

STATEMENT REGARDING THE INCIDENT OF FIRE SUPPRESSING FOAM DISCHARGE AND SCATTERING FROM MCAS FUTENMA

At approximately 4:45PM on April 10, 2020, a fire suppression system at an aircraft hangar in USMC Futenma was activated releasing and scattering firefighting foam that contains the perfluorinated compound (PFC), perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS). A large amount of this foam flowed from the gutters that extend from the US military base and into the Uchidomari River.

The discharged fire suppressing foam was carried by the wind, scattering to the residential area and also to a nearby nursery school, forcing approximately 130 nursery school children to immediately evacuate and take refuge indoors. This discharge incident has raised great concern and caused confusion among the citizens of Okinawa Prefecture.

Cancer-causing effects and other health risks caused by PFOS contained in the fire-retardant foam have been pointed out, and its use and production are prohibited within Japan, and globally, we are seeing usage restrictions and abolition of this chemical. The US Forces has explained that since 2016, they have proceeded to switch to other products that do not contain PFOS. However, in December of last year, there was an incident where firefighting foam containing PFOS was discharged from MCAS Futenma. The recurrence of such incidents further increases feelings of indignation and sense of distrust among the people of Okinawa Prefecture.

Furthermore, discontent is only heightened with how the incident was handled, with the US Forces visiting the site of discharge only on the day after the incident took place, highlighting a lack of awareness through such a slow response.

We have made pressing calls for thorough investigation into the causes, preventive measures, and management systems to the US Forces and relevant agencies every time an accident or incident stemming from the US Forces bases occurs. It is truly regrettable that such an incident has taken place once again despite our pleas, and this is absolutely unacceptable.

To that end, in our duty to protect the lives and properties of the people of Okinawa, we strongly protest against this recent incident of firefighting foam discharge and scattering; and call for the prompt execution of the following four items.

1. Thoroughly investigate the cause of this recent discharge, promptly disclose the investigation results to the people of Okinawa Prefecture, clarify the responsibilities of the US Forces and the Government of Japan, and implement preventive measures.
2. Identify the extent of pollution in the rivers, streams, soil, homes, properties and others affected by the discharge and scattering of the firefighting foam, and swiftly conduct removal work of the pollutant. Furthermore, conduct health checks of the residents and firefighters of Ginowan City involved in the cleanup activities.
3. Revise the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement in order to apply Japanese laws so that examinations within US Forces bases can take place swiftly.
4. Cease operations at MCAS Futenma, and close and remove the installation.

The above statement was decided on the 16th day of April, 2020.

Satoru Nakasone
Chairman
The Special Committee on the
U.S. Military Base Affairs
Okinawa Prefectural Assembly