

# US mishaps stir ire in Okinawa

Relations with Japan clouded by rising number of military aircraft incidents as issue takes center stage in mayoral race

There is a long line of Japanese politicians who have lost their jobs due to a slip of the tongue. The latest to put his foot in his mouth is Fumiaki Matsumoto, who stepped down as a Cabinet Office state minister on Jan 26 for heckling during a parliamentary meeting the previous day.

When an opposition lawmaker, in a question to Japanese Prime



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Minister Shinzo Abe, highlighted a string of incidents involving United States aircraft in Okinawa, including emergency landings of helicopters, Matsumoto responded by asking mockingly: "How many people died from that?"

This led Japan's opposition parties to lash out at Matsumoto for downplaying the incidents.

On Jan 29, Abe apologized "deeply" to residents of Okinawa and the people of the country, adding that the government will make efforts to reduce Okinawa's base-hosting burden and to handle other matters by boosting discipline.

Last year also there were several incidents of officials and lawmakers from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) shooting their mouths off,

and they contributed to the downward slide in approval ratings for the Abe administration.

The people of Okinawa have been angered by the frequency of accidents and incidents involving US military aircraft. The safety of US aircraft and other military operations is a constant source of tension in Okinawa, which has the heaviest concentration of US military bases.

After conducting an independent investigation into US military aircraft mishaps, Japan's Defense Ministry announced on Jan 22 that accidents or incidents involving US military aircraft in Japan more than doubled in 2017, increasing to 25 cases from 11 the previous year.

A US Marine Corps AH-1 attack helicopter made an emergency landing in Tonaki village, Okinawa, on Jan 23, the latest in a series of mishaps involving US choppers in Japan's southernmost prefecture. Okinawa Governor Takeshi Onaga has slammed the US forces in Japan as being "out of control" and "crazy".

There are more American soldiers based in Japan than in any other foreign country. The American presence — around 54,000 US military personnel — has clouded bilateral relations.

In October 2017, a US military CH-53E transport helicopter went up in flames after it crash-landed

on privately owned land in Okinawa. A series of emergency landings by V-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft followed.

In December, a window dropped from a US heavy transport helicopter onto a school's exercise ground, prompting the Japanese and US governments to agree that US helicopters would avoid the airspace over the elementary school.

On Jan 18, the school held an evacuation drill for its students on how to deal with a situation involving US military aircraft flying over the area.

After years of negotiations with the US, the Japanese government is relocating the US Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma to the less populated Henoko coastal area of Nago city from a crowded residential area of Ginowan.

The airfield relocation is intended to put an end to safety issues caused by operations at the Futenma base.

However, people from different parts of Japan have launched sit-in protests against the relocation project since April 19, 2004. The Okinawa governor and many local residents want the facility relocated outside the prefecture.

On Jan 19, the Okinawa Prefectural Assembly unanimously passed a protest resolution in the wake of successive emergency landings of US Marine Corps helicopters.

The local legislators issued a statement calling for the suspension of MCAS Futenma's operations by the end of February 2019. This is the first time the local legislature has issued a deadline.

It comes as crimes committed by American soldiers and contract workers against Okinawan civilians have crystallized opposition against the US bases.

In May 2016, an American military contractor was arrested on charges related to the murder of a local woman. The stabbing death revived memories of the 1995 kidnapping and rape of a 12-year-old Okinawan schoolgirl by three US servicemen.

The US military in November banned all of its service members in Japan from drinking alcohol after a fatal road accident involving a Marine who was arrested with a blood alcohol content three times the legal limit. The military truck he was driving collided with a car in Naha, killing its 61-year-old Japanese driver.

The US military has confirmed plans to reduce its footprint in Okinawa in the coming years.

Land used for the Northern Training Area — a US exclusive use facility in Okinawa — was returned to the prefecture in 2017, the biggest transfer of property since the prefecture's reversion from US to Japanese control in 1972.

With the return of the 4,000-hectare site, Okinawa's share of the total acreage of US military facilities in Japan decreased to 70.6 percent from 74.5 percent.

The US military also plans to move about 4,000 of the 19,000 Marines from Okinawa to the US territory of Guam from 2024 to 2028, CNN reported.

On Jan 28, the mayoral election campaign started in Nago which, according to *The Asahi Shimbun*, has become the epicenter of the battle between anti-US military base protesters and the Japanese central government. Voting will be held on Feb 4.

Nago Mayor Susumu Inamine, 72, who is seeking his third four-year term as an independent, is against the relocation of MCAS Futenma. Inamine's rival is 56-year-old Taketoyo Toguchi, who is supported by the ruling coalition of the LDP and Komeito, among other parties.

Back in 2016, when I talked to the local people, they referred to their compatriots in other parts of the country as "they (are) Japanese". Identity is an issue for many Okinawans. They reject a Japanese identity in favor of an Okinawan one.

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# Xi's bold vision offers world a solution

By JIA WENSHAN

Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is a combination of Marxism and cosmopolitan ideas for solutions to global problems which President Xi Jinping has articulated after conducting a comprehensive study into China as a leading contributor to and member of the world in the past several decades, particularly since 2013 when he fully took office.

Xi supported an open economy, globalization, free trade, and advocated cultural exchanges to build a community of shared future for humankind in his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2017. His stance was in sharp contrast to the protectionism, nationalism and isolationism gaining support in some parts of the world.

Xi Jinping Thought is an expansive ideology characterized by pluralism, inclusiveness, equality, and win-win cooperation, and promotes free trade and globalization. It goes beyond any single existing convention. It is not only innovative but also forward-looking, and has the potential to correct and transform the existing world order.

Xi Jinping Thought has become the ideological basis for governance, policymaking and policy implementation, as well as a major theoretical framework for neo-globalization practices, as illustrated by the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative.

The globalization espoused by Xi is freedom-based, innovation-driven, equity-oriented, inclusive and responsible, and collaborative in leadership.

Xi and China do not just pay lip service to such ideas. They have put them into result-driven action.

Since 2013, China has successfully carried out anti-corruption and anti-poverty programs at home, and initiated taxation for housing to enhance social equity while creating free trade zones, and promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and the green economy.

Globally, China launched the Belt and Road Initiative — the plan to boost Asia's trade and infrastructure connectivity with Europe and Africa along the ancient Silk Road routes — in 2013. Today, 65 economies are part of Belt and Road projects and 84 economies have joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. While China initiated and has been overseeing the implementation of these projects, all the member countries are equal partners and co-beneficiaries in them.

It is perhaps for these reasons that Xi's speech at Davos and at the UN headquarters in Geneva last

year created an instant stir across the world, and has been influencing international relations since then.

The theme of the 2018 World Economic Forum was Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World, which in fact echoed the concept Xi put forward at the UN headquarters in Geneva last year. And dozens of global leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi shared similar ideas at this year's World Economic Forum.

While Modi defended globalization, Macron emphasized the need for equity as a result of globalization and took a dig at US President Donald Trump for his stance on climate change.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel labeled right-wing populism as "poison" in Davos this year and called for cooperation, not divisions, to resolve global issues such

as immigration. Unexpectedly, British Prime Minister Theresa May, too, criticized populism and supported free trade in her speech at Davos.

The leaders of Brazil and Canada also decried protectionism. These remarks even prompted Trump, who raised the protectionist flag with his America First policy, to tone down his populist rhetoric and take a more pragmatic stance in his speech at the World Economic Forum this year.

Xi's bold and insightful stance against anti-globalization offers a China solution to global governance which will become more refined through global application.

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