

RESOLUTION OF PROTEST OVER THE US NAVY MH-60 HELICOPTER CRASH

At approximately 4:24 PM on January 25th, an MH-60 multi-mission helicopter assigned to the US Navy Seventh Fleet flagship, the USS Blue Ridge, crashed off the eastern coast of Okinawa Island.

An accident such as this could lead to a very serious incident risking the lives and properties of those in the Prefecture, and it has caused great concern among the residents of Okinawa Prefecture who are forced to live their lives alongside US military bases. It is truly regrettable that such an accident has taken place.

Just in the last five years, we have seen frequent and repeated accidents and incidents involving US Forces aircraft, including the incident where an H-60 helicopter failed to land on a US Forces vessel off the coast of Uruma City; crash of an AV-8 Harrier attack aircraft off the east coast of Okinawa Island; the MV-22 Osprey crash off the shores of Abu, Nago City; the F-15 fighter jet crash in the southern seas off Okinawa Island; and the FA-18 fighter jet crash in the waters southwest of the Minamidaito and Kitadaito Islands. Such incidents only heighten feelings of anxiety and distrust among the people of Okinawa towards the safety management systems of the US Forces.

Furthermore, on the 29th of January, an incident occurred in which an object dropped from an aircraft in a parachute drill at the Ie Shima Auxiliary Airfield landed on a private farm field outside of the designated area.

With each occurrence of accidents and incidents related to the US Forces, the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly has addressed the US Forces and agencies concerned, strongly calling for thorough investigations into the cause of the accidents and incidents, and the implementation of preventive measures. Despite our calls, it is extremely regrettable that a series of such accidents have taken place, and this situation is unequivocally unacceptable.

Besides on land, there are 20 air spaces and 27 water areas designated as US Forces training areas within Okinawa Prefecture. With military aircraft training in these areas that are not stationed in Okinawa, and the countless number of crashes and other incidents, the people of Okinawa are exposed to danger both on land and at sea.

To that end, we, the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly, in our duty to protect the lives and properties of the people of Okinawa, solemnly protest the recent accident and call for the prompt execution of the following three items.

1. Conduct a thorough investigation into the cause(s) of the accident and promptly disclose the findings to the people of Okinawa Prefecture.
2. Cease flights of all aircraft of the same model within the Prefecture until safety and measures for preventing recurrence are implemented.
3. Fundamentally review the current state of the air spaces and water areas designated for training.

The above is resolved as stated on this 13th day of February, 2020.

Okinawa Prefectural Assembly