

October 6, 2005

Mr. Donald H. Rumsfeld, U.S. Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Rumsfeld,

This is to convey an opposition statement to the proposed option called “Downsized runway option” that intend to reclaim shallow water area within Henoko reef to relocate the present U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station of Ginowan City to the water off shore the U.S. Marine Corps Camp Schwab, Nago City, Okinawa, Japan.

We, at the Nature Conservation Society of Japan (NACS-J) has carried out the citizens’ seagrass monitoring program under the name of “Okinawa Jangusa Watch” since 2002 and revealed that the seagrass bed distributed within Henoko reef, especially offshoere the Camp Schwab, is the largest of its kind in Okinawa Island and critical habitat for endangered population of dugong (Dugong dugon).

Comparative study of the proposed downsized runway option and the result of the Okinawa Jungusa Watch showed that even the downsized runway option gives serious threats to the Henoko reef and risks survival of last remaining dugong population in Japan. Taking the changes of coastal current and the problem of noise into account, negative environment impact will be larger compared with the original plan to reclaim beyond Henoko reef.

We are very sorry that the Government of Japan and the U.S. discussing options within Henoko area, without considering the establishment of the conservation plan and nature reserve to ensure the long survival of dugongs in spite of the recommendation adopted in the third IUCN World Conservation Congress held in Bangkok, November 2004.

The Nature Conservation Society of Japan, hence, ask the Government of Japan and the U.S., **NOT TO IUCLUDE THE DOWNSIZED RUNWAY OPTION IN HENOKO REEF** within the options to relocate the present U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station based on following reasons.

**1) Downsized runway option to reclaim shallow water will cause greater impact on seagrass bed within Henoko reef rather than original plan**

Comparative study of the downsized runway option and the result of the Okinawa Jangusa Watch revealed that 15 of 70 seagrass monitoring sites will be directly damaged by reclamation works. According to the study conducted between 2002 and 2004, every

site except one are covered with seagrass of healthy condition including five seagrass species (*Halophila ovalis*, *Tharassia hemprichii*, *Cymodocea cerrulata*, *Halodule uninervis* and *Halodule pinifolia*) within seven seagrass species found in water of Okinawa Island.

It is misunderstanding that reclamation of shallow water will diminish the impact for coral reef. Seagrass bed in shallow water contribute the reef ecosystem to provide nursing grounds for reef fish and it make up an integrated reef ecosystem as well as with inner and outer reef, tidal flat. If we reclaim seagrass beds in shallow water, it gives serious threats to the whole reef ecosystem as well as to the seagrass beds that provide diet for dugongs and sea turtles.

**2) Downsized runway option will reclaim the area where intensively utilized by dugong, therefore reclamation work risks survival of last remaining dugongs**

According to the studies conducted by the Defense Facilities Agency, Ministry of the Environment and the Nature Conservation Society of Japan, distribution of the feeding trails and other signs such as dugong dung overlapped with the downsized runway option. One feeding trail and two dungs were found within planned reclamation area and other six feeding trails were found near the planned area.

Furthermore, the downsized runway plan will close four of seven “kuchi” that are entrance for dugongs to access seagrass beds in the reef. Among them, reclamation of “Mananu-guchi” where dugongs utilize intensively will give serious threats to dugong, because it risks the approach of dugong to seagrass bed.

We appreciate your consideration on conservation of Henoko reef and last remaining and northern-most population of dugong.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sadatoshi Tabata  
Director General  
The Nature Conservation Society of Japan

Appendix 1, Downsized runway option in the Henoko reef overlaid with distribution of seagrass and dugong feeding sign