

# Nago City Office signs up for diplomatic think tank

September 20, 2013 Ryota Nakamura of Ryukyu Shimpo

The Nago City Office has decided to sign up to the think tank New Diplomacy Initiative, which sends out information and makes policy recommendations between Japan and the United States. It is rare for a municipal office in Japan to become involved in a diplomatic think tank. By signing up, the city office aims to gather information from sources other than existing media and diplomatic channels and to disseminate information itself.

The city office plans to sign up as a group member this October. In February 2012, Mayor Susumu Inamine visited the United States to state his opposition to moving the facilities currently at U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to Henoko in Nago. During his visit, he came to understand that American people are not aware of Okinawan issues. The city office started thinking about ways to set up a network with the American side and to collect the latest information from the United States.

A representative of the think tank said that they will support Mayor Inamine when he visits the United States and will help the city convey information to the United States. Director of the think tank, Sayo Saruta, helped with the mayor's visit to the United States last year.

Established in August, the think tank's main objective is to take normally unheard voices to where diplomacy occurs. Board members include Japanese journalist Shuntaro Torigoe, professor of Tokyo University Kiichi Fujiwara, professor of George Washington University Mike M. Mochizuki, and professor of Hokkaido University Jiro Yamaguchi.

Koichiro Nakazato, the Chief of the Public Relations and Liaison Division of the city said, "Signing up with New Diplomacy Initiative is valuable for Nago because we are in a position in which we must make a broad range of judgments on U.S. military base issues."

(English translation by T&CT, Lima Tokumori and Mark Ealey)

## **Glossary: New Diplomacy Initiative**

A research institute that makes policy recommendations to accurately represent various opinions in Okinawa and Japan to the United States. They work to deliver information about U.S. military base issues in Okinawa, such as the land reclamation off Henoko, Nago in preparation for moving the facilities at U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. They approach governments, legislatures, universities, nongovernmental organizations and mass media organizations in Japan and beyond in order to influence policy decisions. They hold symposiums, gather information and lobby.