



OKINAWA PREFECTURAL GOVERNMENT

1-2-2 Izumizaki, Naha City,
Okinawa, JAPAN 900-8750

December 15th, 2022

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20460

Administrator Regan:

The Okinawa Prefectural Government in Japan is deeply interested in future trends in the regulation of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) compounds. For this reason, we are paying close attention to the recent news that your agency under your leadership proposes to designate per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances as hazardous.

As you are undoubtedly aware, Okinawa hosts one of the most substantial United States military presences in the Pacific. Currently, about 70.3% of the area of the U.S. military's exclusive-use facilities in Japan is concentrated in Okinawa, occupying about 15% of the area of the main island of Okinawa. Unfortunately, this has exerted significant pressures on the local Okinawan community. Substances such as PFOS are continuously being detected in the vicinity of this vast US military base in Okinawa. We are all too aware that PFAS compounds can adversely affect residents, military personnel, and their families, including children.

Within Okinawa Prefecture, PFOS and other substances have been detected in rivers and groundwater around U.S. military bases such as Kadena Air Base. An investigation conducted by the prefectural government concluded in January of 2016 that the US military installations were the likely source of the contamination. These rivers and groundwater are the source of tap water supplied to US military bases. For this reason, there are concerns about the impact not only on the people of Okinawa, but also on US soldiers and their families, including children.

The prefectural government has requested access to these facilities for on-site inspections, but access to the bases has not been permitted. Even now, PFOS and other hazardous substances are being detected in the rivers and groundwater surrounding the base due to the absence of investigations into the causes. In order to safeguard the health of all those living in Okinawa, it is imperative that the source of these contaminants be quickly identified and removed.

In April of 2020, an incident occurred in which firefighting foam containing PFOS leaked from Marine Corps Futenma Air Station. In June of 2021, another incident occurred on an army base after

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rainwater caused contaminated water from an oil storage facility to overflow. Following these two incidents, the government of Okinawa asked US Forces in Japan to take the following steps: to make an inventory of all materials containing PFOS on US bases in Okinawa, to develop a public plan to dispose of these chemicals, to dispose of old fire-fighting foams that contain PFOS, and to switch to new products which do not contain these chemicals. In addition, we requested that local authorities be allowed to carry out on-site inspections on bases near which large concentrations of PFOS have been detected.

In September of 2021, the Marine Corps announced that they had completely switched over to new firefighting foams, but this has yet to be followed by similar announcements from any other US forces stationed on Okinawa. To date, no information has been received regarding the storage status of PFOS on US military facilities, and on-site inspections have not been realized.

Because the health and safety of U.S. military personnel and their families, including their children, and the communities in which they live around the world are of paramount importance, we urged members of Congress to consider the following amendment to this year's cycle of the National Defense Authorization Act. The proposed amendment calls on the Commander of U.S. Forces Japan to review PFOS spill incidents and to issue guidance on future spill prevention and mitigation. We are working with lawmakers from both parties on this issue and hope that this amendment will be included in the bill.

The announcement made by the EPA reminds us of the impact that PFAS has on people around the world. We would like to continue to pay close attention to the information announced by your agency in the future, and if possible, we would like to cooperate with you by exchanging information, etc. on the efforts of Okinawa Prefecture to take measures against PFOS and related issues. Thank you again for your leadership on this important matter, and I would be grateful if you could let us know if there is anything we can do to address the issues of PFAS compounds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denny Tamaki". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Denny Tamaki

Governor of Okinawa, Japan