

# *Japanese Protest Relocation of U.S. Military Base*

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Tokyo, February 13 (RHC)-- Hundreds of Japanese protesters have taken to the streets of Okinawa Island to demonstrate against a controversial plan to relocate a U.S. military base there. The protest came ahead of a three-day visit by U.S. Ambassador to Tokyo, Caroline Kennedy, to the southern Japanese island.

The U.S. has proposed a broad plan to consolidate and reduce its troop presence in Okinawa. For that, it should move the U.S. Marines Corps' Futenma air base to a more remote coastal area called Henoko -- in Nagasaki City. However, most Okinawans want Futenma to be closed and moved completely off the island.

About half of the 50,000 U.S. forces in Japan are based in Okinawa. Many local residents have complained about base-related crime, noise and the risk of accidents. The latest protest rally also comes as the number of sexual assaults by U.S. military personnel in Japan is on the rise, as many offending soldiers receive either no or very light punishments. And the angry demonstrators also strongly condemned several incidents of sexual violence committed by U.S. soldiers across the region.

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