

VIDEO: US to Use S. Korean Base to Project Power Against China?

By [Matthew Hoey](#)

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This handout picture released by the Republic of Korea (ROK) Navy shows ROKS DDH-981 Choi Young, a Chungmugong Yi Sun-shin class South Korean destroyer, firing during a joint military exercise between US and South Korean navies in the Sea of Japan (East Sea) on July 27, 2010 (AFP Photo / Roknavy)

Residents on the South Korean Island of Jeju are continuing to resist the siting of a huge naval base there. Critics fear it will be used not as a shield against North Korea, but as a base for the US to target rising world power, China.

On Tuesday, four activists protesting against the base in Jeju's Gangjeong village were arrested.

Matthew Hoey, an international co-ordinator of the Campaign to Save Jeju Island, told RT that the activists were peacefully protesting outside a hotel where the 10th Annual South Korea-UN Disarmament Conference, known as the Jeju process, was taking place. His friends were among those arrested.

According to Hoey, 94 per cent of residents in Gangjeong village voted against the construction plans. Those opposed to the base are mainly concerned about environmental issues and fear it could harm South Korean-Chinese relations.

"Recently the provincial government here in Jeju demanded that the construction be stopped, but the military said 'no'," he noted. "The government is simply not listening."

Hoey worries that the villagers have run out of legal options in their non-violent campaign against the base.

Following the arrests, a large rally has taken place outside the police station where the activists were detained and also at the gates of the naval base, he said.

Hoey says the base is going to become one of the largest naval military bases in the world.

"The capacity of this base is 20 large destroyers, two aircraft carriers, two subs and it would be outfitted with the Aegis ballistic missile defense system," he explained.

The South Korean government started the construction of a \$970 million base in January 2011 despite local resistance. The Defense Ministry said American ships would be allowed to visit the port.

South Korean military officials claim the base is necessary to serve as a shield against North Korea, secure maritime transportation routes and help boost the regional economy.

But critics say the base could become an outpost for the United States to flex its muscles against rising world power, China.

“We’re a hair less than 300 miles away from the Chinese mainland and this is a very attractive location for the United States military. As an official at a conference the other day told me, it’s no secret that US ships will be calling this home,” Hoey said.

“Maybe not next year, maybe not in five years, but sometime down the road the idea of a Jeju missile crisis comes to mind - a rapid escalation between the US and China,” Hoey warns.

“US ships and subs are just 300 miles off the shore here in Jeju. It makes the island a target.”

With unique nature and biological diversity, Jeju Island has been named a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. The island contains the Natural World Heritage Site, Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes.

“Touch not one stone, not one flower,” is its residents’ battle cry in the fight to preserve the island.

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