

US Establishes Illegal “No-fly Zone” over Okinawa without Consulting Japanese Government

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Japan’s transport ministry has asked the United States military to explain why they have issued a no-fly zone in the area where a HH-60 rescue helicopter crashed on Monday in [Okinawa](#). The ban includes civilian aircraft flying within an 11 km radius and up to 3 kilometers above the [crash site](#). The order was issued despite the fact that technically they have no jurisdiction over airspace in Okinawa.

What’s more, the US authorities failed to ask permission from their Japanese counterparts in both the transport and [defense ministries](#) and so they consider this ban as “invalid”. The ban follows the aircraft crash that killed one crew member and distressed the local Okinawan community, who are already on edge because of the strong presence of the US military in their region. Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister [Shinsuke Sugiyama](#) met with U.S. Under Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel in Washington on Tuesday to discuss the details of the crash and to “strongly protest” the accident and urged the US to take measures to prevent anything like that from happening again. The US officials assured him that they will share all relevant information that they discover as they investigate the cause and circumstances of the crash.

Prime Minister [Shinzo Abe](#) said in a news conference that the US should prioritize the safety of the Okinawan citizens first and foremost. “We would like to ask the U.S. side to give its utmost consideration to safety,” Abe said. He also requested that the US [suspend all operations](#) involving the HH-60 helicopters until the cause can be determined. An official from the Japanese Foreign Ministry also said that this unfortunate crash “couldn’t come at a worse time.” Public opinion about the deployment of several [MV-22 Osprey](#) aircraft, which have had several safety issues of their own, is already volatile and this latest incident will only harden the people’s stance against the newly-deployed planes.

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