

Request for authorization to conduct water testing at bases

Okinawa Prefecture

Ginowan City

Okinawa City

Kin Town

Kadena Town

Chatan Town

沖縄県

宜野湾市

沖縄市

金武町

嘉手納町

北谷町

GIKISHO No. 50
August 17, 2022

Lieutenant General JAMES BIERMAN, Jr
Okinawa Area Coordinator
United States Forces Japan

Re: Request for authorization to conduct water testing at bases

Dear LtGen Bierman,

I would like to express my gratitude for your regular support to the water and environmental administration of Ginowan City, Okinawa.

It has been found that the level of perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), PFOS and PFOA, in streams and springs in the vicinity of U.S. bases in Okinawa exceeds the interim thresholds designated by the government of Japan—a matter of great concern to the citizens of Okinawa. The prefecture and relevant municipalities reasonably surmise these pollutants originate from the U.S. bases. In order to solve the issue, I request that on-site testing or sampling of water by Okinawa prefecture and relevant municipalities at bases be authorized and that the government of Japan and/or the United States Forces Japan take mitigation measures including testing within bases, taking the following background into account:

Since 2016, Okinawa prefecture has conducted water testing for PFAS (particularly PFOA, PFOS, PFHxS, and 6:2 FTS) at streams and springs around U.S. bases, and with the result and in response to our call, the provisional guideline value in the environment and the target value for public water of PFOS and PFOA were set to 50 ng/L in total Japan.

According to the result of testing, high concentrations of the PFAS in springs near Kadena Air Base and Futenma Air Base have been detected on a regular basis, suggesting the source of contaminants. And in the town of Kin, whose source water flows from the area around Camp Hansen, the tested values of PFOA and PFOS exceeded the provisional target value, which also indicates the base may be the cause. Chatan treatment plant, which takes water from the Kadena area, provides tap water to the U.S. base.

We believe it is essential to identify the source of the contaminants and promptly implement countermeasures to solve the issue and have appealed to the government of Japan and the USFJ to allow on-site testing in the bases and to take necessary actions. However, it remains unrealized.

In June 15, 2022, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced it would apply stricter standards on health advisories for perfluoroalkyl substances, namely PFOS, PFOA, PFBS, and GenX, because these compounds were highly likely to induce adverse health effects on human body.

Okinawa prefecture has requested the Commander of USFJ on July 15, 2022 as attached, and hereby request that on-site testing or sampling of water by Okinawa prefecture and relevant municipalities at bases be authorized and that the government of Japan and/or the United States Forces Japan take mitigation measures including testing within bases.

Sincerely yours,

MATSUGAWA Masanori

Mayor of Ginowan City