

Japanese citizens demand stop to 'dangerous' low-flying U.S. helicopters

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US Forces' CH53E helicopter flying over Ginowan, a city located in Okinawa Prefecture, Japan.
(Photo by AP)

Tokyo, March 6 (RHC)-- A Japanese civil society group has lodged a protest with the government over repeated, irregular low-altitude flights by U.S. military helicopters, demanding thorough investigation and action.

A petition was submitted to the Japanese government on Thursday by the citizens group Japan Peace Committee, urging action to put an end to such illegal flights.

The petition states that the U.S. military flights cause noise pollution and carry the risk of death and destruction in the event of an accident.

“We call for a thorough investigation into the truth of what is going on, and strongly request that the US government cease the flights immediately,” the group said in the petition submitted to the country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense.

Local media in Japan has on several occasions reported about U.S. military helicopters flying over densely populated areas of central Tokyo, much below the altitude set under Japan’s Civil Aeronautics Act. It has often published video footage of US aircraft violating the country’s aerospace regulations.

The citizens group, headquartered in the Japanese capital Tokyo, refers to frequent sightings of U.S. military aircraft flying low in the civilian areas, calling for a probe and action.

“It’s now clear there is decisive video evidence of low-altitude flight training being conducted regularly in the center of Tokyo. This isn’t just trampling on (Japan’s) sovereignty, it’s a serious issue that threatens lives,” Jun Chisaka, Secretary-General of Japan Peace Committee, told local media.

“Officials should accept the facts immediately and take measures to make them stop,” he stressed. Japanese Defense Ministry is reportedly investigating the issue, according to local media reports. “It’s not the case that we think everything the U.S. military says is right. We want to take measures that don’t place a burden on the people living in these areas,” a ministry official told the local daily, Mainichi.

Mainichi last week carried an investigative report in which it observed flights of US military helicopters between July 2020 and January 2021 from multiple points in the national capital.

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