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# The "Roadmap" to Nowhere: Explaining the Inability to Implement U.S. Base Realignments in Okinawa\*

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## Abstract

The "Roadmap for Realignment Implementation" (known in Japan as the Final Report), released on May 1, 2006, and the earlier "Transformation and Realignment for the Future," issued on October 29, 2005, and known as the Interim Report, both belie structural problems in the alliance and in the Japanese government's relations with local authorities, flawed premises, a lack of honesty and transparency, and the failure to think big and instead settle for quick-fixes. The result of the talks and agreements is, in short, a "roadmap" to nowhere, and one that could bring a rapid downward spiral in the bilateral relationship. This article challenges the premises, process, and policy options suggested by the Final Report and calls upon alliance managers to come up with a better plan, using the attached recommendation as the basis for such a review.

**Keywords :** U.S. bases, Okinawa, transformation, realignment, U.S.-Japan alliance,  
Self Defense Forces

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## Introduction

Historians in the future may very likely judge the Japanese and U.S. governments guilty of politically, strategically, and militarily making the alliance vulnerable and fundamentally damaging the relationship of trust with local communities that host U.S. facilities, particularly Okinawa Prefecture. At the minimum, the two governments will be criticized for not seizing the opportunity that the U.S. base realignments in Japan, as part of America's larger transformation of its military, presented for strengthening the political and military foundations of the alliance by truly enhancing defense cooperation and fundamentally improving the situation in Okinawa.

The "Roadmap for Realignment Implementation"(known in Japan as the Final Report), released on May 1, 2006, and the earlier "Transformation and Realignment for the Future," issued on October 29, 2005, and known as the Interim Report, both belie structural problems in the alliance and in the Japanese government's relations with local authorities, flawed premises, a lack of honesty and transparency, and the failure to think big and instead settle for quick-fixes. The result of the talks and agreements is, in short, a "roadmap" to nowhere, and one that could bring a rapid downward spiral in the bilateral relationship.

Officials in the Japanese government and, perhaps, some in the U.S. as well, will challenge this view. Defense Minister Nukaga Fukushiro, appearing on one of Japan's Sunday morning political talk shows on May 14, stated he felt he "stabilized the Japan-U.S. alliance for the next 20-30 years."<sup>11</sup> While keeping my fingers crossed that Nukaga is correct in his generous self-appraisal, as someone who has studied the bilateral relationship and postwar Okinawan history for more than a decade, I would have to argue that we would be lucky if the current agreement gets us past the next 10 years.

This article analyzes the planned U.S. base realignments. It will identify where the speed bumps, dangerous curves, detours, and eventual wrecks lie on the roadmap and present an alternative plan that, if followed, would avoid these hazards altogether.

It is not meant to challenge the integrity and hard work of those that had been involved directly in the realignment talks, but to criticize the incorrect premises and false expectations that went into the process, the failure to go beyond a minimalist approach to the alliance and base issues, and the limited results that this approach will bring.

Simply put, the benefits for all involved, are few, and the consequences many. A worse

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11) Nukaga Fukushiro, opening comments during appearance on Terebi Asahi's "Sunday Project," 10:02 a.m., May 14, 2006.

realignment plan could not have been made if they tried. Instead of bringing about a win-win-win solution for the U.S., Japan, and Okinawa, each side has come out an apparent loser. Agreements like that don't last long.

### The Weakening of the Alliance

Problem-ridden as these reports are, it is hard to know where to begin. Due to my being a university professor perhaps, I instinctively gave each a grade after carefully reading the reports when they came out. The Interim Report received a D- (flawed premises, lack of logical connection between parts 1 and 2, lack of effort, etc.) and the final one an F (no progress, lack of details, etc.). In other words, the realignment talks have failed the test.

However, alliance management is not school. The participants cannot take the class over again. This poor grade, or better put, the poor results of the talks will have a major impact on the U.S.-Japan alliance and the region as a whole if not reexamined quickly. The region remains unstable, filled with frictions over the "history problem," territorial conflicts, energy rivalries, ethnic conflict, totalitarian and dictatorships and other differences in political systems, and a widening gap of haves and have-nots. Japan's recent Asia diplomacy, or lack thereof, is making it more so.

As will be explained in more detail at the end of this article, a solution to the apparent contradictory dilemma of "reducing the 'burden' on Okinawa" while "maintaining deterrence" (indeed, even strengthening deterrence) did exist, but instead of pursuing that option, the U.S. and Japanese governments sadly went with a least-common-denominator approach.

There are four major problems with the realignment plans. The first is political in nature, the second, military, the third, strategic, and the fourth is the fact that no grand design was presented for Okinawa Prefecture and other communities that host U.S. facilities and would be impacted one way or the other by the planned moves.

In reviewing the Interim Report, which set the direction and much of the contents of the final agreement, it should be pointed out that not everything in it was worthy of criticism. For example, the *recognition* of the need to strengthen bilateral security cooperation through interoperability, joint planning, intelligence sharing, and combined use of bases, should be praised. However, the Interim (and Final) Reports, which lacked specifics, failed to reflect this recognition in its plans for combined use of bases that would lead to a true strengthening of the alliance. Instead, the use intended by the two governments seems to be limited to "contingency use," training, and moves by the yet-to-be established GSDF Central Readiness

Force to Camp Zama, and a move by the ASDF Defense Command to Yokota Air Base. The envisioned shared use is far from bold or forward-looking, in which U.S. and Japanese forces live together, study together, train together, and eventually deploy together for humanitarian and other operations. Moreover, it was primarily U.S. facilities that were the target of realignments; facilities for the SDF, which is in the most need for transformation and realignment, essentially were not looked at. Because the study was unnecessarily narrow from the start, negotiators failed to develop alternative combined basing options that would revitalize the alliance.

If the defense minister truly sought to "stabilize the alliance for the next 20-30 years," why did the Japanese government limit itself to minor adjustments in base usage? In other words, this limited approach to using bases will not secure the alliance for the next 20-30 years. He (and his predecessor) should have approached the talks more boldly, not just wishing to "stabilize" the alliance but to enhance it as well. As the U.S. services, especially the Marines, are essentially in favor of greater if not full combined use, such an approach was possible. In addition, why did the defense minister shoot for just the next 20-30 years? Why not 50? Unfortunately, the Japanese government has lost a valuable opportunity that probably won't come again to both strengthen the alliance and actually deal with the political frictions arising from U.S. bases on its soil.

Not only was the chance lost due to the lack of a dynamic approach, but as is explained later, the ability to implement the Final Report is highly doubtful. Who will take responsibility for this? Certainly not the senior participants, who are busy congratulating themselves. It will likely fall to us, the next generation of alliance managers, to pick up the pieces of a politically and militarily fractured U.S.-Japan alliance.

#### *Political Problems*

In the background of the February 19, 2005, U.S.-Japan Defense Consultative Committee's agreement to "reduce the burden on local communities, including those in Okinawa," was the fact that over the years, particularly since the unfortunate rape of a schoolgirl by U.S. personnel in 1995, the leaders of both countries have had to discuss basing problems in local communities almost every single time they met. As a result of this perceived need for "micromanagement" of the alliance, frustrations exist on both sides that it has not been able to realize its true potential as a global public good.

U.S. base realignments, the planning for which began in earnest in late 2003, were supposed to bring an end to the need for this alliance micromanagement. Instead, the

conditional returns (in other words, relocations mostly within the prefecture) and dispersal of functions and training to other places in Okinawa and Japan, has increased the number of local communities who will be impacted and the time and efforts needed in "gaining acceptance." As a result, micromanagement will not be enough. We will now need "nanomanagement."

In an even more frightful scenario, if the problem-filled final report is not implemented, like the Futenma relocation portion of the SACO agreement of 1996 before it, then the two countries might experience greater distrust and dissatisfaction between them. The realignment talks were emotional on both sides, suggesting that the relationship of trust (between policy-makers, and toward Japanese politicians and senior U.S. officials) is not as strong as we would like to believe. Add to this delicate situation another unrealized agreement like the SACO one and the 1974 agreement to conditionally return Naha Military Port, still unrealized 32 years later, and you have the makings of a period of "defense friction" on par with the "trade friction" of the late 1980s and early 90s.

Japanese tend not to be aware of this, many on the U.S. side are frustrated if not downright angry at the inability or unwillingness of the Japanese government, which continues to label U.S. Marines and other personnel (whose stationing was originally requested by the Japanese government) as "burdens," to explain to its people why the alliance exists and why there is a U.S. military presence. There are many examples of this, but the following three recent episodes should suffice.

First, at a joint press conference at the State Department on May 1, Foreign Minister Aso Taro stated to the effect that the "relocation of [the] Marine Corps to Guam [will] eas [e] all the burden on Okinawa."<sup>2)</sup> In other words, to the Japanese government, the existence of the Marines is the issue and with their relocation to Guam all of the problems in Okinawa will disappear. Similarly, Defense Minister Nukaga added "We will do our best in ensuring the relocation of Marines from Okinawa to Guam which has been the long-cherished dream of the Okinawans. And with this, we can build up the relationship of further trust in our alliance."<sup>3)</sup> From the perspective of the Japanese government, it seems the Marines are the origin of all the problems in alliance management.

The third example was a comment on a television news show the morning after the March 12 referendum by citizens of Iwakuni City against the relocation of approximately 60 Navy

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2) Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, "Remarks (2006/443)," 11:10 a.m., May 1, 2006, Loy Henderson Conference Room, Washington, D.C.

3) *Ibid.*

aircraft carrier jets and 1600 personnel to the existing Marine Corps base there for night-landing practice. (The non-binding referendum saw a large majority of participants express its opposition.) A commentator on the show said the bases are just like "garbage dumps and nuclear power plants." In other words, no one wants them. Has the relationship deteriorated this far? And if so, why has the Japanese government let it get to this point?

The three examples were recent ones, but similar ones had appeared before. As a result of this attitude on the Japanese side, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld apparently firmed up his feeling that "we will not station our forces where they are not wanted" as a result of his meeting in November 2003 with Okinawa Prefecture Governor Inamine Keiichi during the former's trip to Japan.

This can probably be named the "sandbox phenomenon," when, after an argument at a park, a boy will stand up and tell the other children that he is "taking his toys and going home." Japan appears to have joined the club of "former friends," such as Germany and South Korea, where we will dramatically and spitefully reduce our presence "if they are not welcome." The defense secretary reportedly made the same comment at a high-level meeting at the Pentagon in January 2005, or some 14 months after his visit to Okinawa. It is clearly going to take much time for the relationship of trust to be rebuilt, if at all.

### *Military Problems*

The second problem with the realignment plans involves military considerations, especially the III MEF move to Guam.

The Marines strive to be the most up-to-date in information, training, and education, and their successes historically on the battlefield prove it. In the Asia-Pacific, they are the only land forces that are expeditionary and able to respond quickly to a variety of challenges. In other words, there is no substitute for the Marines, who are able to nip crises in the bud before they reach the shores of Japan (or of other friends and Allies).

Readers may wonder about the Ground Self Defense Forces and the U.S. Army. The GSDF is attempting to modernize, but they are far from meeting the capabilities of the Marines. Moreover, the GSDF is forbidden from undertaking most missions abroad due to the peace constitution. The U.S. Army, on the other hand, is far away and slow.

The Marines are America's "911 Force." If a rescue vehicle showed up to the scene of a fire or other accident late, it is a matter of life-or-death. The same is true for the Marines. If they are dispersed and sent far away to Guam, they could arrive at the scene too late to initially influence the situation. In modern conflicts that could be decided in a few days, it

could be fatal for Japan if the Marines are not stationed there. In other words, the Marines are Japan's 911 force as well.

In the current realignment plan, approximately 8,000 personnel from the III MEF Command Element and other supporting commands will be relocated out of Okinawa Prefecture to faraway Guam. Due to this, problems in Command and Control will emerge, as well as other challenges in plans and operations that may be difficult or even impossible to overcome. As a result, the ability to militarily respond will be degraded.

There are those who might point out that some combat forces will remain (at least numerically), and thus there is nothing to fear. However, a true ability to respond is when the command is up and running, not the other way around.

Deterrence is enhanced significantly due to the Marines' ability to respond quickly. Moreover, they are on 24-hour call for actual crises and disasters, such as the response to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami when III MEF played a critical and central role. With the exception of the fundamentalists and others in the anti-base movement, these missions are generally recognized among the public.

However, the Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) program, sponsored by the Pacific Command in Hawaii, is one thing in which the Marines stationed in Japan are heavily involved in and which is extremely important. TSC involves multilateral and bilateral training with the militaries of most of the 43 countries in the Asia-Pacific region in an effort to develop their capabilities, transparency, and a respect for civilian control of the military, all of which lead to confidence-building through cooperation. Moreover, the U.S. military participates in building infrastructure, assists schools and hospitals, and helps out in other ways during its visits to these countries. The goal or hope of TSC is that these efforts will expedite the coming of peace and stability to this troubled region.

Because they are the sole expeditionary land forces in the region, the Marines are at the center of TSC. As many as 100 major events are held each year, and the Marines participate in some 80 of them. While the overall direction of TSC for the Pacific is set in Hawaii, forces forward deployed, such as the Marines in Okinawa, usually conduct the implementation piece.

While the TSC program would not of course stop if the Marines were moved to Guam, their participation (both in terms of the number of times and days they could conduct it) would be reduced, due to budgetary and time considerations. As a result, unfortunately, it will take that much longer for peace and stability to come to the region.

This is a critical point that directly affects Japan and its Self Defense Forces. Due its prewar militaristic adventures, postwar Asia has watched Japan's military cautiously.

Through its relationship with the U.S. military, however, the SDF has been able to expand its presence in the Asia-Pacific, Northeast, Southeast, and South Asia, as well as in the Middle East. The U.S. military is, in other words, the vehicle in which the SDF has been riding to greater involvement in the world. If the Marines, who participate in most of the regional exercises, depart, the opportunities for the GSDF, an official counterpart organization of the Marines, to participate in international events will decrease, with potential damage to Japan's international standing. Moreover, a more direct problem is the fact that the GSDF (like the U.S. Army) is attempting to get away from its Cold War posture and become more like the Marines-faster, smaller, lighter, modern, and expeditionary. If the Marines are relocated to Guam, the chances for exchanges will be decreased, presenting a huge challenge to the modernization of the SDF doctrine, education, and training.

It remains unclear where the decision to move to far off and undeveloped Guam came from in the first place. Some experts say it was the result of a U.S. unilateral desire to move there for strategic flexibility, while others say it resulted from the Japanese government's calls for "reducing the burden" in Okinawa based on demands by Okinawa Prefecture to relocate the Marines outside of the prefecture. This riddle will be answered at some point in the future, as documents become declassified and participants write their memoirs, but for the time being, the Japanese government continues to take credit for it, at least for domestic consumption. If that is the case, was a politically charged policy that lacks military and strategic sense a wise one? As explained above and below, this writer does not think so. And if it wasn't wise, why didn't the Pentagon make its case and try at least to develop a win-win solution such as those outlined next and at the end of the article.

One troubling question is just how policy makers came to interpret calls for "outside the prefecture (*kengai iten*)" as "outside the country (*kokugai iten*)."<sup>1</sup> In between "outside the prefecture" and the more extreme "outside the country" should have been "within Japan," but this option appears to have not been studied at all and instead the Marines are being banished to far off Guam.

At the minimum, it was possible to relocate the headquarters and subcomponents of III MEF to Atsugi Air Facility in the Kanto area, in exchange for the relocation of the Navy carrier wing out of that facility to MCAS Iwakuni in western Japan. If this were done, the Japanese government could then be able to honestly send a political message to Okinawa that it too was willing to share some of the "burden" by hosting some facilities from Okinawa in Tokyo. More importantly, for the alliance, the III MEF presence in the Tokyo area would

allow it to closely coordinate with its GSDF counterparts in Ichigaya, US Army Forces Japan in Zama, including the planned I Corps Headquarters, the 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force Headquarters at Yokota as well as the Headquarters of US Forces Japan there, and that of US Naval Forces Japan in Yokosuka. Moreover, by being close to its GSDF counterparts and the other services of the SDF, the Marines would be able to contribute to their modernization and efforts at jointness, as well as learn from their Japanese counterparts.

Despite these merits, the Koizumi Administration appears to have judged the relocation to the mainland as politically problematic and thus avoided a difficult decision by simply calling for the Marines to be relocated to outside of the country. Ironically, however, the prediction that the move would be politically difficult seems to have been premature. In a public opinion poll on defense issues conducted by the Cabinet Office in February this year and released on May 1, 51.5% of the public expressed support for relocating U.S. forces from Okinawa to mainland Japan. The percentage was even higher for respondents in the Kanto area. This is a form of domestic "burden sharing," a long-standing desire of the Okinawans, but unfortunately the central government did little in this regard and instead sought the easy way out. As a result, the chance to create synergy between the GSDF, Marines, and Army and breathe life into alliance was lost. It is hard to describe this as a wise decision by the Japanese government, or even symbolic of a mature bilateral relationship.

### *Strategic Concerns*

It is certainly rational to reduce forces following well thought-out base consolidations, but the realignment talks did not use this formula. The approach used was an unprincipled one, lacking strategic sense, in which the number of personnel to be cut was decided artificially (read: political) first and reductions were made to fit that arbitrary (read: uninformed) number.

For example, as was mentioned above, this writer believes it will be difficult to maintain the ability to militarily respond, and if this is the case, then it means that deterrence is not being maintained. This goes against the understanding reached on February 19, 2005, at the SCC meeting that deterrence would be maintained. It goes without saying that this will have a harmful effect on the security of both the United States and Japan, as well as on that of the region.

Moreover, these reductions are sending two negative messages to the region.

First, North Korea and China, which have desired a weakening of the U.S.-Japan alliance, are surely delighted over the reductions.

Secondly, the fence sitters in Southeast Asia, which are wondering if the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Asia will be led by Japan or by China, probably now view the U.S.-Japan alliance as so weak internally politically that large scale personnel reductions and base consolidations were necessary, and thus may be looking to cast their dice with China. As a result, the influence and prestige of Japan, already becoming isolated, will be reduced that much further. If Prime Minister Koizumi believes so strongly in the idea of national interests, what in the world was he thinking?

#### *The Lack of a Future Vision for Okinawa*

One more important problem with the realignment plan is that a future vision for Okinawa and other communities most impacted (both positive and negative) by the moves was not spelled out. In order to gain greater support for the plans, it was necessary to release such a vision at the time of the Interim Report or even the Final Report, but that was not done.

There are two views within the Japanese government on this question. One is that "it was not necessary to announce such a vision along with the Interim Report." This view underscores, however, the gap that existed between Okinawa and the central government on their respective expectations for the realignments. This gap likely emerged due to confusion over the difference in the rhetoric or explanations being used within the alliance (priority on maintaining deterrence) and before the public (priority on reducing the so-called burden).

Specifically, a battle was going on within the Japanese government on this question between those that simply did not care what Okinawa and other local communities thought and those who believed it was necessary to gain their support. The latter group represented the remnants of the Hashimoto Ryutaro and Obuchi Keizo approach to Okinawan affairs, namely, "not to go over the heads of the local citizens." The former group, however, is the dominant one in the Koizumi administration, identified by his "Anything-But-Hashimoto" style to Okinawa and all other matters of governing. In any case, even the former group has come to recognize the need to coordinate with Okinawa's elected representatives and is now promising development measures, albeit piecemeal in nature. However, the relationship of trust between Tokyo and Okinawa is apparently broken and this sudden conciliatory stance is probably too late. This could cause a local backlash at the polls this Fall in the gubernatorial election.

The second view is that "it was impossible to prepare a future vision for Okinawa in time for Interim Report." True, but this is precisely the problem. A sense of urgency emerged that it was necessary to prepare something, anything, in time for President George Bush's Fall

visit to Japan last year. Thus, a flawed plan was herded through the bureaucracy to fit an artificial timetable. In retrospect, it definitely was not a good thing to do so. If alliance managers really wanted base realignments that would stabilize the alliance for the next 20-30 years, they should have gone about it more carefully, coordinating with local authorities, and examining all the options. As a result, it will end up like SACO, a plan for which the critical parts were unrealized.

As a result, this agreement is like a "house of cards." In other words, as stated in the "Roadmap," the "III MEF relocation from Okinawa to Guam is dependent on: (1) tangible progress toward completion of the FRF, and (2) Japan's financial contributions to fund the development of required facilities and infrastructure on Guam." So, if the FRF does not go through, then the III MEF move does not happen. As the Marines' move to Guam is played up as the center piece of the "reduction of the burden in Okinawa," as well as the bargaining chip to allow the I Corps headquarters relocation to Japan (at the expense of the Marines), you end up with little substance to generate public support.

As is explained next, there are at least 10 reasons why the Henoko move is going to problematic. If the Henoko move, the framework of which has been agreed to by the two governments, is unsuccessful, then the realignments in Okinawa will not happen. This is not a speed bump or a detour. This is a potentially fatal crash.

### **The 10 Problems with Henoko**

First, the construction of new airfield across Schwab's peninsula will cause significant environmental damage to the coral areas around the peninsula and to Oura Bay to the northwest, not to mention impact the feeding areas of the dugong, the symbol of the environmental movement. This will in turn rally the already active political opposition to the plan, especially the "sit-in" protests, now in the 800<sup>th</sup> day at the time of this writing, and likely see new lawsuits brought by environmental groups.

Second, the flight patterns would be noisy and potentially dangerous for nearby residents (not to mention the dozen schools in the immediate area). Despite JDA statements to the contrary, which are either mistaken or purposely misleading, the runway needs to be at least 2000 meters from neighboring homes in order to avoid noise pollution. In the current plan, in which a V-shaped double runway would be built, the flights would still impact neighboring villages. If the original plan to build the facility farther offshore were pursued, safety risks and noise pollution would decline, but environmental, political, and economic

costs would rise. Hence, the decision it seems to build along the shore at the expense of the nearby residents.

The concerns over citizen's safety and noise pollution have also bothered the U.S. military. The Marine Corps realizes the inconvenience its flights causes for the citizens of Okinawa and does not want to trouble them any more than necessary when carrying out its alliance obligations; hence its agreement 10 years ago to move to what was then, prior to economic stimulus packages by the Japanese government, a less populated area in the north. For this reason, the current plan is unsound because a new urban area is already developing near the planned facility and a second "Futenma Problem" will simply emerge in the future in Henoko and the surrounding areas by the time the new facility is operational. D.C. policy-makers who have never been to the area should have taken this into consideration before they gave their nods of approval. Japanese policy-makers should have known better than to plant the seeds for the next crisis.

The fourth problem is with its military aspects. Negotiated by civilians rather than military specialists, the Henoko plan does not maintain the current capabilities of Futenma. Most egregious is the greatly shortened runway, which at about 1600 meters (not including two 100-meter overruns) does not even come close to replicating the 2800-meter runway of Futenma.

A related fifth problem is the fact that the Henoko plan focuses only on the airfield and does not specify where, when, and how the related support facilities, such as housing, schools, etc., would be built in an increasingly crowded area around the small community of Henoko. Due to the move north, military personnel living in housing areas in the southern and central part of Okinawa will have to make a long daily commute to Henoko, in some cases, 90-minute one-way drives. When I explained this to an otherwise thoughtful Japanese scholar of U.S.-Japan relations last year, he responded, "They are civil servants and thus just have to put up with it." Unfortunately, it does not work that way. Military personnel need to be fully attentive and in their best health to perform the missions assigned to them. They are not sitting behind desks like us academics, but behind steering wheels and in some cases in the cockpits. Furthermore, with the bases spread out as they are (e.g., the plan for Naha Military Port is only to move it a few kilometers north of Naha to nearby Urasoe City), inter-base transportation and shipment of supplies will have to continue on the public roadways, this time requiring even more travel as the facility would be moved further north. Let us hope a major crisis does not emerge in the region and expose this vulnerable logistics system.

The sixth problem relates to the fact that Henoko is not a comprehensive solution. Not only are the support facilities not included, but no specific plan exists for the other bases that need to be consolidated and relocated, such as Naha Military Port, Camp Kinser, Self Defense Force facilities, and other bases. As a result, these problems are just being put off for a later day, assuming there is a later day.

Seventh is in the construction. Fill will need to be shipped from China (ironic, right?), which will increase the time and costs involved. A breakwater will also need to be constructed, as Okinawa is known as "Typhoon Ginza." Such a wall does not appear in any of the JDA designs. Construction of it will add to the costs and time involved, not to mention increased opposition by environmental groups.

The eighth problem relates to the fact that four historical sites are located in the planned construction area. The sites would need to be investigated (expected to take at least 6.5 years), before construction begins. Similarly, the coastal area is also considered a holy area in the local Shamanist religion.

The ninth problem is the time involved. In light of the above problems, the Henoko project will take at the minimum of 12 years, if not more, assuming it begins today. (This calculation does not include delays due to current and future lawsuits related to the above environmental, historical, and religious-cultural issues.) Moreover, as was pointed out above, the Henoko plan concerns the air facility only, and not the other support services. If these other projects are included it will probably take 20 years.

The tenth problem is the costs. Because of the need to tear down existing structures on Schwab, import building materials, and eventually attempt to relocate other bases down the road, the costs are going to be much higher than the imprecise figures being tossed around today.

The above problems are just the "Top Ten." There are many more problems relating to Henoko that makes one wonder why, despite all these real concerns, the decision was made to go ahead with Henoko. A satisfactory answer has yet to be given by the Defense Agency and the Defense Facilities Administration Agency, which was probably too busy dealing with the related twin scandals of bid-rigging and "descent from Heaven," sort of like America's revolving door between big business and government.

### **Additional Problems with the Final Report**

As was previously mentioned, because the Final Report made no improvements over the

Interim Report, I had to give it an "F." Another reason why it earned such a low grade had to do with its lack of detail. Reading it, I was disappointed, in the way the Japanese government continues to distrust its own public, even though it describes the initiatives as leading to a "new phase" in the alliance. If the alliance has really entered a new phase, why does the Japanese government continue to limit transparency vis-à-vis its own people on alliance affairs?

It writes, for example, that all safety and environmental measures will be taken but it does not explain what these measures will be and how environmental and other assessments are to be conducted.

Likewise, the deployment of MV-22 Ospreys to Japan sometime around 2012 is an open secret, but Japanese government officials incredulously continue to deny that they have heard anything on this matter. Like unresolved base relocation problems, this is a political problem that is simply being put off for a later day. However, like accumulated interest, the problems are bigger when they have to be addressed later.

Moreover, the costs for the relocation remain unclear. It will entail a great deal (much of the money to remain in Japan as their construction companies will no doubt be designated to undertake the projects). However, because the problems surrounding Henoko, as outlined above, are numerous and the Japanese government did not truly explore combined use with its Self Defense Forces which would have reduced overall defense and realignment costs, it is likely that the public will be reluctant to support paying for the moves, especially if it becomes apparent to the Japanese public that the move to Guam was, in the end, a unilateral U.S. initiative.

In summary, just like a map that lacks detail and gets the user lost, this "Roadmap" is going to cause the U.S.-Japan relationship to go astray.

## Were There No Alternatives?

In light of all the above problems, I am sure readers are wondering if there was no alternative that would avoid these detours and save us from possibly crashing.

There were alternatives, both for the mainland, as alluded to earlier, and particularly for Okinawa. The details of an alternative for realignments in Okinawa are introduced here.

The author prepared this proposal after I learned that officials in the Japanese and U.S. governments, like doctors, had pronounced the existing Henoko plan (finalized by the Japanese government in July 2002) as "dead" toward the end of 2004 and early 2005, and

became worried about the future of the bilateral relationship. After extensive research, I announced the alternative proposal in the form of a policy recommendation in September last year. I did so at that time because Henoko had somehow been resuscitated but the U.S. and Japanese governments were heatedly arguing over whether the relocated facility would take the shape of the existing form (dumb), built in a shallower area close to the shore and thus the local communities (dumber), or on land within Camp Schwab (dumbest), and I thought a bolder plan was necessary to break the deadlock. (Instead, as we know, they went with something between the dumber and dumbest plans.)

The Foreign Ministry, which had been overshadowed in the talks by the Defense Agency, and other government representatives expressed a strong interest in the proposal, immediately contacting me. However, unfortunately, I never heard from the Defense Agency that as the one tasked with coming up with alternatives and implementing any agreement finally reached should have been the most interested in the plan. The U.S. side praised the plan "as the best one," but explained that unless the Japanese government, which originally requested the return of Futenma back in February 1996, tabled the proposal, there was nothing it could do. I agreed and encouraged interlocutors in Japan and Okinawa to push it but senior officials in the Defense Agency were now in denial mode, even relaying less-than-accurate information to the prime minister who had also expressed interest in my alternative plan.

Titled *Toward a Viable, Comprehensive, Long-Term Approach toward the Okinawa Basing Issue and the True Strengthening of the Alliance*, the plan is divided into five parts, which reflect the complicated nature of the "Okinawa Problem."<sup>4)</sup> It is more than just moving the bases around, something that few policy-makers seemed to be aware of. This lack of insight into the dynamics of the Okinawa problem is the main reason, in this writer's opinion, for the likely failure of the realignment plans as they relate to Okinawa. In other words, discussions moved ahead without examining the premise-what exactly is the "burden"? In my policy recommendation, I defined the "burden" in the following five ways: size and scope of the bases, number of personnel (and frictions they cause), training and other negative impacts, problems with Okinawa's long-term socio-economic development, and structural problems, such as transparency on base issues, etc. In short, if the Okinawa problem is not viewed comprehensively, no lasting or fundamental solution is possible.

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4) Robert D. Eldridge, *Toward a Viable, Comprehensive, Long-Term Approach toward the Okinawa Basing Issue and the True Strengthening of the Alliance*  
<http://www2.osipp.osaka-u.ac.jp/~eldridge/Articles/2005/Special%20Recommendation%20English%20version.pdf>.

The details can be found in the policy proposal itself, so I will be brief and limit the below to a discussion of the part of the plan that deals with the bases themselves. Unlike the Interim and Final Reports, my proposal has the handful of SDF bases in Okinawa as subject to realignment as well.

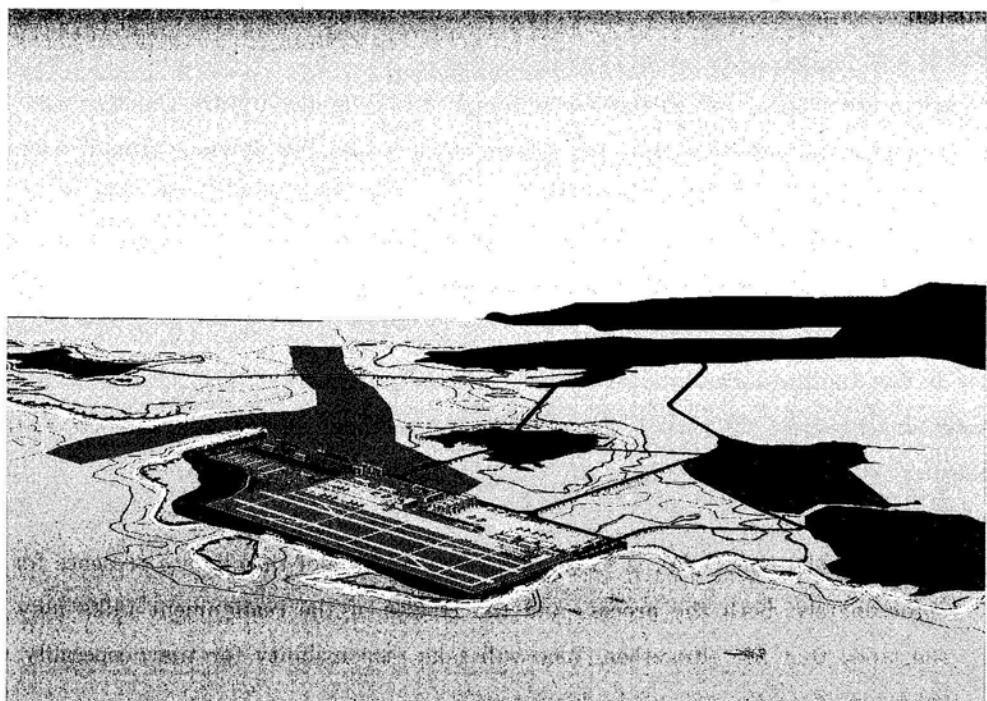
#### U.S. Military/Self Defense Force Base Realignments under Eldridge Proposal

Bases to be Returned (Management), Area Size	Where Bases Will Be Merged	Bases to be made joint use under SDF control
Futenma (U.S. Marines Corps), 481 hectares*	Yokatsu	Yokatsu
Naha Military Port (U.S. Army), 57 ha*	Yokatsu	Yokatsu
Naha Airport (A&MSDF), 210 ha	Yokatsu and Kadena	Kadena
Camp Naha (GSDF), 30 ha	Camp Hansen or Schwab	Camp Hansen or Schwab
Camp Kinser (USMC), 275 ha*	Yokatsu	Yokatsu
Camp Courtney (USMC), 135 ha	Camp Foster and Kadena	Camp Foster or Kadena
Camp Hansen (USMC), 5140 ha	—	Camp Hansen
Camp Schwab (USMC), 2062 ha	—	Camp Schwab
Kadena Air Base (USAF), 1995 ha	—	Kadena
Northern Training Area (USMC), 7513 ha*	—	Northern Training Area
Deputy Division Engineer Office (U.S. Army), 4.5 ha	Land area to be returned	
Total area: 17,683 ha	Total# of mergers: app. 10	Total joint use with SDF: 5

Summarizing the chart, three U.S. facilities (Naha Military Port, run by the U.S. Army and not by the Marines as some in the U.S. government actually mistakenly assumed, Camp Kinser, and Futenma) would be relocated together to a shallow area off of Katsuren (Yokatsu) Peninsula in the central part of Okinawa on the Pacific Coast side. ASDF jets (F4s) currently at Naha International Airport and those (F15s) planned for deployment in the future would also move to Yokatsu, which would become an SDF facility shared with the

U.S. military. Propeller planes at Naha Airport, such as MSDF P3Cs would go to Kadena, and Air Force jets over a certain noise level, would primarily use the Yokatsu facility in an effort to prevent further friction with the communities surrounding Kadena, which have increasingly complained about noise pollution (and passed resolutions, filed lawsuits, and appeals). Kadena would become an SDF base, with the U.S. Air Force one of its tenants. The Yokatsu facility, housing a heliport and two 3600-meter runways, would not only be able to accommodate the operations of the respective services but because of their co-location, would permit the strengthening of their cooperation and coordination. (See figure.)

In addition, the GSDF base in Naha City would be relocated to Camp Hansen or Schwab with those facilities placed under SDF control. Only after living together, training together, and working together can the true synergy in the alliance realized.



*Concept of Yokatsu facility that combines functions of MCAS Futenma, Camp Kinser, Naha Military Port, and Air Self Defense Base Naha, complete with a heliport and two 3600- meter runways.*

The merits to the Yokatsu proposal are too numerous to list here, but the main points are that it can be built quickly (approximately 3 years), inexpensively (compared to the Henoko option and in the context of the overall realignments), and with proven construction methods. Most important, the idea of a combined move to Katsuren, which forms the main part of my proposal, was an idea that originated in Okinawa itself, in other words, an Okinawan idea.

The Henoko plan is not an Okinawan proposal; it is a central government concept. For this reason, the Henoko plan will never be embraced in Okinawa.

It is unclear how the Japanese government viewed my proposal and to what extent they actually investigated it, if at all, as there is no proof that they did so. I proposed my policy recommendations with plenty of time to work them into the Interim Report that Fall, but they unfortunately weren't included. Afterwards, the bid-rigging and other scandals of the Defense Facilities Administrative Agency came to light. It is unclear whether the insistence on Henoko by the Japanese government was a result of bid-rigging, political pressure, or simple bureaucratic pride on the part of the Defense Agency which was unable to realize the Futenma move 10 years following SACO.

## Conclusion

The Japanese government, which took an uncompromising stance toward Okinawa and other local communities immediately after the Interim Report, echoing opinions from Washington that it was essentially a "done deal," has begun to coordinate with the concerned local authorities. However, if it is unable to get their cooperation, it has said it plans to create a new "special measures law" to force their compliance. It is even entertaining passing a new conspiracy law that could be used to find anti-base activists, including ordinary citizens opposed to the Henoko move, guilty. Doesn't this suggest, instead, that there is a problem, politically or administratively, with the government's methods, and equally important, that a fundamental review of the agreement is necessary before we discover 10 years hence that it was a flawed plan?

The U.S. base realignment plan is supposed to ensure a life-of-the-alliance presence for U.S. forces. Unfortunately, both the process and the results of the realignment talks may have greatly shortened that life altogether. Who will take responsibility for that, especially when those involved in the talks will all be long gone?

These officials, who were in a hurry to come up with an agreement, repeatedly told colleagues "to hurry up, the bus is leaving." If they are using the "Roadmap" to guide them, I definitely don't want to get on. Racing full speed forward, they continue to ignore the warning signs and seem to be completely unaware of the steep drop off just past the sharp curve up ahead.