

Japan Minister Fired Over US Airbase

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The Japanese premier fires a minister for rejecting Tokyo's recent compromise with Washington on a controversial US airbase on Okinawa Island.

Japan's Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama dismissed consumer affairs minister, Mizuho Fukushima, The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday.

Tokyo and Washington have issued a statement, saying that the Futenma air station in the southern island of Okinawa would be relocated to a new site on the same island.

Fukushima told a press conference that she "could not betray the people of Okinawa," Press TV's Michael Penn reported. The former minister added that she "could not accept the plan to create a new US airbase on the island which would increase the burden for Okinawan people."

Fukushima said that politics demanded trust and that if she betrayed her campaign promises to the people, she would be breaking that trust.

Hatoyama had run for premier on a campaign to materialize a "more equal" relationship with Washington. He had also promised to move the base off the island which houses three-quarters of the thousands-strong Japan-based US military.

Locals there have for long protested the presence of the military personnel who are allegedly involved in crime, pollution, noise and accidents.

Fukushima had stood up to Hatoyama's and other Cabinet ministers' plea for her to endorse the agreement.

Her party, the Social Democratic Party of Japan, could, meanwhile, leave Hatoyama's coalition, jeopardizing his chances in the Upper House elections set to be held in July.

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