

January 20, 2015

Lieutenant General John Wissler
Okinawa Area Coordinator

Atsushi Sakima
Mayor, Ginowan City

Protest: Falling objects from AH-1W Helicopter

18 years since the SACO Agreement, and 10 years since the helicopter crash at Okinawa International College, Marine Corp Air Station Futenma continues to exist in the middle of our densely populated city of Ginowan. With a total population of around 96,000, approximately 7000 people live on each square kilometer of land, excluding US property. The residents continue to carry the burden which comes with hosting a military base such as the noise pollution and the constant risk of aircraft related accidents.

The city has received notice from the Okinawa Defense Bureau of parts, including a missile pod, falling from an AH-1W helicopter stationed at MCAS Futenma. The total weight of the items which have fallen from the aircraft is over 200kg.

Fortunately, at this time, no personal injury or property damage has been reported. However, objects free-falling from aircrafts can cause tremendous damage and tragedy. Thus, the city strongly protests the incident.

Similar incidents have occurred in April of 2013 as well as August and September of 2014. The city has requested time and time again for investigation of causes and countermeasures to prevent these incidents from reoccurring. However, we are very disappointed to hear that such an accident has occurred again and cannot help but question the military's safety management and accident prevention abilities.

As MCAS Futenma is located in the center of a densely populated city, aircraft related accidents are bound to cause immense disaster and injury. We demand a thorough investigation of the cause, a reliable prevention plan, and for the military to publicize its findings.