous materials as well as training using said materials.

d. Such measures as further maintenance of discipline and thorough implementation of educational programs should be taken to prevent traffic accidents and crimes committed by military personnel and others and to prevent untoward incidents from occurring outside the facilities and areas, with the aim to relieve the fears of residents of the vicinity.

e. It should be specified that the provisions of the minimum safety altitude stipulated in Article 81 of the Civil Aeronautics Law applies to flights by U.S. Forces aircraft (including low-altitude flight training).

(3) Article 9-related

In order to preserve the living environment and ensure safety around the facilities and areas, it should be specified that Japanese laws apply to quarantines of people, animals, and plants as well as human health and sanitation.

(4) Article 13-related

Preferential treatment in terms of automobile tax and a low displacement car tax on privately owned vehicles of the members of the U.S. Armed Forces and others should be corrected.

(5) Article 17-related

It should be specified that in cases in which the Japanese authorities have primary jurisdiction, the Japanese side can unconditionally take into custody or question an accused member of the U.S. Armed Forces or the civilian component.

(6) Article 18-related

It should be specified that military personnel and others are required to take out voluntary (bodily injury liability) insurance on their privately owned cars.

(7) Article 23-related

Specifications to permit the mutual extension of support between Japan and the U.S. Forces in Japan in the case of a disaster should be included.

(8) Article 25-related

It should be specified that the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee shall listen to the concerns and opinions of the local municipalities regarding matters such as the operations of the facilities and areas, and that the Committee shall discuss such matters.

It should also be specified that the matters agreed to at Japan-U.S. Joint Committee meetings will promptly be made public.

(9) Matters related to the "Japan-U.S. Joint Committee Agreement Regarding the Countermeasures to Reduce the Aircraft Noise in the Yokota Air Base"

We request that the "Japan-U.S. Joint Committee Agreement Regarding the Countermeasures to Reduce the Aircraft Noise in the Yokota Air Base" be reviewed and the following be specified:

- a. The prohibition of flights between the hours of 21:00 and 7:00, and on Saturdays, Sundays,

Japanese national holidays, Bon holidays, year-end and New Year holidays, and certain days such as entrance examination dates.

b. The prohibition of engine tests between the hours of 17:00 and 7:00, and on Saturdays, Sundays, Japanese national holidays, Bon holidays, year-end and New Year holidays, and certain days such as entrance examination dates.

c. Ceasing of all flight training using U.S. Navy carrier-based aircraft.

"Liaison Council of Municipalities Surrounding Yokota Air Base Concerning Yokota Air Base"

Shohei Shimizu, Mayor of Tachikawa City

Jouichi Kitagawa, Mayor of Akishima City

Ikuo Kato, Mayor of Fussa City

Mitsuo Arai, Mayor of Musashimurayama City

Shin Namiki, Mayor of Hamura City

Kouemon Ishizuka, Mayor of Mizuho Town

Manager: Mitsuo Arai, Mayor of Musashimurayama City