

**Okinawa Newspapers' Biased Reports on Osprey**

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Okinawa's two major newspapers – the Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times – have become propaganda newspapers failing to provide whole pictures of developments. Their traditional reports on the Imperial Japanese Army's mass suicide orders during the Battle of Okinawa have been typically and excessively biased. So have been their reports on the Osprey vertical takeoff and landing transport aircraft to be deployed at the U.S. Marine Futenma Air Station in Okinawa.

**Exaggerated dangers**

The Japanese and U.S. governments plan to deploy the new transport aircraft at Futenma in August. The ambition of China, which has expanded into the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean including the South and East China Seas, is the greatest threat to other Asian countries including Japan. In a bid to counter China, the United States is seeking to build slim-but-agile military forces while cutting military spending by some 39 trillion yen over the next decade. The Osprey deployment is significant for these efforts.

The Osprey VTOL transport flies at the speed of 560 kilometers per hour, two times faster than the CH-46E transport helicopter now in operation. Its combat radius is more than four times longer at 600 kilometers and its allowable load is nearly four times bigger. While two Osprey accidents were reported just before the deployment, the Osprey accident rate (number of accidents per 100,000 flight hours) is 3.32 including accidents during the development phase, lower than 5.74 for the CH-46. Since the Osprey became operational in 2004, the accident rate has fallen to 1.12. At present, the U.S. Marine Corps operate 140 Ospreys in the world.

Nevertheless, the Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times have covered and emphasized the dangers of the Osprey almost every day. For example, the Ryukyu Shimpo issued an extra edition on Ginowan citizens' rally against the Osprey deployment on June 17. On the next day, it combined its top and last pages to display a photo of the rally and a large banner saying "5,200 determined to reject Osprey deployment." The newspaper used eight of its 30 pages to cover anti-Osprey comments emphasizing the victim mentality.

Among those making comments carried by the paper was an angered 72-year-old man who branded the Osprey deployment as representing

discrimination against Okinawa. A mother in her 30s was telling her 6- and 4-year-old daughters, "Let's go to prevent fearful aircraft from coming." Senior high school students also made anti-Osprey comments. These comments were all emotional. The way of reporting by the Okinawa Times was not different.

### **PM Noda required to be decisive**

The two newspapers have made few reports about China's threats, the significance of the U.S. military realignment in Asia-Pacific, the Osprey deployment's contributions to improving Japanese and U.S. defense capabilities, and the Osprey's safeness. Without any idea about how Japan should counter China, they subject Japan to resentment.

Despite the two major Okinawa newspapers' biased reports as a chronic disease, there are sound opinions reflecting the national defense consciousness in Okinawa. In Henoko to which the Futenma Air Station is planned to be relocated, most of residents support the relocation on condition that local residents be given priority in employment for the base. A sound conservative mayor has been elected in Ishigaki that had been known as the city against U.S. forces and mainland Japan. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and Defense Minister Satoshi Morimoto should provide reasonable explanations and demonstrate their decisiveness to implement policies to support these sound opinions in Okinawa.

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