

TOWN OVERVIEW

Kadena Town lies on the East China Sea coastline of central Okinawa island's Nakagami county. Just 23 kilometers north of Naha, it borders three other municipalities: north of the Hijya River boundary lies Yomitan village, Chatan is to the southeast and boundary lines inside Kadena Air base, while Okinawa City is to Kadena's east.

Covering 15.12 square kilometers, the town's roughly L-shaped form stretches eight kilometers north to south, from a narrow two kilometer east/west band in the north to a broad five kilometer stretch at its southern base. The Class B-rated Hijya River, flowing from wellsprings in Okinawa City through Kadena out to the East China Sea, boasts Okinawa's greatest discharge and largest basin.

Before WWII, Kadena was a district of then Chatan township. Benefiting from its position at the center of the long stretch of Okinawa Island, pre-war Kadena was an island transport hub, linking the Prefectural Railway's Kadena Line terminal to surface roads. Kadena was home to key education, cultural, and financial activities: the Prefectural School of Agriculture was here, along with the School for Young Teachers, a Police Precinct HQ, and the Kadena Plant facilities of Okinawa Sugar Company. Scenic Hijya River was one of "The Eight Views of the Ryukyus" while Hijabashi Harbor Bridge area bustled with steamships shuttling to and from other places in the prefecture. Kadena was central Okinawa's trade hub, balancing a busy populace with nature's beauty and local industries.

Then in 1944, the Imperial Army set up its Naka Airfield here, resulting in the area becoming the US military's primary landing zone in the battle of Okinawa. The opening firestorm destroyed everything from homes to manufacturing facilities and precious

cultural assets; by the August 15, 1945 end of the war, Kadena had been reduced to ashes.

At the end of the war, the Kadena community split by the air strip was allowed limited transit across the runways until tighter US military security measures halted civilian traffic in April, 1948. This effectively split the local Kadena community into two, with today's Kadena municipality being formally incorporated on December 4 that same year.

In 1950, soon the community was permanently split, the Korean Conflict began, bringing with it a new US perspective of Kadena's military facilities as Asia's largest air base. Each year saw the expansion of existing facilities or new construction. 1967 brought the completion of two 4,000 m runways, and the seizure of a massive 82% of Kadena Village for airfield operations and ammunition storage, leaving a mere 18% for local residents. This invariably restricted the industrial and commercial development essential to revitalization, which in tandem with the assaults of noise from air operations, drove the town's downward spiral until Kadena became the epitome of "Okinawa, Island of Bases."

In its efforts to mitigate the overwhelming U.S. military presence and to promote revitalization, Kadena Town implemented projects using JPY 21.8 billion subsidized by the Okinawa Special Revitalization Program for Municipalities with U.S. Military Facilities, aka, the Shimada Committee. These include a updated Town Center, the Multi-Media Recruitment Project and the Comprehensive Revitalization Project which was completed in March, 2008.

Following the 3rd Comprehensive Plan, Kadena Town formulated a 4th Comprehensive Plan which commenced in JFY 2009. The four pillars of the plan are "Mutual Support," "Human Resources Development," "Safety," and "Agility," emphasized in building a bustling community whose citizens support each other, and are assured safe, comfortable lives with extended opportunities for individual development.

Aerial View of Kadena Today

