

Japanese workers on U.S. military bases strike against salary cuts, 2007

- ([mainly or initiated by](#)) [people of color](#) [1]

Timing

November
2007
to:
December
2007

Location and Goals

Country:

Japan

Location Description:

Nationwide campaign

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

For the Japanese government to guarantee that the union workers would receive their whole salary.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 013. Deputations
- 016. Picketing
- 097. Protest strike
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 013. Deputations
- 016. Picketing
- 097. Protest strike

Methods in 3rd segment:

Methods in 4th segment:

- 013. Deputations

Methods in 5th segment:

Methods in 6th segment:

- 013. Deputations
- 097. Protest strike

Segment Length:

5 days

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- Japanese union members who worked on United States Military Bases

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Union Secretary General Tsuneo Teruya, Union Leader Kazuo Yamagawa

Partners:

Not Known

External allies:

Not Known

Involvement of social elites:

Not Known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Zenchuro Union

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length:

5 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Japanese Ministry of Defense

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not Known

Campaigner violence:

Not Known

Repressive Violence:

Not Known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

3 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

0 points out of 3 points

Total points:

4 out of 10 points

Notes on outcomes:

The campaign received a 3 for success because the allowance part of the workers' salaries was cut by 50%. The agreement also abolished the pay-raise system. Survival score was a 1 because the union has retained its structure. The campaign received a 0 for growth because it basically maintained a constant size.

In October of 2007, the Japanese Ministry of Defense proposed a cut in the salaries of Japanese workers employed on United States Military installations. Japan was struggling under huge national debt and the Defense Ministry saw the abolition of a workers' allowance as a way to save a significant amount of money. The Defense ministry would have been projected to save about 10 billion yen a year with the salary cuts. On the other side, the allowance made up about 10% of each worker's salary. The allowance was designated to the Japanese workers for working in a different cultural environment and for using English on the base.

Japan employs workers and provides the work force to the United States as part of an agreement with the U.S. Under a bilateral accord, the U.S. had to agree to the salary change. The Japanese Labor Standards Law did not cover the Japanese workers because they were officially working for the United States Military. Furthermore, Japanese workers were prohibited from receiving compensation for work-related accidents without the permission of the U.S. military.

On Wednesday November 21, thousands of the support workers on United States military installations in Japan went on strike over a plan to cut their pay. Zenchuro Union (Japan Garrison Forces Labor Union) called the strike. The union represented two-thirds of the Japanese workers on U.S. military bases, or about 17,000 of the 26,000 base workers. The labor union said that base worker salaries were 20% lower than that of Japanese service employees. However, the military said that the U.S. base workers' pay exceeded the base of government workers.

The strike lasted four hours and began at the start of the workday. The union workers' demands were to get back their full salaries. Union members picketed outside the gates of military bases. The strikers used picket lines, chants, and slogans to declare their opposition to the salary cuts. In Okinawa, union members tried to stop cars from entering the base. The strikers urged Japanese workers to join the strike and some blocked them from reporting to work. U.S. personnel and contractors, however, were able to enter the bases. In addition, essential employees, like firefighters, carried out their work as usual. The union secretary-general, Tsuneo Teruya reported that 5000 union members took part in picket lines at 90 bases across the country. It was the first

nationwide strike in Japan in sixteen years. Following the strike, both sides expressed a commitment to work out a plan through negotiations.

However, after the fourth meeting between union leader Kazuo Yamagawa and the Defense Ministry yielded no breakthroughs, a second strike by union workers was called. On November 30, Zenchuro called a 24-hour strike due to the Defense Ministry refusal to change its plans to cut salaries. That day, demonstrators posted outside the gates to United States military facilities, rather than report to their respective jobs.

The two sides met again to negotiate on Monday December 10, but no agreement was reached. Reportedly, the Defense Ministry offered to pay the workers 30% of their allowance for the next five years before abolishing the allowance, but the union considered this offer to be unacceptable. The union declared that another strike would take place, this time for 48 hours and would take place on Monday through Wednesday of the next week. Reports provided differing accounts of the negotiations. Some reports said that the Defense Ministry had indicated towards a plan to keep the budget for U.S. bases at the same level and allow workers to retain their salaries. Other reports said that Zenchuro had revised its demands to call for wage increases beyond the rate at that time. Meanwhile the Japanese government was working on negotiating a 3-year cost-sharing plan, but most reports pointed to a strained relationship between Japan and the U.S. rather than pressure from the union strikes. On Monday December 17, Zenchuro organized strikes for Okinawa, Misawa Air Base, Yokota Air Base, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, and Sasebo Naval Base. They scheduled strikes on Tuesday in Kanagawa Prefecture in Yokosuka, Camp Zama, and Atsugi.

Several days later, the Ministry of Defense and Zenchuro representatives reached a deal that would slowly phase out the allowance portion of the workers' salaries. The agreement said that the Ministry would pay 50% of the allowance for the subsequent five years, and then review the policy again at the end of the five years. In addition, the agreement abolished the pay raise system that allowed salaries to increase beyond the pay scale. In total, the cuts led to a budget reduction of 370 million yen.

Research Notes

Influences:

Not Known

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Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Sachie Hopkins-Hayakawa 08/04/2011

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