

GIKISHO NO.41
October 16, 2017

Consul General Joel Ehrendreich
American Consulate General

Atsushi Sakima
Mayor
Ginowan City

Request: CH-53 Helicopter Crash in Northern Outside of the U.S. Training Area

On 11 October 2017, the city has received notice from the Okinawa Defense Bureau in regards to a CH-53 Helicopter which was operated out of the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. Notification included that a CH-53 Helicopter crashed and caught fire in the Northern area outside of a U.S. Training Area.

The CH-53 Helicopter which crashed, was the same type of the helicopter which crashed at Okinawa International University 13 years ago, which unfortunately reminds us of that day the U.S. Military Aircraft crashed into the building and was consumed in flames. The city residents are extremely shocked and concerned reliving this unfortunate incident.

Fortunately, in this recent incident, the aircraft crew members are safe there were no local casualties but it happened on civilian residential land. Needless to say, any aircraft related mishaps taking place on or around MCAS Futenma would be a life threatening situation for many civilians as the Air Station is surrounded by many residences.

In addition, during this period, an MV-22 Osprey that belonged to MCAS Futenma, crash-landed off the coast of Australia in December of last year, and another precautionary landing was taken other times in the past several months. There is pattern developing of successively increasing trouble. During which time we have taken the opportunity to demand improvements, but similar incidents continue to occur. This unfortunate situation inevitably leads us to question the U.S. Military's efforts towards safety as well as the reliability of its aircraft and its preventive maintenance procedures. We can only state that we are extremely disappointed.

I, the Ginowan City Mayor whose duty it is to protect the lives and assets of over 98,000 citizens, can not condone the current conditions associated with this aircraft. Thus, the city strongly protests and demands the following terms be met:

Note

- An investigation of cause of the recurrence of this incident, as well as publication of specific measures taken to prevent recurrence for the disclosure of information to ease the anxiety of all civilian residents.
- An immediate halt of all CH-53 Helicopter flight activity until the safety of this aircraft has been verified.
- The continuing and most recent accident involving the U.S. Military conduct a Reexamination of all primary and secondary safety systems for all aircraft operating on the island of Okinawa.
- The closure of MCAS Futenma at the earliest possible date and return of land to solve the root cause of these arising issues, as well as realization of the agreement to cease all operation on MCAS Futenma in the next 5 years and the alleviation of these risks and burdens.