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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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CHAIRMAN,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC POLICY

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

April 13, 2010

The Honorable Norman D. Dicks
Chairman
Subcommittee on Defense
The Committee on Appropriations
H-405, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dicks:

I write to express my concern over the plan to move the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station in Futenma, Okinawa, Japan to Nago, and ask that you take the concerns of the residents of Okinawa into consideration as you begin work on the Defense Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2011.

The U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) would allow for the relocation of the air station in Futenma to Nago, and eventually, for the majority of U.S. military personnel to be transferred out of country to military bases in Guam¹. Although Okinawa comprises less than 1% of Japan's land mass, the city hosts over 60% of U.S. military personnel in the country. Numerous high-profile incidents involving clashes between local Japanese residents and the U.S. military have been recorded over the past several years, including cases of sexual assault and other crimes. Residents have also articulated concerns about the disruptive noise that would come from the new base.

There is also significant concern about the economic damage that would result from a base in Nago. The fragile coral reef that provides natural habitat for local marine life as well as economic livelihood for local fishermen would be at risk.

Residents of Futenma have expressed strong opposition to the realignment of the military base in Okinawa. Last month, voters in Nago voted overwhelmingly for Susumu Inamine as mayor in a display of opposition to the relocation of the military base to their region of Okinawa. Mayor Inamine ran his campaign on the promise that the U.S. military base would not be constructed in Nago, and he has joined the Upper House of the Japanese House of Representatives in calling for the renegotiation of the 2006 U.S.-Japan SOFA.

¹ 11 U.S.T. 1652; T.I.A.S. 4510; 373 U.N.T.S. 248. Signed at Washington January 19, 1960. Entered into force June 23, 1960 (as amended).

As you work with your colleagues to appropriate funds for U.S. military bases overseas, please take the concerns of the Japanese people into consideration. If I or my staff can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Kucinich". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "D" and "K".

Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress