Japan angry at U.S. troops in Okinawa
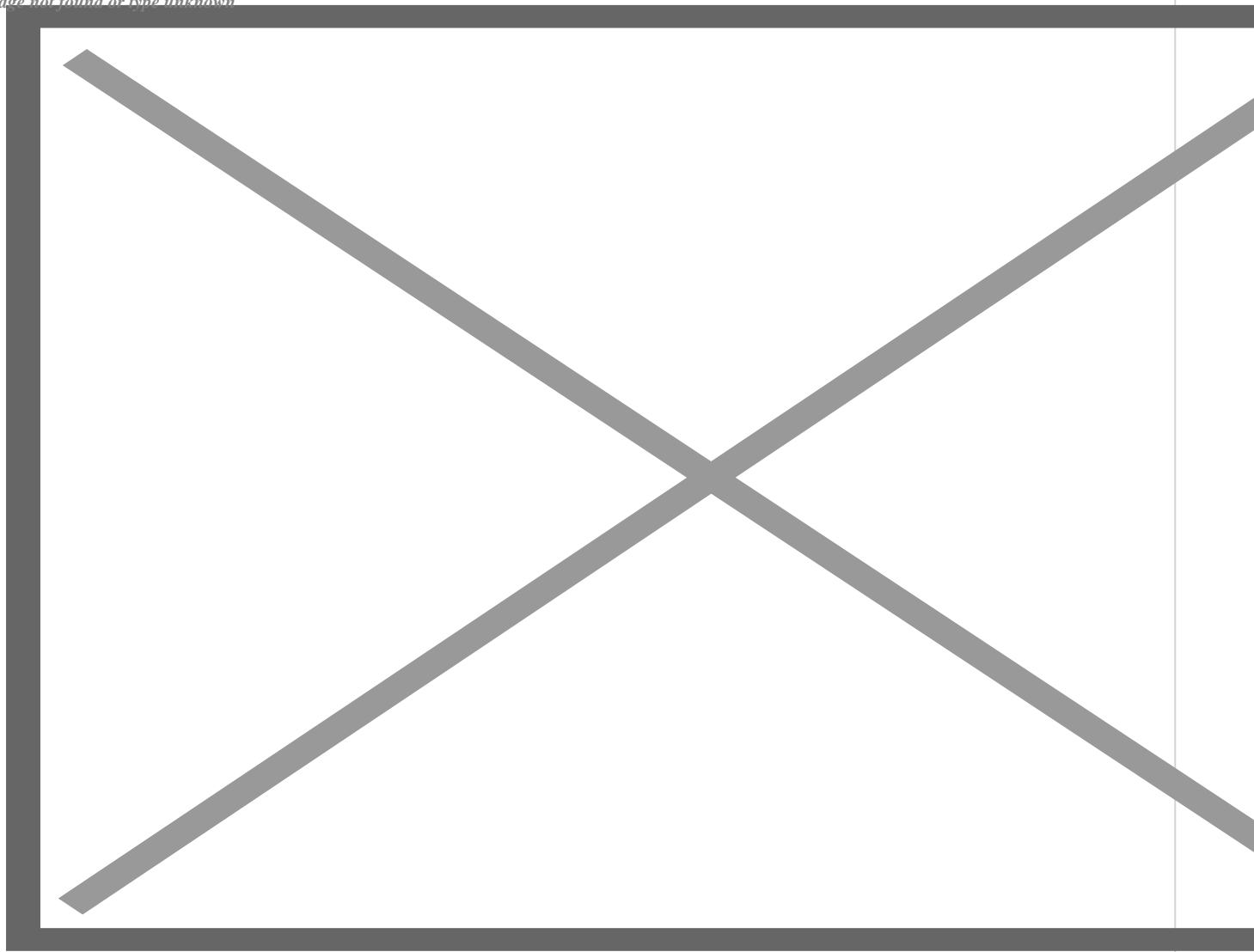

US military personnel at Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan, November 2021. © US Forces Japan/Facebook

Tokyo, December 23 (RHC)-- Japan has urged the U.S. military to get a grip on a cluster of COVID infections inside a Marine Corps base in Okinawa. Tokyo previously complained that American testing

rules were inconsistent with the rules in Japan.

"We have asked the U.S. side to thoroughly implement the maximum measures to prevent the spread of infections," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said on Thursday. The statement came after 227 people stationed at Camp Hansen, a U.S. Marine Corps base in the Okinawa Prefecture, tested positive for Covid, according to the Japanese government.

According to Matsuno, the U.S. forces explained that troops were tested on the fifth day after arriving in Japan, because they had already been vaccinated and would not leave the base until after restrictions on their movement were lifted. Japanese regulations, meanwhile, require that all incoming travelers are tested within 72 hours before departure.

Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi said on Wednesday that he had voiced "strong regret" to Ricky Rupp, the commander of U.S. Forces Japan. Hayashi was quoted by Japanese media as saying that the U.S. military was testing its soldiers three to five days after arrival and allowing them to move freely inside their bases, as opposed to quarantining them. "These rules are not consistent with the Japanese rules," Hayashi said.

The Japan Times cited a government source saying that authorities were "still checking" how testing was conducted across all US military sites in the country. US Forces Japan tightened Covid restrictions on Monday, extending the quarantine period, Stars and Stripes magazine reported.

Washington has maintained military bases in Japan since the end of World War II, for more than 70 years.

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