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## CLINTON TO GET FIRSTHAND LOOK AT LOVE/HATE RELATIONSHIP

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NAGO, Okinawa - Sitting on a tatami mat in a ramshackle building that opens up to the clear, blue ocean just a few dozen yards away, Yuji Kinjo, a retired bus driver, talks about his plans to stop the United States from building an offshore heliport.

As a few workers answer phones and organize stacks of petitions, Kinjo waves a two-page letter he plans to present to President Clinton when he arrives in this seaside resort town in Okinawa Friday for the summit of the so-called Group of Eight democratic powers.

"I hear the United States is a country where people's will is respected," said Kinjo, president of the Society for the Protection of Life, an organization formed four years ago to oppose new U.S. bases.

Although the rundown office, with its rusty desks and sagging sofa, is not impressive, more than 20,000 people have visited since it opened. Hundreds of business cards and photos line the ceilings and walls, and more than 12,000 people have signed the petition Kinjo hopes to give Clinton.

The U.S. military presence in Okinawa - about 26,000 personnel and 39 facilities, including Kadena Airbase, the largest American airbase in Asia - has long been an uneasy one. Many Okinawans feel they bear a disproportionate share of the burden, being home to 75 percent of the land used by U.S. military bases in Japan but making up less than 1 percent of Japan itself.

In a 1997 referendum in Nago, 54 percent of voters were against the new offshore base. An Okinawa-wide referendum the year before found 89 percent of voters in favor of a reduction in U.S. bases.

After three American soldiers raped an Okinawan schoolgirl in 1995, long-brewing local opposition galvanized. Massive street protests led to an agreement between Clinton and then-Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro in 1996 to return 20 percent of base land to Okinawa and relocate certain facilities, on the condition new locations could be found.

Last year, Japan chose the Henoko district of Nago, a former fishing village, for an offshore base and heliport to replace some functions of Futenma Airbase, which was slated to be relocated. Henoko is a sparsely populated area with U.S. military facilities to the north and west.

"Our life is surrounded by U.S. bases," Kinjo said. "Where can we escape to? For us, it's a human rights problem. We have the right to live in a peaceful way."

Kinjo, and other Okinawans say there have been thousands of crimes, including murders, rapes, injuries and thefts, have occurred on Okinawa at the hands of U.S. servicemen since World War II.

In recent days, local newspapers have had headlines blaring the latest uproar, a hit-and-run accident involving a U.S. serviceman. Although the pedestrian wasn't seriously injured and the serviceman later returned to the scene, the accident caused a stir, coming just before the summit and on the heels of another incident that garnered big headlines here: a Marine,

reportedly drunk, allegedly entering an unlocked house and crawling into bed with a 14-year-old girl.

Okinawa's bloody history has made the people especially opposed to any military presence. The island was ravaged in the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, a three-month long siege which killed about 14,000 Americans and more than 240,000 Japanese, almost half of them Okinawan civilians.

Okinawans say they were sacrificed in the war, then made to endure 27 years of U.S. occupation, which ended in 1972. Clinton will be the first American president to visit Okinawa since handing it back to Japan.

From the official Washington and Tokyo point of view, the bases are a strategic necessity, not only for the defense of Japan but for regional stability.

Some point out that opposition to military installations is universal.

"The United States could not stay on Okinawa without the acquiescence of the Okinawan people," said Nicholas Sarantakes, a history professor at Texas A&M University and author of a book on the American occupation of Okinawa. Local communities in the U.S. have had a love-hate relationship with U.S. Army bases as have those in the United Kingdom with the British Army."

While the American presence is the target of Okinawans' protests, their anger is directed primarily at Tokyo.

About 400 miles south of the mainland, Okinawa has long felt distant from Japan, not only geographically, but culturally and politically as well. The archipelago was ruled for centuries by the Ryukyu Kingdom, which had strong trade ties with China and southeast Asia. After Japan annexed it in 1879, it suppressed the teaching of Okinawan language and history.

Japan's decision to hold the G8 summit Okinawa is seen by many locals as pure politics.

"To deal with mounting criticisms from citizens, the summit was the carrot for the Okinawan people," said Moriteru Arasaki, a history professor at the University of Okinawa.

While some Okinawans support the bases for economic reasons, such as the jobs and construction projects they provide, many find the subsidies and projects handed out by Tokyo as a cynical attempt to buy their cooperation.

"It's humiliating," said Etsuko Urashima, a member of a women's group in Nago opposing new bases. "It's discrimination. Because we're poor, they think we'll accept anything."

Still, with the world's eyes focused on the G8 summit, Okinawans recognize a good media opportunity when they see one.

"Our voices don't even reach the Japanese people," on the mainland, Urashima said. "But I hope our voices reach the American people so they know the situation and start taking their bases back."