

Overview of Kadena Air Base

Three U.S. military installations are located inside the boundaries of Kadena Town: Kadena Air Base, the Kadena Ammunition Storage Area and the Army POL Fuel Storage facilities. The Air Base area of 19.86 square kilometers (1.3 times the size of Tokyo International Airport ((Haneda)) or 425 times the size of Tokyo Dome) straddles multiple municipalities on land from one city and two towns: Okinawa City, and Kadena and Chatan towns.

The Kadena tarmac was originally built in September, 1944, to serve as the Naka Airfield Headquarters of the Imperial Japanese Air Force; this was quickly captured by the April 1945 US military forces in the invasion of Okinawa. The US forces immediately proceeded to lengthen the runways and by June, had completed a 2,250-meter long runway to service heavy bombers. Today's dual 4,000 meter long runways were completed in May of 1967.

On February 5, 1968, a B-52 bombardment group deployed to Kadena for typhoon shelter but then remained. Later that year, on November 19, a B-52 strategic bomber crashed and exploded while attempting to take off. This incident aggravated the protest movement against the permanent stationing of the B-52s, which eventually culminated in the departure of the B-52 groups on October 6, 1970.

With the May 15, 1972 Reversion of Okinawa to Japan, Kadena Air Base was integrated with both Camp Sansone and the Army Dependent Housing bases and provided to US Forces Japan as the "new" Kadena Air Base. As part of the Pacific Theater force modernization program which began in 1979, the first F-15 Eagles were deployed to Kadena on September 29, 1979, with all three squadrons activated and on base by March 1981, completing the changeover from the older F-4D Phantoms. On May 23, 1980, came the deployment of the E-3A (now E-3B) Century Airborne Early Warning and Control System aircraft. On December 15, 1992, together with the Kadena Air Base

Realignment and Integration initiative, 18 F-15 Eagle fighters were withdrawn.

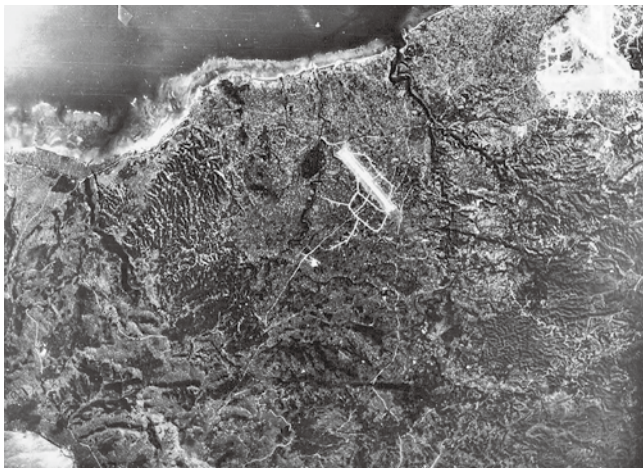
In June of 1991, the 353 Special Operation Group took shelter at Kadena from the eruption of the Pinatubo volcano in the Philippines, to be later permanently home based as a tenant of the 18th Wing.

Other 18th Wing tenant commands home-based at Kadena include the 733rd Air Mobility Squadron, the 82nd Reconnaissance Squadron, and the 390th Intelligence Squadron. Kadena Air Base hosts the U.S. Navy Fleet Activities command, and its P-8A Poseidon, the P-3C Orion Antisubmarine Patrol, and EP-3 Electronic Surveillance units.

Interlinked with the Air Base is Kadena Ammunition Storage Area covering 26.58 square kilometers inside the boundaries of two cities, one town and two villages, i.e., Okinawa and Uruma Cities, Kadena Town, and Yomitan and Onna Villages. The US military began using the ammunition depot area at the time of the occupation of Okinawa, and originally, the area fell under U.S. Army control. When the Army presence in Okinawa was re-structured in July 1978, the Army repositioned its ordnance storage depots to South Korea and the Middle East. Consequently, depot control was transferred to the 18th Munitions Squadron under the 18th Maintenance Group, 18th Wing; the facility now supports the missions of all four US services, the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines.

On August 31, 1976, following the closures of its South Ammunition Storage, the Joint Air Force/Navy Auxiliary Ammunition Storage at Naha Air Base, and the Ordnance Depot on Senaga Island, the U.S. Navy relocated its torpedo warheads and anti-submarine depth bombs to a section of the Kadena Depot.

The Kadena POL Facility is an extensive collection of U.S. Army fuel tanks positioned throughout the area. Between 1945 and 1952, the US military positioned fuel tanks in Kadena, Chatan, Naha City, and Gushikawa (today's Uruma City); between 1952 and 1953, it laid pipelines connecting these tank farms. The arterial pipelines connect all key military bases in Okinawa and are used to transfer jet fuel, gasoline and other petroleum products.



The Imperial Air Force's Naka Airfield



The B-52 Crash Site