

[論 説]

The Reversion of Okinawa to Japan and the Formation of the Support Networks of the Japan Self-Defense Forces

NAKAHARA Masato*

Introduction

In recent years, the role of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in Okinawa has been questioned once again. Amid the growing confrontation between the United States and China, the military role of Japan as an ally of the United States remains significant, and the role of the JSDF in Okinawa is becoming particularly important in this context. How then should the Japanese people address the JSDF in Okinawa in the future? To answer this, this study intends to obtain clues from history and focus on how the Okinawan people have addressed the JSDF in postwar Okinawa.

Scholars have typically regarded Okinawa as the only region in Japan to experience ground warfare at the end of the Pacific War. After the war, they have recognized it as a region, wherein intense struggles against bases occurred. Such a scenario would have been unthinkable on the mainland due to the 27 years of US occupation and the existence of vast US military bases. Furthermore, Okinawa was considered a region, wherein the struggle against the deployment of the JSDF erupted after the confirmation of the relocation of the JSDF.¹

For example, Arasaki Moriteru states, in Okinawa, the forced deployment of the JSDF triggered a new reminder of the reality of the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy in the Battle of Okinawa. Among other things, he states that reformist local governments

* Assistant Professor, Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies, Kobe University. Fellow, Research Institute for Peace and Security.

(*Kakushin Jichitai*) refused to recruit JSDF personnel, and Naha City withheld resident registration for JSDF personnel who were residing in the base. This scenario is in addition to the action of the Council for the Reversion of Okinawa Prefecture to the Fatherland (CROPF)², and labor groups against the forced deployment of the JSDF.³

Sakurazawa Makoto also notes that a poll conducted by the Japan Broadcasting Agency in May 1972 reported that 28% were in favor of and 60% opposed to the relocation of the JSDF. In April of the following year, these statistics were 23% and 60%, respectively. He states that the underlying reason for these results was distrust in the actions of the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy in the Battle of Okinawa among not only progressive but also conservative supporters.⁴

Uemura Hideki also implies that people of Okinawa had negative memories of the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy during the war and did not welcome the deployment of the JSDF which is the successor to the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy.⁵ Thus, previous studies point to an elevated anti-JSDF sentiment, especially in Okinawa, during the reversion period.

However, this scenario does not mean that the JSDF in Okinawa did not receive support at the time. Who, then, supported the JSDF at the time? The main actors are the business people who joined the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association (*Okinawa Ken Jieitai Kyōryoku Kai* that was renamed the Okinawa Defense Association (*Okinawa Ken Bōei Kyōkai* as of September 17, 1973).

The Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association is a civilian support group of the JSDF that was established on March 31, 1972 (1.5 months before Okinawa was returned to Japan). The objective of its establishment is to contribute to the development of the new Okinawa and to promote the welfare of the Okinawan people by enhancing the understanding of the JSDF, spreading and educating defense ideas, and promoting friendship with the JSDF.⁶ Although others were of course involved, the so-called “big four” of the Okinawa business world led the establishment:⁷ Kokuba Kōtarō (1900–1988, founder of Kokuba-Gumi); Miyagi Jinshirō (1902–1997, founder of Daitō Sugar); Gushiken Sōsei (1896–1979, founder of Orion Beer); and Ōshiro Kamakichi (1897–1992, founder of Ōshiro-Gumi).

In other words, a certain number of supporters of the JSDF existed in the business community in Okinawa at the time. This aspect adds a new fact to the typical

understanding of the heightened anti-JSDF sentiment at the time of the reversion of Okinawa. How then was the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association established? To date, no study has been conducted on the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association. Therefore, this study aims to elucidate the history of its establishment as a basic examination of JSDF supporters in Okinawa.

Reversion of Okinawa and Relocation of the JSDF

This chapter provides a chronological overview of the major developments related to the deployment of the JSDF in Okinawa. The period covered is from the late 1960s to May 15, 1972, when administrative authority was returned to Okinawa.⁸

On August 19, 1965, Prime Minister Satō Eisaku became the first postwar prime minister to visit Okinawa. Upon arriving at Naha Airport, he expressed the desire to return Okinawa to Japan in a speech: “the postwar period would not end until this territory had been returned to Japan.”⁹

The reversion of Okinawa indicated that it would become a part of the new Japanese defense zone. This aspect led to consideration of the deployment of the JSDF in Okinawa. Discussions began after the Japan-United States summit meeting between Prime Minister Satō and US President Nixon on November 21, 1969. In a joint statement between Japanese Prime Minister Satō and US President Nixon, a decision was made to continue the Japan-United States Security Treaty and return of Okinawa to Japan in 1972.¹⁰ Moreover, the plan for deployment of the JSDF was concretized with an announcement: “the responsibility for the immediate defense of Okinawa as part of Japan’s defense efforts for her own territories.”¹¹

On January 14, 1970, the third Satō Cabinet was formed, and Nakasone Yasuhiro was appointed as the Director General of the Defense Agency.¹² At the end of September of the same year, an announcement was made that Nakasone would become the first incumbent Director General of the Defense Agency to visit Okinawa. In Okinawa, opposition to Nakasone’s visit was increasing. For example, on October 2nd, the Okinawa Teachers Association (*Okinawa Kyōshokuin Kai* = Okinawa Teachers Union from 1971) and others claimed that Nakasone’s visit to Okinawa is intended to maintain and strengthen US military bases and deploy the JSDF in Okinawa. In particular, the

fact that Nakasone's visit to Okinawa was through an invitation from Lt. Gen. Gordon M. Graham (commander of US Forces Japan), raised an alarm.¹³ On October 6th, CROPF, the Okinawa Socialist Party, and Okinawa's People's Party, among others, requested Yara Chōbyō (Chief Executive of the Ryukyu Islands) to strongly oppose the deployment of the JSDF during Nakasone's visit to Okinawa.¹⁴

On October 7, 1970, Nakasone visited Okinawa.¹⁵ On the same day, the central government announced the scale of the JSDF to be deployed upon Okinawa's reversion to mainland Japan. A decision was made to deploy 25 F-104 fighter aircraft in addition to 1,100, 700, and 1,400 personnel from the Japan, Maritime, and Air SDFs, respectively. On October 8th, the Yara-Nakasone meeting was held, and Yara's response to the deployment of the JSDF attracted much attention. Nakasone stated that if Okinawa falls within the sovereignty of mainland Japan, then defending Okinawa would be natural for Japan. Also, he reported that the JSDF is a defense force for maintaining peace and asked Yara to cooperate with him in clearing the misunderstanding and prejudice of the Okinawan people.¹⁶ In response, Yara expressed strong opposition. Nakasone's statement was also perceived as ignoring the sentiments of the Okinawan people.¹⁷

On January 7, 1972, a Japan-United States summit meeting was held between Prime Minister Satō and President Nixon. At the meeting, both parties announced that Okinawa would be returned to Japan on May 15th, and that the US military bases in Okinawa would be reduced in size.¹⁸ On March 1st, the formation ceremony of the Japan Ground SDF (JGSDF) Provisional First Combined Brigade was held at the JGSDF Eighth Division, Camp Kita-Kumamoto. The JGSDF Provisional First Combined Brigade that comprised of approximately 1,000 personnel, gathered approximately 150 personnel from Okinawa who wished to serve in the area, including Kuwae Ryōhō, the first commander.¹⁹

At the National Defense Council, the government officially decided on April 17th that approximately 2,900 personnel would be deployed to Okinawa by the end of December.²⁰ In addition, approximately 100 members of the Ground, Maritime, and Air SDFs would be dispatched to Okinawa as preparatory personnel prior to the return to Japan. The first and second groups of 20 and 22 preparatory personnel, respectively, arrived at Naha on April 22nd.²¹ The relocation of such a small number of personnel was called an "off and on relocation" (*Samidare Ichū*).²²

In response to the arrival of the JSDF in Okinawa, negative feelings increased among citizens. A few of them were reminiscent of the dark memories of the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy during the Battle of Okinawa.²³ For example, in a statement of protest on April 22nd, the CROPF argued that “at last the Japanese military (JSDF) have forcefully begun their occupation of Okinawa” and announced that they would consider every possible measure for waging an anti-JSDF struggle.²⁴ Conversely, the small number of JSDF members undergoing relocation completely discouraged local opposition activists.²⁵ In fact, on the 22nd when the first group arrived in Okinawa, only approximately 20 young members of the Japan Postal Workers’ Union (*Zenteishin Rōdō Kumiai: Zentei*) and Japan Telecommunications Workers’ Union (*Zenkoku Denki Tsūshin Rōdō Kumiai: Zendentsū*) were present to protest. On the 26th, when the second group arrived, only approximately 100 people, who were mostly from the Okinawa Teachers Union, protested.²⁶

On May 15th, administrative authority over Okinawa was returned to Japan, and the Okinawa Prefecture was established. Although ceremonies commemorating the reversion of Okinawa were held at the Nippon Budōkan Hall in Tokyo and the Naha Civic Hall, a rally was held at Yogi Park that is adjacent to the Naha Civic Hall, on May 15th. The CROPF organized the rally against the deployment of the JSDF and called for: the rejection of military land contracts, removal of US military bases, abolition of the security treaty, the disposal of Okinawa, and the downfall of the Satō Cabinet.²⁷ On the same day, the JSDF newly reorganized the Okinawa-related units, and the first batch of Okinawa-deployed units initiated movement into Okinawa on May 26th.²⁸

Establishment of Support Groups of the JSDF in Okinawa

The previous chapter reviewed the major developments related to the deployment of the JSDF in Okinawa up to the reversion to Japan on May 15, 1972. In the process, opposition to the JSDF increased, predominately led by the CROPF. Alternatively, the anti-JSDF struggle that was initially expected to intensify did not gain much momentum. The reason that underlies this result was the consideration of the feelings of Okinawans by the government and the Defense Agency as they promoted the deployment of the JSDF, which was exemplified by the off and on relocation.

Alternatively, documents at the time indicate the existence of a support structure established by the support networks of the JSDF. Typical examples are the establishment of support groups of the JSDF such as the Okinawa JSDF Friends Association (*Okinawa Chiku Taiyū Kai*), the Okinawa JSDF Parents Association (*Okinawaken Chiku Fukei Kai*), and the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association (*Okinawaken Jieitai Kyōryoku Kai*). This chapter first presents an overview of the process of establishing the Okinawa JSDF Friends and the Parents Associations.

In Okinawa, the Friends and the Parents Associations were established in 1969, three years before Okinawa was returned to Japan. Ishimine Kunio played an important role in this establishment. Ishimine moved to mainland Japan in 1957 after teaching at a junior high school in Okinawa and served as an officer at the JGSDF Camp Kokubu in Kagoshima Prefecture for approximately 2.5 years.²⁹ In October 1959, after his retirement, he departed from Kagoshima Port with a sentimental feeling that he may never step on mainland Japan again.³⁰ Ishimine then went to work for Nanyō Mutual Bank (which later merged with the Bank of Okinawa). During his 13 years of service, he recalled that he began perceive lingering feelings for the JSDF. He decided to gather friends with the same experiences. As a result, he gained the sympathy of Ōshiro Yasuaki who was coincidentally an employee at the same bank. In addition, he found five drinking buddies with whom he could discuss common memories.³¹

On January 26, 1968, a colonel serving at the JGSDF Officer Candidate School in Kurume City, Fukuoka Prefecture visited Okinawa. He was the Battalion Commander of the JGSDF 12th Infantry Regiment in which Ishimine served. Ishimine recalls their reunion as follows: “I had the opportunity to receive a lot of guidance from him.”³²

On July 8, 1968, one of the directors of the Recruitment Section, Western Army, traveled to Okinawa and visited Ishimine at the head office of Nanyō Mutual Bank. The purpose of his visit was to obtain cooperation from Ishimine “so that the JSDF could be stationed smoothly after the reversion to Japan.” He said to Ishimine, “Okinawa will be returned to Japan in the near future. Since you are a former JSDF officer, I thought you would listen to me, so I came to you.” At the same time, he presented Ishimine with a letter of introduction from his battalion commander and senior during his time with the JSDF.³³ Ishimine was tasked with three “missions” as follows:

- (1) to form an alumni association;

- (2) to cooperate in recruiting JSDF personnel; and
- (3) to form a JSDF cooperation association with Okinawan people.

Ishimine immediately responded, “I understand.” He recalled his situation at the time, and said, “When a senior officer in uniform asked me to do something, I returned to the feeling of a JSDF officer and took it as an official mission. Later, I wondered if it would be really alright.”³⁴

In November of the same year, the first Kyushu block workshop of the Friends Association was held in Kumamoto City under the consideration of the Western Army Headquarter.³⁵ Ishimine attended this workshop as a special member from Okinawa and cited that this workshop led him to strongly decide to organize the Friends Association in Okinawa.³⁶ At the workshop, Ishimine received advice from Shinkawa Ryū (then Mayor of Ibusuki City/President of the Kagoshima JSDF Friends Association) and Tsukamoto Masatoshi (former Commander of the North Eastern Army): “In Okinawa, we should hurry to establish the Parents Association in parallel with a private cooperation association.” Therefore, Ishimine called on his seniors and friends who were involved in the project and held a round-table discussion to prepare and establish associations for friends and for parents, simultaneously.³⁷

In 1969, support and guidance from the Western Army Headquarter became increasingly geared toward the establishment of the Friends Association. First, as preparation, a volunteer round-table meeting was held early in the new year. At the same time, they began looking for people to serve as representatives of the Parents Association.³⁸ The candidate for representative was Kobashigawa Asazō, who was the father of a student of the JGSDF Youth Technical School and was a member of the Legislature of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands. Ishimine guided Kobashigawa to the Western Army Headquarter in Kumamoto and introduced him to relevant senior officers to request support in preparing for the formation of a Parents Association across three days beginning on February 2nd.³⁹

From February 13th to 20th, a director of the Recruitment Section and a public relations officer from the Kagoshima District Liaison Department (*Kagoshima Chihō Renrakubu*) were dispatched to Okinawa to assist in the preparation for the formation of the Friends Association as well as to support recruitment activities. On March 3rd, the Kagoshima District Liaison Department distributed 137,580 yen in aid. On March 8th,

the first meeting of the founders of the Friends and the Parents Associations was held at the Okinawa Mayor's Hall. It was attended by Ishimine Kunio, Kobashigawa Asazō, Ōshiro Yasuaki, and six other members.

The inaugural meeting of the Friends Association was held on September 2nd of the same year, wherein Ishimine was elected as the first president.⁴⁰ At the time of its formation, the group had 23 members, as a result of an advertisement in the Okinawa Times, the Ryukyu Shimpō, and Radio Okinawa.⁴¹ In his inaugural address, Ishimine stated the following:

The time will come when the Japanese flag will officially fly high in the blue sky of Okinawa, an island cut off from the motherland and without a nation or flag, by the hands of our comrades. When I think of this, I feel a deep burning passion in my heart like an *awamori* ... We should play a role as a “special operations unit” to prepare for the acceptance of troops scheduled to be relocated to Okinawa when the island is returned to Japan in 1972.⁴²

Thus, the Friends Association began its support activities for the JSDF, three years before Okinawa returned to Japan.⁴³ Furthermore, on October 18th, one month after the founding of the Friends Association, the Parents Association was established.

Inauguration of the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association

On March 31, 1972, approximately 2.5 years after the establishment of the Friends and the Parents Associations, the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association was formed with the support of the two abovementioned associations.

As previously mentioned, Nakasone Yasuhiro (Director General of the Defense Agency) visited Okinawa on October 7, 1970. Nakasone's visit to Okinawa for two days was through the invitation of the US military. It was also intended to assess the local situation regarding the deployment of the JSDF after Okinawa was returned to Japan.⁴⁴ On the day of the event, Yara Chōbyō (Chief Executive of the Ryukyu Islands) and the representatives of Okinawa's political and business sectors welcomed Nakasone at the airport (Photo 1). In addition, 20 representatives of the Okinawa Friends Association

Photo 1. Nakasone's Arrival at Naha Airport, Okinawa



Note 1: Left in the suit is Kokuba Kōtarō, one of the “big four” of the Okinawa business world.

Source: Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sakimori to Tomo ni 25 Nen: Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai 25 Shūnen Kinenshi*, Okinawa: Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, 1998, p. 18.

were present at Naha Airport with their flag. Meanwhile, a skirmish occurred around the airport between a progressive group that opposed Nakasone's arrival and a conservative group that welcomed him.⁴⁵ As Nakasone stepped off the accommodation ladder, he walked straight to the representatives of the Friends Association, perhaps attracted by the flag, and shook hands firmly with each of them.⁴⁶

On the evening of the 7th, James Benjamin Lampert (1914–1978; High Commissioner of the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands) hosted a welcome dinner for Nakasone at the Fort Buckner Officer's Club in Zukeran, Okinawa City. Representatives of the Friends Association and economic organizations in Okinawa, including “big four” of the Okinawa business world: Kokuba Kōtarō, Miyagi Jinshirō, Gushiken Sōsei, and Ōshiro Kamakichi, attended the dinner. They discussed the cooperation of the Okinawan people with the JSDF deployed to Okinawa after the reversion to Japan.⁴⁷

On the evening of August 8th, Nakasone expressed a strong stance at a press

conference held at Naha Airport prior to his return to Tokyo stating the following:

Chief Executive Yara said that the public opinion of the Okinawan people is against the JSDF, but I do not think so. Even though there are voices of opposition, it has not been decided by the Legislature of the Government of the Ryukyu Islands. There might be a silent majority. There are misunderstandings and prejudices among some people about the JSDF in Okinawa. On the mainland, they play an active role in the Olympics and in mobilization during disasters and are appreciated by the residents.⁴⁸

It is easy to assume that the strong stance displayed by Nakasone was due to the presence of JSDF supporters, such as the Friends Association, Parents Association, and the Okinawa business sector. Later, Ishimine, the president of the Friends Association, received an envelope from Nakasone that contained an invitation to the JSDF commemorative ceremony to be held at the outer garden of the Meiji-jingū Shrine. The letter was accompanied by a request to invite a few volunteers from the political and business sectors in Okinawa to attend the ceremony.⁴⁹ Thus, on October 31, 1970, Ishimine, along with 38 other people, including Kokuba, Miyagi, Gushiken, Ōshiro, visited Tokyo to attend the commemorative ceremony that was held on November 4th.⁵⁰ The group was given first-class seats behind the reviewing stand. After the ceremony, the group was invited to a party held at the State Guest House together with foreign military officers and their spouses stationed in Japan. Afterward, the group returned to Okinawa and immediately discussed the organization of the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association.⁵¹

Additionally, at the same time, the defense associations that were already established in mainland Japan, supported the establishment. The defense associations comprised private support groups for the JSDF that was established circa 1960 on a grassroots basis, mainly in areas surrounding garrisons throughout Japan. By the late 1960s, these organizations, whose main objectives were to support the JSDF and disseminate defense ideas, had expanded to include 1,090 associations and approximately 600,000 members nationwide. The reason for this initiative was the opposition of the JSDF supporters to the antiwar and antimilitary culture of the 1960s. In addition, natural disasters, such as

the Isewan Typhoon (1959) and a heavy snowfall (1963), were more directly related to their establishments. In other words, residents of disaster-stricken areas and influential business people in each region established support groups for the JSDF to provide daily support and encouragement to the JSDF engaged in disaster relief missions.⁵² In Osaka, for example, the heavy snowfall of 1963 led to the establishment of the Osaka Defense Association on February 24, 1964. Matsushita Kōnosuke (founder of Matsushita Electric Industrial Co.), who was the most famous businessman in Japan at the time, was selected as the first president. Matsushita's call for support of the JSDF drew sympathy from business people in the Kansai area, leading to the formation of another support network for the JSDF.⁵³ Two years later, on March 27, 1966, the Tokyo Defense Association was established. Sakurada Takeshi, the permanent director of the Japan Federation of Employers' Association (*Nikkeiren*), was elected as the first president. Sakurada Takeshi utilized the financial resources and networks of the business sector to expand JSDF support networks nationwide. As a result, the National Liaison Council of Defense Associations was formed on September 6, 1969, comprised of 1,090 associations and approximately 600,000 members nationwide.⁵⁴

An important aspect of the relationship with Okinawa is that the Tokyo Defense Association supported the establishment of the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association. For example, in September 1970, when the Tokyo Defense Association conducted a military tour to South Korea, Taiwan, and Okinawa, the delegation met with the executive director of the Naha Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a few other volunteers in Okinawa to discuss the formation of a defense association in Okinawa. Eventually, the Tokyo Defense Association occasionally briefed visitors from Okinawa on the preparations for the establishment of the defense association in Okinawa.⁵⁵ On August 9, 1971, the director of the Naha Branch of the Okinawa Disabled Veterans' Associations (*Shōi Gunjin Kai*) visited the Tokyo Defense Association and expressed the desire to work with volunteers to establish a defense association in Okinawa. Furthermore, he requested the Tokyo Defense Association to teach them about issues related to the preparation of the establishment of the association.⁵⁶ In response, the Tokyo Defense Association sent materials necessary for the preparation in addition to conducting meetings.⁵⁷ Around the same time, the secretary-general of the Saga Defense Association (also a board member of the National Liaison Council of Defense

Associations) visited Okinawa on behalf of the Kyushu region and met with business leaders in Okinawa to deepen their contacts.⁵⁸

Under these circumstances, on February 1, 1972, Matsukawa Kunio (1909–1999, President of the Okinawa Keizai Shimbun) and several volunteers established the Okinawa JSDF Friends Circle (*Okinawa Ken Jieitai Tomo no Kai*, a private support group for the JSDF). The newspapers at the time confirmed the activities of the Friends Circle. For example, on March 17, 1972, the Ryukyu Shimpō newspaper reported two signs erected in front of Naha Junior High School. The first was a sign by a pro-democracy group that reads, “Youth will not take up the gun for invasion! JSDF go home.” The second was a sign by the Friends Circle that reads, “Welcome, JSDF to protect Japan’s peace and independence” (Photo 2).

Photo 2. Two signs for and against the JSDF in front of Naha Junior High School



Source: *Ryukyu Shimpō*, March 17, 1972, Morning edition, p. 8.

Furthermore, according to the *Mainichi Shimbun* on March 23rd, other sentiments in Okinawa, such as “the deployment of the JSDF is a matter of course once Okinawa returns to the mainland” and economic groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, are generally in favor of the deployment. The article also reports that “there are about 30 defense cooperation organizations (*Bōei Kyōryoku Dantai*), including citizens’ groups such as the Parents Association for Protecting Children (*Kodomo wo Mamoru Fubo*

no Kai) and organizations similar to the veterans associations.”⁵⁹

In addition, support was received from the Defense Agency in March. For example, Horie Masao (1915–2022), who was appointed as the Western Army Commander in March, recalls that prior to the relocation of the JSDF, he thought, “Let’s somehow create an organization of sympathizers for the JSDF in Okinawa called the ‘Defense Association’.”⁶⁰ Horie consulted with Kokuba and visited Okinawa with the presidents of the defense associations of each prefecture in the Kyushu region. At the time, Horie brought approximately 3 million yen in donations that were collected from defense associations of each prefecture, to Okinawa and handed it to the founders of the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association to be used for its activities.⁶¹ Thus, preparations for the establishment of the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association were made.

On March 31, 1972, the inaugural meeting for the establishment of the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association was held in a meeting room of the Okinawa Employers’ Association in the Matsuyama Nissan Building in Naha City that was hosted by the Okinawa Employers’ Association. At the inaugural meeting, a prospectus was adopted as follows:

With the reversion to mainland Japan, Okinawa is about to be liberated from years of foreign domination and is trying to catch up with the mainland prefectures in every aspect. Therefore, cooperation in the deployment of the JSDF is what is most needed for the construction of that new Okinawa Prefecture.

Of course, national defense is not something that can be accomplished only by the JSDF. We in the private sector must also be committed to the idea of national defense and work in unison with the JSDF.

Considering the above, we need to welcome the JSDF to Okinawa Prefecture promptly and warmly. At the same time, we will deepen the correct understanding and trust of the Okinawan people in the JSDF, and we are keenly aware of the need to create an environment, wherein the JSDF can truly blend in with the people of the prefecture and focus on fulfilling its missions while maintaining mutual contact and cooperation, as well as to promote and enhance the defensive thought.⁶²

Membership reached approximately 2,800, who were mainly volunteers from the

local business community, including the Okinawa JSDF Friends Circle that comprised approximately 1,200 members and formed on February 1, 1972, by Matsukawa Kunio. The other volunteers were the Okinawa JSDF Parents Association (approximately 400 members) and the Okinawa veterans' association (*Okinawa Gōyūkai*; approximately 1,000 members).⁶³ The officers included the “big four” of the Okinawa business sector and other influential people from various fields.

Kokuba Kōtarō was elected as the first president. Kokuba was always supportive of the JSDF, stating that, “The people can live in peace because the JSDF is working day and night to defend Japan.”⁶⁴ At the time of the inauguration of the association, Kokuba, then president of Ryukyu Broadcasting Corporation (*Ryukyu Hōsō*), was pressured by an employee to resign as president of the Ryukyu Broadcasting Corporation or as president of the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association. In response, Kokuba said, “Then I will resign as president of Ryukyu Broadcasting Corporation” and, in fact, resigned.⁶⁵ At the inaugural meeting, Kokuba spoke about the significance of the establishment of the Okinawa SDF Cooperation Association as follows:

The JSDF will engage in homeland defense, disaster relief, civilian cooperation, and other missions, and will play a role in the development and promotion of the new Okinawa. At this time, in order to warmly welcome them, we will foster a better environment so that the reception of the members will be smooth. We also believe that it is very meaningful for us to cooperate with them in some small way so that they can blend into the heart of Okinawa, live with us, and devote themselves to their original duties with peace of mind.⁶⁶

Kokuba exhibited an extraordinary passion for recruiting members of the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association. After Okinawa's reversion to Japan, Kokuba visited the Okinawa District Liaison Department (*Okinawa Chihō Renrakubu*) every morning on the way to work and made exchanging information as well as holding meetings regarding the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association a daily routine.⁶⁷

With the establishment of the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association, preparation to receive the JSDF was made in advance of Okinawa's reversion to Japan on May 15th.⁶⁸ In Naha, the capital of Okinawa, posters that expressed, “Welcome the JSDF” and

“Preparation for disasters is the first step to success; warmly support the JSDF” could be seen. The anti-JSDF struggle that was expected to intensify became extremely quiet, such that a few people said that the two sides of the argument, for and against the JSDF, are now evenly divided.⁶⁹ Thus, on May 15th, Okinawa was returned to Japan, and the relocation of the JSDF with the support networks, was initiated.

Conclusion

This study elucidates the establishment of the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association on March 31, 1972. The main points are as follows.

At the end of the 1960s, while discussion was ongoing about Okinawa's reversion to mainland Japan, the deployment of the JSDF in Okinawa was being considered. In the process, opposition movements gained a certain momentum; at the same time, however, other movements were initiated to support the JSDF. The main players in these movements were JSDF support groups such as the Okinawa JSDF Friends Association, the Okinawa JSDF Parents Association, and the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association. First, in September 1969, the Okinawa JSDF Friends Association was formed under the leadership of Ishimine Kunio, a retired JSDF officer. The following month, in October, the Okinawa JSDF Parents Association was formed. Furthermore, the Okinawa JSDF Cooperation Association was established on March 31, 1972, with the support of the two associations, the existing defense associations in mainland Japan, and the “big four” of the business sector in Okinawa. In this manner, the civilian side was ready to support the JSDF before the return to the mainland in May 15th.

Finally, what are the implications that can be obtained from this research? First, the facts indicate that a certain number of supporters of the JSDF existed even during the period of Okinawa's reversion to mainland Japan, when opposition to the JSDF was strong.

Additionally, the establishment of JSDF support groups in Okinawa presents an important implication in that these groups laid the foundation for the acceptance of the JSDF in local communities. For the JSDF that is usually stationed in a particular area and needs to build close relationships with local communities, the role of the support groups is significant. Such a support foundation was very important for the JSDF

before 1990s, especially during the 1960s, when the slogan for the JSDF was to become “beloved JSDF.”⁷⁰ Specifically, it played a major role as a mediator between the JSDF and local communities, wherein the JSDF was invited or newly relocated. This aspect is even more important in a region such as Okinawa, wherein the anti-military sentiment was strong. As understanding of the local communities about JSDF increased through the activities conducted by the support groups, the negative feelings toward the JSDF harbored by local residents are expected to decrease. Thus, the fact that the support groups for the JSDF were established in Okinawa exerted a substantial influence on the subsequent relationship between the JSDF and local residents in Okinawa.

What is the extent of the influence of the JSDF support groups after the reversion of Okinawa to mainland Japan? Discussing this point will be an interesting avenue for future studies.

Notes

- 1 Shadanhōjin Taiyūkai, *Shadanhōjin Taiyūkai 30 Nenshi*, Shadanhōjin Taiyūkai, 1990, pp. 273–274.
- 2 The Council for the Reversion of Okinawa Prefecture to the Fatherland (CROPF) was formed on April 28, 1960, and became the mother organization of the Okinawan people’s movement of the 1960s. Arasaki Moriteru, *Okinawa Gendaishi [New Edition]*, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005, p. 17.
- 3 Arasaki, *Okinawa Gendaishi*, op. cit., p. 30. Arasaki Moriteru, Nichibei Ampo Taisei to Okinawa, Watanabe Osamu eds., *Kōdo Seichō to Kigyō Shakai [Nihon no Jidaishi 27]*, Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2004, p. 276.
- 4 Sakurazawa Makoto, *Okinawa Gendaishi: Beikoku Tōchi, Hondo Fukki kara ‘all Okinawa’ made*, Tokyo: Chuōkōron Shinsha, 2015, pp. 188–189.
- 5 Uemura Hideki, *Jieitai wa Dare no Mono ka*, Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2002, pp. 110–114.
- 6 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sakimori to Tomo ni 25 Nen: Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai 25 Shūnen Kinenshi*, Okinawa: Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, 1998, the page of the congratulatory address by Yamaguchi Nobuo.
- 7 Sano Shinichi, *Okinawa Dare nimo Kakaretaku Nakatta Sengoshi*, Tokyo: Shūeisha International, 2008, p. 353.
- 8 Koyama Takashi, “Okinawa no Shiseiken Henkan ni Tomonau Okinawa eno Jieitai Haibi wo Meguru Ugoki”, *Bōei Kenkyūjo Kiyō*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2017, pp. 115–157, (Retrieved October 29, 2022, from http://www.nids.mod.go.jp/publication/kiyo/pdf/bulletin_j20_1_5.pdf) .
- 9 Nichigai Asoshieitsu eds., *Nihon Anzenhoshō Shi Jiten: Topics 1945–2017*, Tokyo: Nichigai Asoshieitsu, 2018, p. 53.
- 10 Arasaki, *Okinawa Gendaishi*, op. cit., p. 46.
- 11 Tanaka Akihiko, “The World and Japan” Database, Database of Japanese Politics and International Relations, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) ; Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia (IASA) , The University of Tokyo, (Retrieved June 22, 2023, from <https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/docs/19691121.D1E.html>) .
- 12 Nichigai Asoshieitsu eds., op. cit., p. 61.
- 13 Narita Chihiro, *Okinawa Henkan to Higashi Ajia Reisen Taisei: Ryukyu/Okinawa no Kizoku, Kichi Mondai no Henyō*, Kyoto: Jimbun Shoin, 2020, p. 316.
- 14 Narita, op. cit., p. 316.
- 15 Nichigai Asoshieitsu eds., op. cit., p. 63.
- 16 Narita, op. cit., p. 317.
- 17 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 14, 1970, Morning edition, p. 21.
- 18 Nichigai Asoshieitsu eds., op. cit., p. 65.

- 19 Asagumo Shimbunsha Henshūkyoku eds., *Haran no Hanseiki: Rikujō Jieitai no 50 Nen*, Tokyo: Asagumo Shimbunsha, 2000, p. 103.
- 20 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sōsetsu 40 Shūnen Kinenshi: Sakimori to Tomo ni 40 Nen*, Okinawa: Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, 2012, p. 19.
- 21 *Mainichi Shimbun*, April 27, 1972, Morning edition, p. 3.
- 22 *Mainichi Shimbun*, April 19, 1972, Morning edition, p. 4.
- 23 Arasaki, *Okinawa Gendaishi*, op. cit., p. 47.
- 24 Koyama, op. cit., p. 150.
- 25 *Mainichi Shimbun*, April 30, 1972, Morning edition, p. 4.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Sakurazawa, op. cit., pp. 164–166.
- 28 Nichigai Asoshieitsu eds., op. cit., p. 66.
- 29 *Taiyū*, No. 284, December 15, 1977, p. 8.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 *Okinawa Times*, January 4, 2021, Okinawa Times + Plus, (Retrieved July 18, 2021, from <https://www.okinawatimes.co.jp/articles/-/687570>).
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 Shadanhōjin Taiyūkai, *Shadanhōjin Taiyūkai 10 Nenshi*, Shadanhōjin Taiyūkai, 1973, p. 510.
- 36 *Taiyū*, op. cit., p. 8.
- 37 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sōsetsu 40 Shūnen Kinenshi*, op. cit., p. 14.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 *Taiyū*, op. cit., p. 8.
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 Shadanhōjin Taiyūkai, *Shadanhōjin Taiyūkai 30 Nenshi*, op. cit., pp. 273–274.
- 44 Hattori Ryūji, *Nakasone Yasuhiro: Daitōryōteki Syusyō no Kiseki*, Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2015, p. 122.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sōsetsu 40 Shūnen Kinenshi*, op. cit., p. 14.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 48 *Asahi Shimbun*, October 9, 1970, Morning edition, p. 2.
- 49 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sōsetsu 30 Shūnen Kinenshi: Sakimori to Tomo ni 30 Nen*, Okinawa: Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, 2002, p. 99.
- 50 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sōsetsu 40 Shūnen Kinenshi*, op. cit., p. 131.
- 51 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sōsetsu 30 Shūnen Kinenshi*, op. cit., p. 100.
- 52 Nakahara Masato. A Case Study of the Defense Associations/Self-Defense Forces Cooperation Associations: A Focus on the Reason behind Their Nationwide Foundation in the 1960's. *Jisedai Jinbun Shakai Kenkyū*, 17, 2021, pp. 23–41.
- 53 Nakahara Masato. A Case Study of Support Activities for the Japan Self-Defense Forces by Business People in the 1960's: A Focus on the Osaka Defense Association. *The Ritsumeikan Journal of Peace Studies*, 22, 2021, pp. 95–115.
- 54 Nakahara Masato. The Outspread of Defensive Consciousness by Business Communities in 1960s Japan: A Focus on the Tokyo Defense Association, *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, 29(1), 2021, pp. 165–187.
- 55 Tōkyōto Bōei Kyōkai, *Tōkyōto Bōei Kyōkai Kaihō*, No. 20, August 25, 1971, p. 3.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 Tōkyōto Bōei Kyōkai, *Tōkyōto Bōei Kyōkai Kaihō*, No. 23, March 25, 1972, p. 3.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 *Mainichi Shimbun*, March 23, 1972, Tokyo morning edition, p. 2.
- 60 Bōeishō Bōei Kenkyūjyo Senshi Kenkyū Center eds., *Oral History Reisenki no Bōeiryoku Seibi Keikaku to Dōmei Seisaku 1: Yonjibō madeno Bōeiryoku Seibi Keikaku to Nichibei Anpo Taisei no Keisei*, Tokyo: Bōeishō Bōei Kenkyūjyo, 2012, p. 327.

- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sōsetsu 40 Shūnen Kinenshi*, op. cit., p. 21.
- 63 Tōkyōto Bōei Kyōkai, *Tōkyōto Bōei Kyōkai Kaihō*, No. 24, June 25, 1972, p. 1.
- 64 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sakimori to Tomo ni 25 Nen*, op. cit., p. 54.
- 65 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sōsetsu 40 Shūnen Kinenshi*, op. cit., p. 135.
- 66 Tōkyōto Bōei Kyōkai, *Tōkyōto Bōei Kyōkai Kaihō*, No. 24, op. cit., p. 1.
- 67 Okinawaken Bōei Kyōkai, *Sōsetsu 40 Shūnen Kinenshi*, op. cit., p. 131.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 69 *Mainichi Shimbun*, April 30, 1972, Morning edition, p. 4.
- 70 Skabelund, Aaron H., “‘Aisareru Jieitai’ ni Naru Tame ni: Sengo Nihon Shakai eno Jyuyō ni Mukete”, Tanaka Masakazu eds., *Guntai no Bunka Jinrui Gaku*, Tokyo: Fūkyōsha, 2015, pp.213-246.