



25th December 2017

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister,  
Mr. Itsunori Onodera, Minister of Defense,  
Mr. Koiichiro Nakajima, Director-General, Okinawa Defense Bureau,  
Government of Japan,  
Lieutenant General Nicholson,

Nobuko Itosu, President  
Okinawa YWCA

**Letter of Protest against the Incident of Object Fall from  
US Large Transport Helicopter CH53E belonging to Futenma Air Base**

On Thursday 7th December, approximately at 10:20, a cylindrical part of a large transport helicopter CH53E, belonging to Futenma Air Base, fell onto the iron roof of the Futenma Baptist Church Affiliated Midorigaoka Nursery School. At the time of the fall, approximately 30 children were playing in the school playground, and the object stopped rolling on the roof 50 centimeters short of falling on the playground. While there were no injuries on the side of the children and staff members, it was close to a life-threatening disaster.

It has been found out that this object is the cover of a device to detect propeller irregularities (a cap to cover Strontium90, a radioactive substance, which is released at times of irregularities); the United States authority has admitted that this object belongs to the US military, but denies the fact that it has fallen from a flying U.S. helicopter. Two dents have been found on the nursery school roof, which are seen to have been made by the fallen object, which fits the record of two impact noises detected by the Prefectural noise monitoring station. We strongly demand prompt clarification of the cause of this incident. The Parents' Association of the nursery school is demanding the prohibition of U.S. helicopters leaving and arriving at Futenma Airbase from flying over the nursery school.

Approximately 10:00 on Thursday, 13th December, a window sized 90cm square and weighing 7.7kg fell from a CH53E helicopter onto the playground of Futenma No.2 Elementary School. At the time of the fall, 60 children were having a P.E. class at the playground, and one boy was injured by the incident. The United States Authority has maintained that it was a "human-induced mistake", and that the cause was not a structural flaw in the machinery or faulty maintenance. Only 6 days later, the same helicopters have resumed flights over the nursery

and elementary schools, while it is still unclear how thoroughly the “measures to prevent re-occurrence” such as “re-education of manuals” and “prohibition of flight over schools” have been implemented. In the first place, laws in the United States stipulate that there must not be residences, schools, hospitals and community centers in the “clear zones”; this matter shows how much our lives are disrespected and exposed to danger on a daily basis.

Since the incident, Midorigaoka Nursery School and Futenma No. 2 Elementary school have suffered from ceaseless abusive phone calls and emails, including those that allege that the schools have “hoaxed the incidents”. We should not tolerate a society where the victims suffer from double and triple victimization. All people have the right lead a safe and secure life. We long from our hearts for a society where residents around Futenma Airbase, especially the children, can live and grow up healthy and happily.

Okinawa YWCA strongly demands the flight prohibition of helicopters departing and arriving at Futenma Airbase, and furthermore the immediate closure and unconditional removal of Futenma Airbase.