

PFAS Contamination and US bases Okinawa, Japan



US Military Bases and Okinawa, Japan

Okinawa is the southernmost prefecture of Japan and is home to 1.44 million people.

While consisting of only 0.6 percent of Japan's landmass, Okinawa bears 70 percent of all US military bases in Japan in the name of U.S.-Japan security alliance. US bases occupy 10 percent of Okinawa and 15 percent of Okinawa Island, Okinawa's main island.

The overwhelming presence of US military in this small prefecture has caused a range of problems including PFAS contamination. Many people of Okinawa and US Military personnel stationed are exposed to PFAS contamination.

PFAS Contamination and US bases

PFAS have been detected on and around two major US bases, Kadena Air Base (KAB) and Marine Corps Air Station Futenma (MCAS Futenma).

Around KAB, high concentration of PFOS and PFOA (e.g. 1,379 ng/L), and PFHxS (e.g. 340 ng/L) have been detected at several sources of drinking water. Since 2016, the Okinawa Prefectural Government has installed a carbon filter system to remove PFOS and PFOA at the Chatan Water Treatment Plant. The plant distributes drinking water via municipalities to local communities and 8 US bases in the central and southern part of Okinawa Island.

Around MCAS Futenma, high concentrations of PFAS (e.g., 2000ng/L) have been detected in natural springs and soil. Due to a lack of information on PFAS contamination, local people have used the spring water for growing agricultural products for decades.

PFOS, PFOA, and PFHxS have been detected (4, 2 and 54times respectively higher than the national averages) in blood samples collected from local people.

No Effective Remedies

The lack of collaboration between the US military and the Okinawa Prefectural Government has exacerbated the PFAS problems in Okinawa. Under the US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement, the US military has denied the Okinawa Prefectural Government access to survey the sources of PFAS contamination on the bases. No effective remedies exist for US base related PFAS contamination.



Chunnagaa Spring complex (National Cultural Property) near Futenma. Once the fabric and pride of local community, the Chunagaa spring is now contaminated with PFAS.

Our Request

Please speak with your Members of Congress. Ask them to require the Department of Defense to restore safe water to Okinawa.

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