

<http://www.reefrelief.org/actionalert/actionalert.asp?file=henoko.html>

### **Action Alert Action Alert Action Alert: August, 2004**

Dear Friend of Reef Relief

The following is a letter penned by the Center for Biological Diversity. We hope you will take a minute to read it and cut and past the letter below, with your name on it, in an email that will go directly to President Bush at the email address: [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov).

In Okinawa, Japan almost 400 types of coral form reefs that support more than 1,000 species of fish, marine mammals and sea turtles. This incredible array of life makes the island second only to Australia's Great Barrier Reef in terms of marine biodiversity.

Tragically, a military project backed by the U.S. and Japanese governments threatens to doom a critically important coral reef near Henoko and destroy critically important habitat for numerous rare wildlife species including the dugong, an endangered marine mammal related to the manatee and a cultural icon in Japan, and three species of sea turtle. Local residents voted against the airbase project in a referendum, but Japanese and U.S. authorities are ignoring their voices.

In July of 2004, 889 of the world's leading coral scientists and researchers from 83 countries gathered at the 10th International Coral Reef Symposium in Okinawa, where they signed a petition in opposition to the airbase project.

We need your help and support to stop this misguided project. Construction of the new airbase would cause severe ecological damage to one of the most diverse ecosystems on earth. For this reason, we are asking you to sign the letter below and email it to President George W. Bush urging him to cancel the base construction plan.

Adding your voice to this effort will help greatly in the effort to protect the dugong and one of the most biologically significant places on earth. Even if your group does not work on international issues, your voice

will be a valuable one for elected officials to hear. Thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,

Peter Galvin  
Conservation Director  
Center for Biological Diversity  
P: (707) 986-7805  
Email Peter Galvin <[pgalvin@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:pgalvin@biologicaldiversity.org)>

**LETTER TO PRESIDENT BUSH AND PRIME  
MINISTER KOIZUMI**

Dear President Bush:

The island of Okinawa has been called the "Galapagos of the East" because of the incredible variety of marine and terrestrial life it supports.

Almost 400 types of coral form Okinawa's reefs, which support more than 1,000 species of fish, marine mammals and sea turtles.

You have the power to protect these unique and priceless creatures. Unfortunately, a joint project backed by the United States and Japanese governments will destroy one of the last healthy reefs in Okinawa, pushing many magnificent species closer to extinction.

Current plans call for construction of a new military base at sea, atop a coral reef near Henoko in Okinawa. But the reef that this project would destroy supports numerous highly endangered species - animals protected by American, Japanese and international law. These species include:

- The critically endangered and culturally treasured dugong, which relies on this habitat for its very survival in Okinawa. Japan's Mammalogical Society placed the dugong on its "Red List of Mammals" in 1997, estimating the population in Okinawa to be critically endangered. The U.S. Government's Marine Mammal Commission also fears the project would pose a serious threat to the animals' survival. The World Conservation Union's dugong specialists have expressed similar concerns and

have placed the dugong on their Red List of threatened species.

· Three types of endangered sea turtle - the hawksbill, loggerhead, and green - also depend on this ecosystem. All of these turtles, as well as the dugong, are listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

Because of global warming, landfill and pollution, Okinawa's coral reefs, along with coral reefs around the world are already threatened. More than half of Okinawa's coral reefs have disappeared over the past decade. This makes preserving the healthy reefs that continue to exist all the more important. By canceling the plan to construct the airbase near Henoko, you can help protect a globally important ocean ecosystem and some of the best remaining habitat for Okinawa dugong. I urge you to cancel this destructive project.

Sincerely, ADD YOUR NAME HERE.

CUT AND PASTE THIS LETTER INTO AN EMAIL TO [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

\*\*\*\*\*

ENVIRONMENT NEWS SERVICE  
Reef Experts Object to U.S. Military Heliport Off Okinawa  
Jul 09 '04

WASHINGTON, DC (ENS) — A U.S. military heliport planned for construction on a healthy coral reef off Okinawa's east coast is drawing opposition from coral reef scientists and environmental advocates.

The new air station, which would replace Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, would be built over a reef that is almost two miles off the shores of Henoko. If built, the base would be 2.5 kilometers (1.5 miles) long and 800 meters (.5 miles) wide, constructed on land-fill that would cover Henoko reef.

The area planned for the new base is in a natural conservation area designated by Okinawa Prefecture. The proposed site is known to be rich in biological diversity and is the northern habitable limit of the critically

endangered Okinawa dugong, an internationally protected marine mammal.

During the the 10th International Coral Reef Symposium in Okinawa last week, 889 coral reef experts from 83 countries signed a resolution calling on the governments of Japan and the United States to immediately abandon their joint plan to construct the base.

About 150 researchers from the United States, and roughly the same number from Japan signed the resolution, which was sponsored by the Arizona based Center for Biological Diversity and the Environmental Assessment Watch Group for the Okinawa Dugong. The text of the Okinawa Declaration, the outcome document of the symposium, lists land-fill among the major threats to coral reefs and emphasizes the urgent need to prevent any further destruction of existing reefs.

Daily tours to view the proposed construction site, conducted by the groups sponsoring the resolution, included a visit to an encampment of local residents who, since April 19, have blocked Japan's National Defense Administration Bureau's efforts to begin a boring survey at 63 sites on and around the reef. An eight year effort by local residents to stop the project began when the Japanese and U.S. governments ignored the results of a 1997 citizens' referendum in which a majority of local residents voted against the airbase. It has grown into a broad, multi-pronged campaign.

Opposition efforts include a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Defense brought by a number of Okinawan, Japanese and American groups, including the Dugong Network Okinawa and the Center for Biological Diversity, filed last year in the U.S. District Court in San Francisco.

The U.S. government seeks to have the case dismissed, arguing that it has no official relationship to or responsibility for the environmental impact of the construction itself since the Japanese government is constructing the new base for the United States. Because the project is based on U.S. designs and operational specifications, and Japan's National Defense Administration Bureau will oversee the project with close

cooperation from the U.S. military, the plaintiffs in the lawsuit hope for a favorable decision by the court requiring the U.S. government to abandon the project.

According to the proposal, about 60 aircraft would be based at the facility, including UH-1 utility helicopters, AH-1 attack helicopters, and CH-53 and CH-46 cargo transport helicopters. U.S. engineers estimated that about 1,900 people would work at the heliport.

Annual operations and maintenance costs for the heliport were initially estimated in a report by the U.S. General Accountin Office at \$200 million based on a \$4 billion design and construction cost, much higher than the \$2.8 million being paid by the United States at Futenma.

Copyright Environment News Service (ENS) 2004. All Rights Reserved.

**Mailing Address:**

Reef Relief  
P.O. Box 430  
Key West, Florida 33041

**Visit us in Key West at:**

Reef Relief Headquarters  
328 William Street  
Key West, FL 33040  
Tel (305) 294-3100 · Fax (305) 293-9515  
[Click here for a map](#)

**Visit us in the Bahamas at:**

Captain Roland Roberts House Environmental Center  
Parliament Street, New Plymouth,  
Green Turtle Cay, Abaco, Bahamas  
Tel (242) 365-4014