



**SASAKAWA USA**  
Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA

# Press Release

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## **U.S. Bases in Okinawa: What Must Be Done, and Quickly**

*New report details strategy to alleviate situation in Okinawa while preserving U.S.-Japan Alliance*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. must hasten construction efforts that will allow for the relocation of American forces in Okinawa, and in doing so preserve the U.S.-Japan Alliance that has been strained by an increasingly caustic political situation. That's one of four key findings in "[U.S. Bases in Okinawa: What Must Be Done, and Quickly](#)," a new report released today co-authored by Sasakawa USA Chairman Admiral Dennis Blair and Fellow James Kendall.

Although a process is underway that would relocate facilities and forces stationed in Okinawa to new bases being built on Hawaii and Guam, implementation has been "glacially slow," Blair and Kendall argue in the report. Meanwhile, the political climate continues to deteriorate with the backdrop of increasingly strident protests against the U.S. presence in Okinawa and the election of an anti-base governor and Diet members.

"The political opposition to a continued major U.S. presence on Okinawa is gaining strength, and dramatic action is needed to turn the situation around," the report states. It details four main steps that must be taken quickly:

1. The U.S. must construct its relocation facilities in Hawaii and Guam concurrently, rather than consecutively, in order to move up the transfer from the current date of 2031 to no later than 2025.
2. The Japanese and Okinawan governments must develop "quick wins" in the form of land returns that demonstrate the benefits of finding new uses for existing facilities.
3. Shared use of facilities on Okinawa between American and Japanese forces must be deepened, thereby increasing cooperation in potential joint operations and also improving civil-military relations.
4. The currently planned relocation of Marine Corps forces to Australia must be re-examined, with alternative locations considered closer to potential crisis points in East Asia.

"The tandem solutions offered by the Futenma Replacement Facility and Okinawa Consolidation Plan are well thought-out and offer the only realistic solutions to the challenges of alleviating an overbearing U.S. presence on Okinawa and providing security for U.S. and allied interests in the Asia-Pacific," the report states. "In addition, with the exception of the Australia moves, the relocation of Marine forces from Okinawa will improve readiness by providing better training opportunities, with little penalty paid in terms of reaction time to potential crisis locations in East Asia."

In the introduction to the report, [Lieutenant General Wallace "Chip" Gregson](#) (USMC, Ret.), the former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs and Commanding General of the Marine Corps Forces Pacific, endorses the report's recommendation for the concurrent construction of new facilities on Guam and Hawaii while also offering agreement with the other points.

"Okinawa has achieved a remarkable status: much more discussed than understood. This paper by Admiral Dennis Blair and James Kendall helps clear away the fog," Gregson writes. "By presenting an unvarnished look

at U.S. history on Okinawa, and prescribing practical, achievable steps forward, the paper serves a valuable purpose.”

The full report is available online now [here](#). A printed version will be available from the Sasakawa USA headquarters in January. Events related to this topic are planned for the New Year, and more information on those will be announced soon.

### **About Admiral Dennis Blair**

[Admiral Dennis Blair](#), Chairman of the Board and CEO of Sasakawa USA, is a renowned expert on Asia Pacific policy and issues. He also serves as a member of the Energy Security Leadership Council and the Aspen Homeland Security Council; and he is on the boards of Freedom House, the National Bureau of Asian Research and the National Committee on US-China Relations.



As Director of National Intelligence, from January 2009 to May 2010, Blair led 16 national intelligence agencies, managed a budget of \$50 billion and provided integrated intelligence support to the President, Congress and operations in the field. During his 34-year Navy career, Blair served on guided missile destroyers in both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets and commanded the Kitty Hawk Battle Group. Prior to retiring from the Navy in 2002, Blair served as Commander in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Command, the largest of the combatant commands.

Read more of his commentary and analysis [here](#).

### **About James Kendall**

[James Kendall](#) is the Fellow for Common Challenges at Sasakawa USA, specializing in topics including Asia-Pacific affairs; U.S. and Japanese foreign and defense policies; maritime security; U.S. basing in the Pacific; and U.S.-Japan cybersecurity policy.



A career Marine Corps officer, Kendall’s last military assignment was as Senior Japan Program Analyst at the U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters. He also served as the East Asia & Pacific Affairs Bureau Military Advisor at the State Department; Strategic Analyst with the Marine Corps’ Strategic Initiatives Group (SIG) at the Pentagon; exchange officer at the Japan Defense Agency, Tokyo and commander of several Marine artillery units. Kendall served three overseas assignments in Japan and deployments to Somalia, Kuwait, and Iraq. During Operation Tomodachi, following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, he was the Marine liaison to the Japanese Self Defense Forces providing disaster relief.

He can be reached via email at [jkendall@spfusa.org](mailto:jkendall@spfusa.org). Read more of his research and analysis [here](#).

### **About Sasakawa USA**

Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA is an independent, American non-profit and non-partisan institution devoted to research, analysis, and better understanding of the U.S.-Japan relationship. Sasakawa USA accomplishes its mission through programs that benefit both nations and the broader Asia Pacific.

Research programs focus on security, diplomacy, economics, trade, and technology. Education programs facilitate people-to-people exchange and discussion among American and Japanese policymakers, influential citizens, and the broader public in both countries.

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