

No. 9717

(Sense-of-the-Assembly)

ON U.S. BASES IN OKINAWA

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

Background Information:

The Battle of Okinawa resulted in the deaths of 14,000 U.S. soldiers (35,000 wounded); 90,000 Japanese soldiers; and 150,000 Okinawan civilians (approximately one-third of the population). Fifty-one years after World War II the U.S. military presence on Okinawa has increased to 45 bases, occupying 20% of the total land area of 454 square miles (much of it the best agricultural lands). Since Okinawa's reversion to Japan in 1972, 120 military aircraft accidents have occurred and 4,716 crimes have been committed by military personnel, including two murders of local residents and the recent rape of a 12 year old girl;

The Scriptures show that Jesus' battles were spiritual rather than military--but they did involve profound conflict with the ruling powers. The arrest of John the Baptist propelled Jesus to begin his public ministry (Mark 1:14) and Jesus' clearing of the temple (Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-58, John 2:13-22) dramatically challenged the economic, political and religious control exercised by the authorities over the people. Similarly the people of Okinawa are challenging the powers and principalities by massive demonstrations and by appealing to solidarity actions by peace groups around the world. Jesus teaches us that he is continually revealing himself in human history and making himself known to us through our sisters and brothers who seek liberation from war making and military domination.

WHEREAS, the women of Okinawa were instrumental in raising awareness of the negative consequences of militarism; and

WHEREAS, the Okinawa Prefecture comprises only 0.6% of the whole Japanese territory, but 75% of all military installations in exclusive use by U.S. Forces-Japan are concentrated in Okinawa; and

WHEREAS, 90% of Okinawans oppose the presence of U.S. bases on its land; and

WHEREAS, through the years U.S. nuclear weapons, poison gas, excessive aircraft noise, and the live-firing of military exercises have caused serious accidents, physical ailments, fear and psychological damage to civilians, especially children, and lasting environmental destruction; and

WHEREAS, a major part of the main seaport used for international commercial trade to enhance economic development of Okinawa is occupied by the U.S. military; and

WHEREAS, the Okinawan people are asserting their self-determination from U.S. and Japan's military policies; and

WHEREAS, U.S. newspapers recently announced that the U.S. will give back about 20 percent of the land it occupies on Okinawa, including Futenma Air Base; but experienced Okinawans do not believe U.S. promises since Okinawa military bases have been put on closure lists before, and some remain active nearly twenty years later; and

WHEREAS, the closing of Futenma is merely rotating the soldiers and installations to Kadena Air Base and does not represent gradual removal and;

WHEREAS, our partner church, the United Church of Christ in Japan (the Kyodan), and the Okinawa District Assembly of the Kyodan have issued several public statements for the removal of all U.S. military bases from Okinawa;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), meeting in Denver, Colorado, July 25-29, 1997 urges the U.S. government to implement immediately a phased removal of all U.S. military bases and personnel from Okinawa and a clean-up of remaining environmental pollutants; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), meeting in Denver, Colorado, July 25-29, 1997 urges all members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to support the present prefecture and local governments of Okinawa and the vast majority of the Okinawan people in their unceasing efforts to achieve the complete removal of U.S. military bases and U.S. military personnel in Okinawa Prefecture and to return these lands for peaceful, people-oriented development; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), meeting in Denver, Colorado, July 25-29-, 1997, urges the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), in consultation with the President of the United Church of Christ, to send a copy of this resolution to the President of the United States, the U.S. Secretary of State, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, the Prime Minister of Japan, Governor Ota of Okinawa and Hawaii's representatives and senators in Washington, D.C. and the Okinawa district assembly of the Kyodan.