

# Henoko Has a Few Words for the Pentagon - an Okinawan ex-Marine Speaks Up

**C. Douglas Lummis**

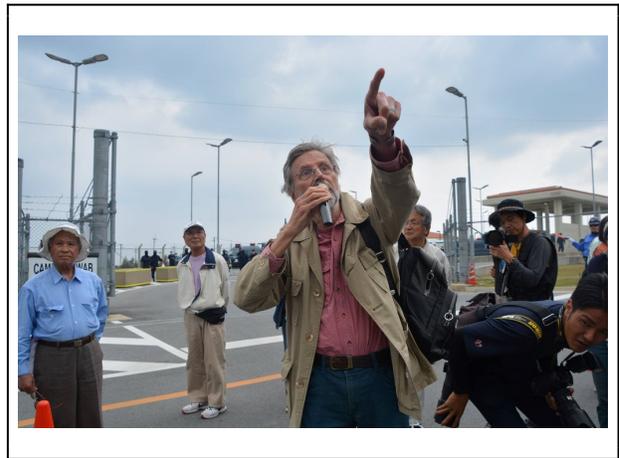
At the protest rally at Henoko on 21 March (2,500 people in front of Camp Schwab protesting the Pentagon and the Japanese government's plans to build a new Marine Base in Oura Bay) there were four or five Marines up on the hill across from the gate with cameras and walkie-talkies and armbands, observing and recording the event. Clearly they were not there out of personal curiosity, but doing a job. Perhaps it was hoped that their presence would strike a Big-Brother-is-Watching-You fear into the hearts of the protesters, but if so, it was not working.



Photo credit Takamine Chota

It occurred to me that, on the contrary, they could be thought as a useful medium of communication, by which the message of the rally would be conveyed directly to base headquarters, and from there to Pacific Command headquarters and on to the Pentagon. After all just a few weeks before, the Commander of US Forces in the Pacific,

Admiral Harry Harris, had testified before the US Senate Armed Services Committee that Henoko base construction was two years behind schedule, and that the protest movement was part of the reason, whereupon the very next day Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide said, No, it's right on schedule. As it would be crazy for Suga to lie to the Pentagon when the Pentagon has the facts, it must mean that Suga really doesn't know what's going on at Henoko. From this we can learn that the Pentagon has better information about Henoko than the Japanese Government does. And the source - one source anyway - of that information will be these guys up on the hill.



I decided I wanted to talk to them, and when the rally was over I borrowed the mike from Yamashiro Hiroji and said something like the following:

You guys up there should know that the people down here are not frightened or troubled by you

taking videos of them or recording what they say. That's because they have nothing to hide. On the contrary, they very much want you accurately to pass what you saw here today on to headquarters. And what did you see? First of all, you saw real anger, right? Not ideology, not some ism, but the real anger of ordinary people.

Imagine, if you can, a foreign military base in your hometown. Somebody comes out of it and rapes the girl who lives next door to you. The Base Commander comes out and says, "Oh, terribly sorry." Then it happens again, and the Base Commander comes out and says, "Really, really sorry." Then again, and the CO says "Yes, absolutely regrettable." And it happens again and again and again - for seventy years. If you had ever experienced something like this, you would be in a better position to understand what these people were saying today.

And what you also saw is a movement that is not showing any signs of disillusion, of despair, or resignation or weakening, but rather that is gaining in numbers, in determination, and in savvy. And a movement that sees itself as starting to win after more than two decades of protest. Construction has been halted. The unstoppable has been stopped. And if you want to know what stopped it, it's right down here. You're looking at it. So what we ask of you is, please, by all means, pass this information accurately on to headquarters. We very much want them to know these things.

(And I can report that they did record all of this with their various gadgetry, and presumably we can trust them to have faithfully passed it on to their bosses.)

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