

December 3, 2009

RE: PROPOSED U.S. MILITARY AIR BASE EXPANSION NEAR HENOKO,
OKINAWA

Dear President Obama, Secretary Clinton, Secretary Gates, and Ambassador
Roos:

The island of Okinawa has been called the “Galápagos of the East” because of the incredible variety of marine and terrestrial life it supports. Unfortunately, a joint military project proposed by the U.S. and Japanese governments threatens to destroy one of the last healthy coral-reef ecosystems in Okinawa, pushing many magnificent species to the brink of extinction. You have the power to protect these unique and priceless creatures.

Under a 2006 bilateral agreement, U.S. and Japanese governments agreed to relocate the contentious U.S. Marine Corps’ Futenma Air Station to Camp Schwab and Henoko Bay. This shortsighted plan does not take into consideration that the relocation will destroy a valued ecosystem, including the nearly 400 types of coral that form Okinawa’s reefs and support more than 1,000 species of fish. It will also hurt imperiled sea turtles and marine mammals.

Current plans call for construction of the new military base near Henoko and Oura bays in Okinawa. But the habitat this project would destroy supports numerous endangered species — animals protected by American, Japanese, and international law for their biological and cultural importance. These species include:

Okinawa dugong: The critically endangered and culturally treasured dugong, a manatee-like creature, relies on this habitat for its very survival in Okinawa. Japan’s Mammalogical Society placed the dugong on its “Red List of Mammals,” estimating the population in Okinawa to be critically endangered. The U.S. government’s Marine Mammal Commission and the United Nations Environmental Program fear the project would pose a serious threat to this mammal’s survival. The World Conservation Union’s dugong specialists have expressed similar concerns and have placed the dugong on its Red List of threatened species. The Okinawa dugong is also a federally listed endangered species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

The Okinawa dugong has extreme cultural significance to the Okinawan people, and only about 50 dugongs are thought to remain in these waters. The base construction will crush the last remaining critical habitat for the Okinawa dugong, destroying feeding trails and seagrass beds essential for dugong survival.

Sea turtles: Three types of endangered sea turtle — the hawksbill, loggerhead, and green — also depend on this ecosystem. These turtles are listed under the

U.S. Endangered Species Act and the global Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. The turtles use nearby beaches to feed and lay their eggs. The construction and operation of the new base will cause water and air pollution, create artificial light pollution, and increase human activity — all of which are harmful to sea turtle survival.

Many plant and animal species are still being discovered in Henoko Bay. Since the base plan was announced, new types of seagrass — a vital staple food for the dugong — and mollusks have been discovered on the project site. New wonders of nature are found here each year.

The base plan would devastate dugong habitat in Henoko Bay and nearby Oura Bay, and would be extremely harmful to turtles, fish, coral, and other marine life. The recently elected Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and the Democratic Party of Japan have expressed the desire to renegotiate the 2006 agreement and cancel plans to relocate the base. You have the ability and duty to alter the course of this devastating plan, but time is of the essence. We urge you to direct the U.S. secretaries of defense and state to cancel this project immediately.

By canceling the plan to expand an airbase near Henoko and Oura bays, you will protect a globally important ocean ecosystem and some of the best remaining habitat for the Okinawa dugong. IUCN has designated the 2010 Year for Biodiversity as the year of the dugong. Please cancel this destructive project and ensure that the Okinawa dugong has a fighting chance at celebrating its importance in 2010 and years to come.

Sincerely,

Center for Biological Diversity
Earthjustice
American Friends Service Committee
Animal Welfare Institute
Big Wildlife
Endangered Species Coalition (on behalf of more than 400 organizations, see below*)
Environmental Protection Information Center
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Greenpeace
Humane Society of the U.S. and Humane Society International
International Marine Mammal Project of the Earth Island Institute
Natural Resources Defense Council
No Nukes North
Rainforest Action Network
Sea Turtle Restoration Project
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Western Nebraska Resources Council

The Whaleman Foundation
Wild Equity Institute
Xerces Society

*Endangered Species Coalition Member Groups:

1000 Friends of Florida
1000 Friends of Maryland
20/20 Vision Education Fund
A World Institute for Sustainable Humanity
Abalone Alliance Safe Energy Clearinghouse
Acterra
Action for Animals
Alabama Environmental Council
Alaska Wildlife Alliance
Alley Cat Allies
Alliance for Animals
Alliance for the Wild Rockies
American Association of Zoo Veterinarians
American Bird Conservancy
American Cetacean Society
American Eagle Foundation
American Hiking Society
American Humane Association
American Indian Center of Central Florida, Inc.
American Lands
American Malacological Society
American Planning Association
American Public Garden Association
American Rivers
American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
American Society of Mammalogists
American Wildlands
Anacostia Watershed Society
Andropogon Associates, Inc.
Animal Answers
Animal Defense League of Arizona
Animal Protection Institute
Animal Protection of New Mexico
Animal Rights Foundation of Florida (ARFF)
Animal Welfare Institute
Appalachia Science in the Public Interest
Appalachian Mountain Club
Ark Trust, Inc. (Humane Society of the United States)
Arkansas Climate Awareness Project
Arkansas Earth Day Foundation

Arkansas Federation of Garden Clubs
Arkansas Renewable Resources Council
Arkansas Wildlife Federation
Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights
Association of Zoos & Aquariums
Atlanta Audubon Society
Audubon Society of Central Maryland
Audubon Society of Central New Mexico
Audubon Society of New Hampshire
Audubon Society of Portland
Audubon Society of Rhode Island
Audubon Texas
Augusta Bird Club
Ballona Institute
Bat Conservation International
Bay Area Action/ Acterra
Bay Area Nuclear Waste Coalition
Berks Conservation League
Berks County Conservancy
Berks County Earth Day Committee
Biodiversity Conservation Alliance
Border Ecology Project
Bowling Green Warren County Humane Society
Buckeye Forest Council
Bucks County Audubon Society
Buffalo Field Campaign
Buffalo Outdoor Center
Butte Environmental Council
California Native Plant Society
California Trout
California Wilderness Coalition
Cambridge Woodfire Pottery
Canada Goose Project
Caribbean Conservation Corp'n./Sea Turtle Survival League
Carson Forest Watch
Cascadia Forest Defenders
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Development of International Law
Center for Native Ecosystems
Center for Plant Conservation
Center for Wildlife Information
Cetacean Society International
Chapman Forest Foundation
Chattooga River Watershed Coalition
Chewonki Foundation

Chicago Zoological Society
Citizen Advocacy Center
Citizens United For Animals, Inc.
CLEAN - Coastal Law Enforcement Action Network
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Coast Range Association
Coastal Plains Institute, Inc.
Columbia (SC) Audubon Society
Community Services, Inc.
Connecticut Audubon Society
Connecticut Citizen Action Group
Connecticut Conservation Assoc.
Conservancy of Southwest Florida
Conservation Alliance of the Great Plains
Conservation Council for Hawaii
Conservation Fisheries
Conservation Law Foundation
Conservation Northwest
Conservation Science Institute
Cornell Greens
Darby Creek Valley Association
Defenders of Wildlife
Delaware Nature Society
Delaware Riverkeepers Network
Desert Fishes Council
Desomount
Dogwood Alliance
Doris Day Animal League
Earth Action Network
Earth Center in the Delaware Watershed, Inc.
Earth Day Network
Earth Island Institute
Earth Share of Missouri
Earth Works Project
EarthJustice
Earthworks
East Michigan Environmental Action Council
Eastern Cougar Foundation
Eastern Mennonite Missions
ECO ISP
Ecology Center of Ann Arbor, Inc.
Ecology Mission Group,Central Baptist Church,Wayne
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Small Mammal Conservation Fund
Endangered Species Coalition
Endangered Species Program, WI DATCP

Environment America
Environmental Commons
Environmental Council of Rhode Island
Environmental Defense Center
Environmental Investigation Agency
Environmental Law Society, University of Michigan
Environmental Law Society, Vermont Law School
Environmental Protection Information Center, Inc.
Episcopal Diocese of Maryland's Committee on the Environment
Farallones Marine Sanctuary Association
Federated Conservationists of Westchester County
Federation of Fly Fishers
Florida Audubon Society
Florida Endangered Species Network
Focus on Nature
Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics
Foundation for Global Sustainability
Free The Planet!
Friends of Animals
Friends of Ballona Wetlands
Friends of the Batiquitos Lagoon
Friends of the Bay
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Nescopeck
Friends of the Rivers of Virginia
Friends of the San Juans
Friends of the Sea Otter
Fund for Animals
Fund for Wild Nature
Fyke Nature Association
Garden Club of America
Gasparilla Island Conservation
Gaviota Coast Conservancy
Georgia Native Plant Society
Glen Canyon Institute
Government Accountability Project
Grand Canyon Trust
Gray Panthers
Great Lakes United
Great Plains Restoration Council
Great South Bay Audubon Society
Greenbelt Alliance
Greenpeace
Green-Rock Audubon Society
Gulf Restoration Network
Gulf Specimen Marine Lab

Harris Center for Conservation Education
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary
Heal the Bay
Heartland All-Species Project
Heartwood
Hells Canyon Preservation Council
Hempden Goods
Herpetologists' League
Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County
Hoosier Environmental Council
Humane Education Network
Humane League of Lancaster County
Humane Society of the U.S.
Idaho Conservation League
In Defense of Animals
Indiana PIRG
International Bird Rescue Research Center
International Fund for Animal Welfare
International Marine Mammal Project, Earth Island Institute
International Primate Protection League
Izaak Walton League of Maine
Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance
Jane Goodall Institute for Wildlife Research
John G. Shedd Aquarium
John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute
Jumping Frog Research Institute
Kalmiopsis Audubon Society
Kentucky Heartwood
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Key Deer Protection Alliance
Keystone Conservation
Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center
Knoah's Ark
Kritter Kountry

Lake Champlain Committee, Inc.
Lake Michigan Federation
Land Council
Land Trust Alliance
LandWatch Monterey County
Larch Company
Last Chance Audubon Society
League of Conservation Voters
League of Women Voters
Living Education Center for Ecology and the Arts
Lone Tree Council

Long Island Pine Barrens Society
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Madison Audubon Society
Maine Audubon Society
Mainline Unitarian Church
Marine Fish Conservation Network
Maryland Alliance for Greenway Improvement and Conservation
Maryland United for Peace and Justice
MaryPIRG
Massachusetts Audubon Society
Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal
McHenry County Defenders
Michigan Environmental Council
Michigan Humane Society
Michoacan Reforestation Fund
Minnesota Native Plant Society
Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
Missouri Botanical Garden
Monitor
Montana Audubon Council
Montana Wilderness Association
Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania
Mount Graham Coalition
Mountaineer Chapter, Trout Unlimited
National Association of People with AIDS
National Audubon Society
National Forest Protection Alliance
National Humane Education Society
National Parks Conservation Association
National Recreation & Parks Assoc
National Wildlife Refuge Association
Native Plant Conservation Campaign
Native Plant Society of Oregon
Native Seeds/ SEARCH
Natural Areas Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nevada Wildlife Federation
New England Wildflower Society
New Jersey Audubon Society
New Jersey Environmental Education Fund
New Jersey Environmental Lobby
New York Rivers United
New York State Wildlife Rehabilitation Council
New York Turtle and Tortoise Society
North Cascades Conservation Council
North Central Washington Audubon Society

North Coast Environmental Center
Northeast Pennsylvania Audubon Society
Northern Alaska Environmental Center
Northern Arizona University (School of Forestry)
Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society
Oak Brook Chapter, Trout Unlimited
Oceana
Ocean Alliance
Ocean State Action
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
Orange County People for Animals
Orca Quest
Oregon Natural Desert Association
Oregon Wild
Ouachita Watch League
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
Pacific Rivers Council
Pandas International
Payne County Audubon
Peace and Justice Center
Pegasus Foundation
Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation
Pennsylvania Audubon
Pennsylvania Trout
Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation
Performing Animals Welfare Society
Philadelphia Botanical Club
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Pilchuck Audubon Society
Pine Creek Valley Watershed Association
Planning and Conservation League & PCL Foundation
Potomac Valley Audubon Society
Presbyterians for Restoring Creation
Primate Conservation Inc.
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
Puget Sound Urban Wildlife Photography Club
R Mason Fine Arts
Rainforest Action Network
Raptor Research Foundation
Reading Public Museum
Republicans for Environmental Protection
Restore: The North Woods
Restoring Eden
Riverhead Foundation
Rockbridge Area Conservation Council
Rogue Valley Audubon Society

Rumpf Law Offices
Sacred Earth Network
Salmon Protection and Watershed Network SPAWN
San Bruno Mountain Watch
Santa Barbara Urban Creeks Council
Santa Fe Presbyterian Church
Save America's Forests
Save Our Wild Salmon
Save the Manatee Club, Inc.
Save the Species Worldwide
Save-A-Turtle
Sea Turtle Preservation Society
Seattle Audubon Society
Selkirk Conservation Alliance
Shundahai Network
Sierra Club
Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter
Sierra Club, Kaskaskia Group
Sierra Nevada Forest Protection Campaign
Siskiyou Project
Sky Island Alliance
Society and Animals Forum
Society for Animal Protective Legislation
Society for Conservation Biology
South Carolina Forest Watch
South Shore Audubon Society
Southern Environmental Center
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance
Southwest Environmental Center
Strong Foundation for Environmental Ethics
Students Conscious of Protecting the Environment
Students for the Environment - University of Delaware
Superior Wilderness Action Network (SWAN)
T&E, Inc.
Tahoma Audubon Society
Target Earth
Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning
Texas Committee on Natural Resources
Texas Parks and Wildlife
The Activism Center at Wetlands Preserve
The Otter Project
Tides Center/ Bioregional Initiative
Timber Wolf Alliance
Tortoise Group
Trevor Zoo at Millbrook School

Trout Unlimited
Trout Unlimited Virginia
Trout Unlimited, Mountaineer Chapter
Trout Unlimited, Oak Brook Chapter
Tucson Audubon Society
Tuolumne River Preservation Trust
Turner Endangered Species Fund
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Ministry for Earth
Unitarian Universalists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (UFETA)
United Church of Christ EcoAction
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon Society
Urban Wildlands Group
US Public Interest Research Group
Vermont Audubon Society
Vernal Pool Association
Virginia Forest Watch
Virginia Herpetological Society
Virginians for Wilderness
VOICE for Animals
Voices for Survival, First Presbyterian Church
Washington Cross Audubon Society
Wild Fish Conservancy
Water Watch
Waukesha County Environmental Action League
Webster Groves Nature Study Society
West Michigan Environmental Action Council
Western Lands Project
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Western North Carolina Alliance
Western Wildlife Conservancy
Whale Conservation Institute
Whidbey Environmental Action Network
Whooper Happenings
Wild Earth
Wild Forever
Wild South
WildAgain Wildlife Rehabilitation, Inc.
WildEarth Guardians
Wilderness Society
Wilderness Study Group
Wildlands Project
Wildlife Advocacy Project
Wildlife Alive/Earth Island Institute

Wildlife Alliance of Maine
Wildlife Center of Virginia
Wildlife Conservation Society
Wildlife Information Center
Wildlife Rehabilitation of Massachusetts
Wildlife Rescue of the Florida Keys
Wildlife Society
Wisconsin Audubon Council
Wissahickon Restoration Volunteers
Wolf Education and Research Center
Wolf Recovery Foundation
World Foundation for Natural Science
World Society for the Protection of Animals
World Stewardship Institute
Wyncote Audubon
Wyoming Outdoor Council
Xerces Society
Zoo New England
Zoological Society of Philadelphia

cc:

Director Karen Kelley, Office of Japanese Affairs, U.S. Department of State; John J. Kim, Bureau of Oceans, International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, U.S. Department of State; Deputy Assistant Secretary David A Balton, Office of Oceans and Fisheries, U.S. Department of State; George T. Frampton, Chair of the U.S. Council on Environmental Quality