Threats Against Internationals on the Rise

By G.O.

Jeju’s Olle Trail is 204km of connecting paths that follow the south coast of the island. Pamphlets and websites designed to attract tourists to the trail promise unique and natural coastal experiences of nature and “unrivalled” beauty. For the most part it is true. But Route 57, the 113-km hike from Or ‘eolli to Wollonggor, has become “unrivalled” in a way that has nothing to do with nature or beauty. First there is theavenous disposal plant. Not a very good place for a picnic, but hills forgive and walk on. Then, about two-thirds of the way along the hike, the second affront. This one a massive and labelling assault on the senses that sears anything natural. There is no beauty here. Just a 24 yope fence topped with spirals of barbed wire that wind along the coast for as far as the eye can see.

Today is the first time I have been approached by a tourist asking what is going on here. The painted dogens on the fence will tell part of the story. NO MORE WARS. PLEASE LET PEACE PREVAIL. WHAT FOR WHO FARE PEACE IS THE WAY. I explain that behind the fence is the construction site of an enormous ROC-US naval base. I explain that it is part and parcel to the ROC’s completeness with President Daum’s Prior’s Asia Pact. I further explain that if completed, it will increase political tensions in the region, and that people here do not want to be involved in yet another war. And I explained how a naval base here will consume the traditional village of Gangjeong, forever destroying the self-sustaining way of life that has supported the villagers for over 450 years. My back was turned to the 300 or so police men and women who were marching across the bridge to surround and isolate those who were there to protest the illegal 24-hour construction that is taking place. Suddenly the person to whom I was talking turned and ran to the side of the road. He watched as activists were confronted by police and removed from the construction site. A policeman pulled the hood of my back while others surrounded me with their shields. Abruptly assuming I was a tour- ist, the policeman yelled into my ear: “Violation of visa! Deport! Deport!” Both humiliated and intimidated, I felt like I had been treated like a criminal. I had a riot feeling in my stomach as a had no choice but to defend myself. Deport! For warning peace! Now it is me who does not comprehend. Now it is me who wonders where the natural beauty has gone... the natural, unrivaled beauty that I would like to trust in the heart and soul of all living beings.
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for a number of complex reasons, mostly due to the manipulation and secret deal-