



Gangjeong Village, on Jeju Island, the Island of Peace : classic nonviolent resistance is succeeding..

Gangjeong Village on the island of Jeju is a small farming and fishing community on the island's southern coast. raze farms and fishing grounds despite their protests. Both the village of Gangjeong and the elected assembly of Jeju Island has voted to stop the naval base construction . Sung-Hee Choi is in prison and will go on trial July 15 for holding a banner that said “touch not one flower, not one stone”

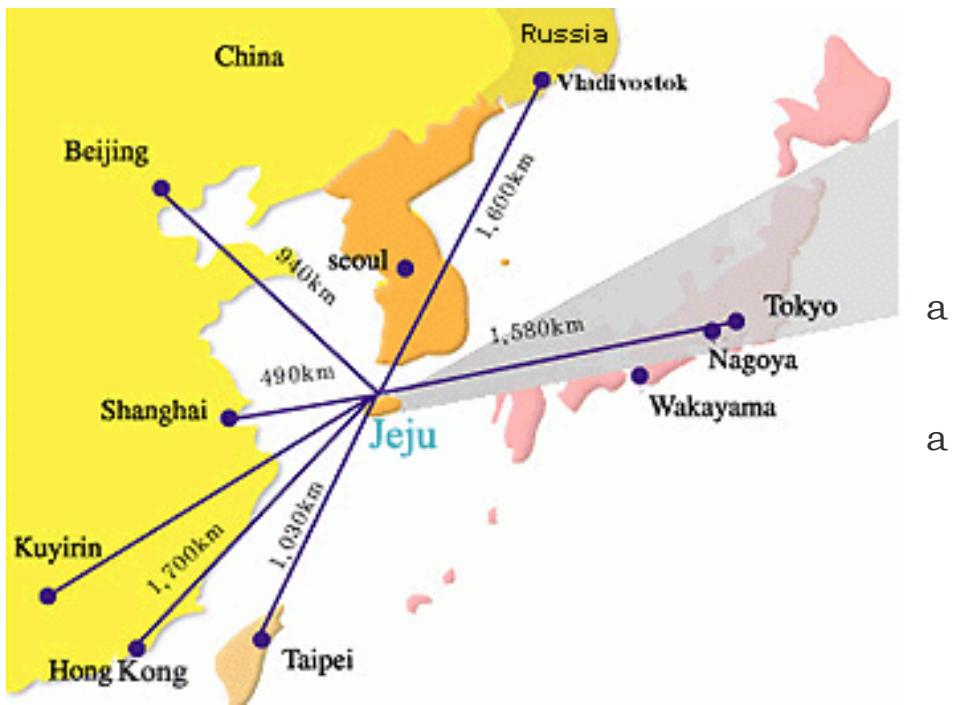
Sung-Hee Choi in Jeju prison

From **Jeju and a Naval Arms Race in Asia** June 18, 2010 · By Kyoungeun Cha
International Policy Institute.

“Maritime security has been a top issue in Northeast Asia recently...Jeju Island is important for another reason. The South Korean government is planning to build a naval base there.

Jeju Island is a special self-governing province located just southeast of South Korea. Its location in the center of Northeast Asia has given Jeju Island a political and geographic advantage. To the east, the island faces Tsushima Island and the Japanese prefecture of Janggi, with the South Sea and East China Sea in between. To the west, Jeju faces Shanghai across the East China Sea. The South China Sea lies south of the island, while the mainland of South Korea lies to the north.

Despite its strategic location, Jeju Island is strange place for a military base. UNESCO has declared the island World Heritage site, and it is a popular honeymoon destination. The former Roh Moo-hyun government also designated Jeju as a



“peace island.” And yet the South Korean government has wanted to build a naval base on the island since 2002. Although there has been strong local resistance, the South Korean government plans to build the base in Geongjeong village, the third proposed site.

Jeju Island has long been a focus of strategic and security interests in Northeast Asia. During World War II, the Japanese used the island to defend Japan from American forces. There were supply bases on the island for 75,000 Japanese soldiers. The U.S. military later attempted to fortify the island after the fall of Japanese empire.

And today, Jeju Island is again the focus of attention. But this time, it is the latest escalation in a naval arms race in Northeast Asia.

The Jeju Massacres Riel Müller is a fellow with the Korea Policy Institute

“The division of the Korean Peninsula by the United States and the Soviet Union turned Jeju into a battlefield for subsequent cold war conflicts on the peninsula. In 1948, with U.S. and U.N. support, South Korea held elections that established a separate state in the south, thus solidifying Korea's division. In response, 30,000 islanders in Jeju went out to protest the elections, which was abruptly ended when police opened fire and killed eight protesters. This prompted riots throughout the island and the boycott of the South Korean elections by Jeju islanders. Unfortunately, the United States overseers annulled the Jeju election results due to their lack of participation, and Syngman Rhee was elected without the votes from Jeju counted.



But that wasn't all. Korean right wing nationalists labeled the entire island as Communists sympathizers. When U.S. backed leader Syngman Rhee took power following the elections, he initiated a massive "Red" cleansing campaign targeted the Jeju general population. Using the South Korean military and ultra rightist paramilitary groups from the Northwest Korean Youth Association, the Rhee government

employed a scorched earth strategy of repression resulting in the indiscriminate raping of women and burning of villages. Thousands of people were killed. It is estimated that 70 percent of entire villages were razed to the ground and 30,000 people—ten percent of the island's population—were murdered. It was a brutal precursor to what the mainland would experience during the Korean War.

At the newly constructed Peace Park Museum and Memorial for the massacre, one can take a few moments to reflect on Jeju's fate as a battleground for

imperial and ideological conflicts and the meaningless loss of lives that people here have suffered. I went there on April 4th for the commemoration of "Sasam" as the massacre is called locally. From the thousands of people who were gathered for the memorial ceremony, it is clear that the massacre has left deep scars in Jeju society. For years, any mention of the massacre could lead to imprisonment and torture. Relatives of those who had been labeled as Communists were prevented from taking public service positions or jobs in many companies. Many are still afraid to talk about what happened.

It was not until 2006 that the late President Roh Moo-Hyun officially apologized for the massacre and designated Jeju "Island of World Peace". For 50 years, successive governments in Seoul silenced the Korean people's memories of systematic murder, rape and torture. As one exits the museum, a sign reads: "Jeju April 3rd Incident will be remembered as a symbol of the preciousness of peace, unity and human rights." But the government's memory is short.

Plans for a major naval base on Jeju had been in the works since 2002 at different locations, but opposition from local residents halted construction several times."

From MacGregor Eddy of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space www.space4peace.org



Prof Yang Moon-Yu under truck

I was in Gangjeong village as a representative of the Global Network. One of our board members (and my friend) Sung-Hee Choi was in prison and due to go on trial on June 10.

I arrived on June 9. On the day I arrived the Navy and Samsung were trying to do construction from the sea. The ability to do construction from the land has been blocked successfully by the Gangjeong villagers willingness to put their bodies in front of, or even under, the construction machines

I was jet lagged and groggy but was just in time to see the small boat return from visiting the crew of the barge. This dredging barge was supposed to flatten to soft coral reef in preparation for the Naval Base construction.

Using negotiation and nonviolent discussion the Gangjeong representatives were able to stop the work that day. One of my first sights of the natural

beauties of Jeju was seeing Brother Song, taking off his wet suit, while being cheered for his courage and negotiating ability.

I became close to Brother Song over the next ten days, partly because he spoke more English than anyone else in the village.

The next day we most the village bus went to Jeju City for Sung-Hee's trial. On the way out a woman was passionately discussing the issue of villagers who had taken the Navy pay off and left, but now want to come back. The consensus was they were welcome to come back.

The trial was a surreal experience for me. Although I could not understand a single word of the proceedings, as a three time federal defendant for my protests at Vandenberg Air Force Base, it was all very familiar. The trial was postponed until a later date, now July 15.

Dr. Yang Moon-Yu was there looking weak and skeletal. He had left the Jeju University Hospital where he is under treatment to recover from 70 day water only fast. I am glad to say since then he has gained weight and looks much better, even radiant. He had been released from prison on probation when he was close to death.

The next day I went to the Jeju prison to visit Sung-Hee with her mother, and Mr. Go, chair of the Stop Naval Base committee, as well as Yune Pak a close friend of Sung-Hee.



With poor Yune doing the heavy work of translating I learned a lot about how the village functions and stops construction at the same time. While most villagers go about their jobs or harvest, a certain number keep watch on the construction site. If there is any attempt to move the heavy machinery, the community center sounds a siren and everyone who can rushes down to the site to block the machinery.

Mr Go under the crane

machinery.

Although sometimes this is dramatic such as this photo of Mr. Go lying under a 200-ton crane, most of the time in is just a lot of talking sometimes in the rain.

The visit to Sung-Hee was very short, only ten minutes is allowed with no contact and the guards write down everything we say. I was able to visit her three times during my stay, and she was glad that someone from Global Network had come to support her.

On my last day the barge (the “bad boat”) came back. The small boat with Mr. Go, the mayor of Gangjeong, Brother Song a few others went out to talk to the crew.

This time the crew hit them with poles, sprayed them with hoses, and eventually beat and kicked Brother Song senseless. He was moved to a hospital, and is now recovering but still in some pain. This incident caused the Korean national congress to call for an investigation into the affair. Construction was not stopped, but a typhoon swept all the Navy’s markers for the base construction away.



We know large caissons of cement are being prepared for delivery by boat to the destruction of the soft coral reef. Meanwhile support for the village of Gangjeong on the mainland of South Korea has mushroomed. Pop stars, Nobel laureate poets, the bishop of Jeju, and a civil group of hundreds of organizations have all said they want Jeju to remain the Island of Peace.

I left Gangjeong with an ache in my heart and concern for Brother Song. In my many years peace work I have never seen nonviolent resistance practiced with such discipline, persistence and courage.

I believe that this naval base will not be built.

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The U.S.-Korea alliance is closely related to this issue. The naval forces of the United States are the most powerful in the world. The U.S. and South Korean government are expanding their military alliance, and if the naval base on Jeju Island is set up, the U.S. navy will use the base to monitor China’s naval power. Because of its close location to China, the naval base will primarily be a bulwark against Chinese expansion rather than defend against North Korea threat (for which the bases in Busan and Jinhae are better suited.)

The Jeju naval base is a likely bone of contention between the United States and China because of missile defense. Seoul plans to dock Aegis-equipped destroyers at Jeju. These warships are the main military component of the

U.S. missile defense system. According to Xinhua Chinese newspaper, South Korea plans to build a new naval base on the southern island of Jeju to expand the range of its naval operations. U.S. defense contractor Lockheed Martin provides the Aegis combat system to Seoul. “China regards missile defense as the 21st century’s greatest threat and is dissatisfied with U.S. missile defense policy,” argues Cheong Wook-sik, director of Peace Network in South Korea. China believes that, in the event of a conflict over Taiwan, the United States will inevitably become involved because of missile defense. South Korea, meanwhile, has indicated its interest in becoming more integrated into the U.S. missile defense system. In this way, by becoming caught in a conflict between China and the United States, the naval base could endanger Jeju Island and the national security of South Korea.

According to Lee Tae-ho, deputy secretary general of People’s Solidarity for Participatory Democracy in South Korea, “The Chinese government has a response strategy that first attacks U.S. missile defense in the case of an emergency. That means that the Jeju naval base will be targeted in an armed conflict between the United States and China.” Even short of war, the base will create tension among China, Japan, and Korea, which could escalate into a naval arms race in the Asia-Pacific region. “

This UNESCO World Heritage designated island stands to lose much of what makes it part of our world heritage. The transformation of Jeju into a military base also shows that much has yet to change in South Korea before a true democracy is established. The strategies of subtle coercion and lack of transparency by both the Navy and the South Korean government against its own people are discouraging to any person concerned about democracy and the rights of people. The struggle of Gangjeong villagers for land, life, and peace should concern us all. “

Some of this information is from Anders Riel Müller who is a fellow with the Korea Policy Institute living in South Korea MacGregor Eddy of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power is Space who was in Gangjeong from June 9 to June 20.

And credited excerpts from **Jeju and a Naval Arms Race in Asia** June 18, 2010 · By Kyoungeun Cha International Policy Institute.

Any mistakes are mine MacGregor Eddy July 2, 2011