People danced while making Korean traditional festive music after marching around the Jeju Naval Base during a special human chain on Mar. 7. Photos by Dasan (left) and Hati (right).

Gureombi’s Power Lives On

by Curry

Gureombi Rock is a central part of the Gangjeong peace movement even 10 years after it was blasted with dynamite and covered with landfill and concrete. Even today, newcomers to Gangjeong can feel the power of Gureombi. Gureombi’s power lives in people’s memories of the beautiful 1.2 kilometer contiguous rock which formed the coastline of Gangjeong. It was home to diverse species such as the endangered red-footed crab. It had numerous fresh-water springs, including Halmangmul, which was believed to have healing properties. Gureombi provided a safe hiding place during the April 3rd massacre. It was an open place for all ages to rest, eat, swim and play. It was a community gathering place especially during the long struggle to stop the construction of Jeju Naval Base. Gureombi is a symbol of life and peace. Gureombi represents all that is destroyed by violence for the interests of war profiteers. To evoke the presence of Gureombi is to negate the navy base and reject militarism. To celebrate Gureombi is to cherish harmony between humans and nature. The vision to restore Gureombi empowers and sustains our peace movement.

Every day, Monday through Saturday, after 100 Bows for Life and Peace at 7 AM at the entrance of Jeju Naval Base we shout, “Rise up Gureombi!” At 11 AM, we gather for mass and sing, “We love you Gureombi!” At 12 noon, we meet at “Gureombi Plaza” for a human chain procession and dance to music that declares, “We hate cement! We like Gureombi!” And each year, on Mar. 7, the anniversary of the day that the blasting of Gureombi began in 2012, people who have felt the power of Gureombi reunite for a special day of remembrance.

This year on Mar. 7, we hung a banner depicting Gureombi at the entrance of the base and spent the day there, praying for peace, drinking coffee, making new flags, hosting a live ‘radio’ program, performing traditional pungmul, singing, dancing and picnicking. The statement by Gangjeong Peace Network and the Association of Gangjeong Villagers Against the Jeju Navy Base concluded, “Life. Peace. Gureombi. Gangjeong. We will restore the names that were erased. In the name of Gureombi, we oppose all wars which destroy life and the future, and today we continue living on Gureombi. We speak of love in this place of destroyed names. Love. This will change everything.”

Friends gathered in front of the Gureombi banner and sewed new flags with messages including, “We are Gureombi.” Photo by Dasan.
Upon Gangjeong’s request, more than 40 messages arrived. Here are a few excerpts from those grateful messages. For the full messages, see savejejunow.org.

“[..]As war rages on in Ukraine and tensions between the US and China intensify over Taiwan, we must double our efforts to push back against the drive to further militarize the Asia Pacific and our world.” (Christine Ahn and Jeju Ahn-Miles)

“[..]Ten years ago I was honored to join you in an epic struggle to resist the construction of the Naval Base there. As an activist in the United States who has known resistance and been arrested many times and imprisoned three times, my arrest on Jeju Island was perhaps the proudest of my life[..]” (Dennis Apel)

“[..]I mourn with you the destruction of Gureombi for war making, as we mourn the destruction of Pu‘uloa (aka “Pearl Harbor”) to create a war base. But i celebrate the powerful and joyful movement you have become[..]” (Kyle Kajihiro)

“[..]I applaud the courage and determination of all the people resisting this naval base and please know that members of Veterans For Peace, not only myself and those who were there are in solidarity with their struggle[..]” (Tarak Kauff)

“[..]I am one of so many who have been with you in Gangjeong who do not know the feeling of Gureombi Rock beneath my feet. And yet, as this anniversary approaches I feel a profound sadness and mourning for this place that I have not seen[..]” (Grant Leuning)

“[..]As surely as the day will come when Korea is One, the brave villagers of Gangjeong will blast away the concrete, and sunlight will fall, again, upon Gureombi rock.” (Paul Liem for the Korea Policy Institute)

“Hafa adai (local greetings) from Guahan (Guam) in the Pacific! We stand in solidarity with the people of Gangjeong village on the 10th remembrance year of the blasting of the Gureombi Rock, where the Jeju navy base is now built[..]” (Lisa Natividad)

“[..]Koreans overseas recognize and uphold your struggle as one of our own, and together we will close the bases and restore our lands. Toojeng!” (Nodutdol)

“[..]Just as Gangjeong’s sea was destroyed as concrete flowed in to build the navy base, the tropical coral sea of Henoko/Oura Bay is being filled everyday with earth and sand to make a base for the US marines[..]. In Jeju and in Okinawa we don’t need all these bases. Through demilitarization of the islands of East Asia, we will stop the vortex of increased military spending and the threat of war![..]” (Okimoto Hiroshi)

“[..]But amidst suffering and desperation, it has also been a beacon of hope for those who seek alternatives to the violence that appears to permeate everything around us[..]” (Paco)

“Jeju Island is the Island of Peace. And the word “Pacific” means “peace.” So, how ironic and heartbreaking that Jeju-do has been targeted (along with many other “key” islands) by the U.S. military machine to be used as a node from which to project violence toward China […].” (Koohan Paik-Mander)

“[..]As a collective of women resisting militarism in Hawai‘i, where U.S. bases have desecrated Kanaka Maoli (indigenous) land and poisoned wai (fresh water), we see our struggle as interconnected with the struggle in Gangjeong[..]” (Women’s Voices Women Speak)

“[..]We are at a crucial time in the history of humankind and we need to act together to bring equity, justice, and compassion to all. We must work in solidarity with each other, across the false borders that try to separate us[..]” (Angie Zelter)
Gangjeong Protectors' Seminar Series

In memory of the destruction of the Gureombi Rock 10 years ago, Gangjeong Peace Network hosted a relay of seminars at St. Francis Peace Center in the village. From Feb. 17 to 25, 4 presenters (Oum Mun Hee, Choi Sung Hee, Grace Kim, Oh Doo Hee) took turns leading each day's presentations on various themes such as the Korea-US alliance, climate justice and art activism. Each presentation was filled with creative, provocative ideas and visions of activism on current issues delivered with much love and passion for our shared future. The leading presentations were followed by group discussions of which participants were mainly residents and protectors (지킴이) of Gangjeong. Some of the activists acknowledged the constant threat to erase both physical and historical remnants of the peace movement around the area. The participants and presenters agreed that these group seminars should keep going on.

Navy Base affects Soft Coral in the Gangjeong Sea

Alcyonium gracillimum. 70m southward and 15m deep underwater from the Gangjeong lighthouse. The photos were taken in 2007-2015-2021. With the naval base construction, clean sea water became full of floaters. The size of the soft coral was reduced to one knuckle. It is a region originally estimated to be very important as it connects the soft coral habitats at Mun Island, Beom Island and the soft coral garden in the east to the soft coral habitats near the Songak mountain coast in the west. In 2007, 9 endangered species were discovered during only 30 min. of underwater investigation. However, currently only Alcyonium gracillimum rarely exist. Gangjeong Friends have constantly monitored the soft corals in the Gangjeong Sea for years, which helped to stop the plans for a new sea route for cruises years ago. Photo by Gangjeong Soft Coral TFT.

Again, Gangjeong!

On Dec. 19, 2021, Peace Treaty Now (PTN), an overseas Koreans' solidarity network, held a zoom meeting which connected them with Gangjeong. Fr. Mun Jeong-hyeon and activist Choi Sung-hee who live in Gangjeong and fought against the navy base for a long time were happy to share with many overseas Koreans their thoughts on before and after the construction of the Jeju navy base which replaced Gureombi Rock. PTN is formed of 1st or 1.5 generation overseas Koreans from the United States, Canada, and Europe. Making solidarity with peace movement groups in each region, it is gathering support for ending the Korean war and making a peace agreement from the local public, media, and legislators through rallies, picketing, speeches, forums, and visits.

Tera, a performer and artist from Pachi Productions, performed grieving movements near the wall of Jeju Naval Base for a video produced in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the destruction of Gureombi Rock. Photo captured from video by Pachi Productions (See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXfuIqqvj4)

Oum Mun-hee gave a solidarity speech on behalf of Gangjeong Peace Network at a Women's Day gathering in front of Jeju City Hall. Photo by Kim Soyoung
"Spring Wind" Pilgrimage to Meet Another World

by Curry

Peace Wind members Ddalgi, Oh Doo-hee, and Father Mun Jeong-hyeon are journeying all around Korea to build solidarity with people who are working to create another world, a world with climate justice, equality (no more discrimination), safe workplaces (no more irregular jobs), and practicing of peace (no war exercises). The 40-day "Spring Wind" Pilgrimage to Meet Another World kicked off with a press conference in Gangjeong on Tues., Mar. 15. Representatives of the 4.16 (Sewol Ferry) Families Committee, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (Jeju headquarters), the Association of Gangjeong Villagers Against the Jeju Navy Base, and Gangjeong Peace Network shared remarks, and singing by the Gangjeong Peace Choir was followed by the daily human chain dances. After the press conference, the Peace Wind members and fellow travelers visited the KAL Hotel in Jeju City to meet and encourage the workers who are struggling to oppose mass lay-offs of the whole hotel staff because the hotel's owners suddenly decided to sell the building to an apartment developer. After one more day in Jeju at the Jeju Dolphin Center, the journey continued on to the southern provinces of the mainland, visiting sites where people are struggling against military bases, new airport projects, nuclear power plants and high-voltage power lines, and joining gatherings to support the rights of workers and refugees, the right to healthcare access and the right to build a mosque. They also visited the May 18th (Gwangju Uprising) Cemetery and the memorial site for the Sewol Ferry tragedy at Paengmok Harbor. Throughout the month of April, the Spring Wind pilgrimage will continue traveling across South Korea, up to the DMZ and Seoul, to draw connections between each of the movements for the environment, equality, workers' rights, and peace and to envision how to work from the grassroots, regardless of who the president is, to build together a better world.

No New Airport in Jeju, Gadeokdo or Saemangeum

by Curry

On Mar. 17, the Spring Wind pilgrimage visited Gadeokdo, an island which is part of Busan City. Like the Jeju 2nd Airport and the Saemangeum Airport in Gunsan, there are also plans for a new airport to be built at Gadeokdo, even though 10 regional airports in Korea have been in the red for at least 6 years. These new airport plans not only threaten to accelerate climate change, they also destroy the local ecosystems and are likely to be used by the military. On Feb. 26 the National Assembly passed a special law to streamline the feasibility study process for the Gadeokdo airport project, and in March, the Ministry of Environment ignored the pleas of civic groups to reject the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment for the Saemangeum airport project and rather issued conditional approval. Despite cold, rainy weather, the Spring Wind pilgrims joined local activists for a press conference at Gadeokdo and a march in the city calling for the cancellation of the new airport projects at Saemangeum and Jeju as well as Gadeokdo. They learned about the camellia trees, dolphins, otters and migratory birds whose habitats would be destroyed if the mountainous island is flattened. They also visited historical sites from when the Japanese military evicted Gadeokdo residents in 1904 in order to fortify the island during the Russo-Japanese War.

Another rainy day, on Mar. 26, the Spring Wind pilgrimage visited the Sura tidal flats in Gunsan, where the new Saemangeum airport is planned to be extended from the US Kunsan Air Base. Already the ecology has been severely altered by the world's longest man-made sea wall (completed in 2010), but many species remain, and it is not too late to restore the original carbon-sequestering, water-purifying tidal flat habitat. In the afternoon, many supporters joined the 17th Paeng-Paeng Festival in nearby Haje Village. The village was emptied due to the expansion of explosives facilities at the air base, but people gather there each month to encourage one another and protect the 600-year hackberry (Paeng) tree. Ddalgi wrote in her daily pilgrimage update, “Even saturated in suffocating development, we will do our best to survive until the end, like the milky fiddler crab. Today we did our best to till the soil, plant seedlings, sing together, and share laughs and solidarity. Let’s look forward to another world's sudden approach, just like spring.”
Construction for the military road comes into full swing

By Oum Mun-hee

On Feb. 22, the beams for the top of the navy base entry road bridge were finally installed. The bridge construction has been the most difficult and important core process in the construction of the road, which crosses Gangjeong stream. After the top work on the bridge beams, the road will be made in earnest. People have tried to stop the opening of the military road and the grave environmental destruction caused by it. They held a protest at the site early in the morning when the beams were installed. They also wrote a protest message on the wall of the bridge, which read, “Human beings, what are you?” It was a question on behalf of all the beings who are losing their lives due to the destruction committed by human beings. The movement to stop the destruction of Gangjeong stream began in earnest when the dead bodies of some mandarin ducks who make their habitat there were discovered, shot by shotguns in early January, 2020. Now with the progress of the bridge construction, the movement has had to go through shock for a while. However, the people who despaired will continue to resist the illegal and violent military road which would be a link in the network furthering the militarization of Jeju. First of all, they will make an archive of all the government’s deceptive processes to construct the navy base entry road. They will also carry out a campaign for the installation of a wildlife preservation zone at Gangjeong stream. Given the result of biological observations so far, we found no such zones currently in Jeju. We are noticing that the navy entry road crossing Gangjeong stream has already broken the peace, deterring justice in its procedures and ultimately building up the military base network.

The true nature of the the navy base entry road straightening project

By Go Gwon-il

The Gangjeong stream road straightening project is being conducted with a changed name: 'Jeju civilian-military complex port entry road improvement project.' The project’s claimed purpose is to reduce traffic accident risks by heightening the Gangjeong stream bridge and straightening the curved road. But given the changed name, it looks like though the navy proposed it at first, it is driven with the use of the Jeju Island provincial budget. Further, it looks like the intention behind the project is to stop the opposition activities against the Jeju navy base by dismantling the mass tent where daily street mass for the peace of Gangjeong has continued every weekday since 2012. It is an attempt to erase the history of the anti-Jeju navy base movement with the bait of a development fund for the surrounding area, in other words, a 'community recovery project.' On Feb. 14, Jeju provincial councilwoman Kang Min-sook made a remark that the traces of the Jeju navy base opposition movement's history should be erased for the revitalization of tour business in relation to the cruise terminal in Gangjeong village. We considered her statement in the same context. After the anti-base villagers' association protested, she apologized. However, the sincerity of her apology is suspicious given that she did not keep her promise to support the building of the history library, investigate the base entry road construction and actively respond. The villagers say the business is a waste of money. Why reconstruct the road and heighten the bridge when there is no problem in the current road? It is easy to lower your speed unless you are drunk. Jeju navy base is skillfully oppressing those who oppose it and changing Gangjeong's nature and the daily life of villagers.
Military bases are not about security  By Lina

In February 2022 I was able to visit Gangjeong again. It had been nearly five years since my last visit in 2017. Walking around Gangjeong at the cusp of the war in Ukraine makes the presence of the military base more chilling. We often see these buildings and the spaces around military bases idle, but when the drums of war are beating, it is a reminder that military bases are bases of war, bases of death and aggression. Military bases are not about ‘security’. Human security is when we aim for people to feel safe and secure. We cannot feel safe living with and around military bases that house weapons ready to kill, destroy and butcher. Military bases house humans who will be planning, strategizing and implementing war, death and destruction. These feelings as I walked around Gangjeong that sent chills down my spine were countered by the beautiful Gangjeong river and the warm welcome of friends who are still living in Gangjeong to resist the bases of war, death and aggression. Like the river, our friends in Gangjeong who are still there, day in and day out, with all of the complexities, difficult relationships, wind, rain and scorching sun are still resisting, even with their presence, this base of death.

9th anniversary of Demilitarized Peace Island

Jan. 27 was the 17th anniversary of the government’s declaration of Jeju as a World Peace Island. It was also the 9th anniversary of the people’s declaration of Jeju as a Demilitarized Peace Island. A World Peace Island only by disguise, Jeju is actually becoming a military-fortified zone. In 1991, international politics & diplomacy experts mentioned ‘demilitarization’ as the first condition for Jeju to become a Peace Island. In successive forums, words such as ‘neutrality’ and ‘denuclearization’ were also mentioned. However, such discourse lost power with the new cold war and the strengthening of the ROK-US alliance in the early 2000s. Jeju Naval Base was built amid the sophistry that military bases and peace could coexist together. For the People Making Jeju a Demilitarized Peace Island, Jan. 27 was a day to renew their will to make Jeju a Demilitarized Peace Island by exchange of ideas through a zoom meeting.

I dreamed in prison  By Song Kang-ho, The Frontiers

On October 28, after serving 578 days, I was released on parole. I should have been in jail until March 30 this year. Every morning when I wake up, it seems like a dream that I am free. However, that does not mean that the time spent in prison was meaningless. In prison, I could read many books and pray more deeply. I prayed for Jeju Island to become a peaceful demilitarized island. And I asked God how to turn the naval base built in Gangjeong Village into a peace park where anyone could freely come in and out. And I prayed for the restoration of Gureombi Rock which is buried under the base. Now I am trying to set up an institute in Gangjeong Village that trains peace activists. They can learn and practice peace to incapacitate the naval base through nonviolent direct action. This year, about ten students will study at this institute. The naval base in Gangjeong will gradually try to militarize the community. However, I will generate more ideas and experiment more challengingly so that an ecosystem of peace can be well-formed in Gangjeong Village. Now I’m testing a broadcast program that broadcasts thoughts of anti-war peace to the soldiers in the naval base. I will try to find more people to participate in the daily noon human chain, and more lively songs and dances will block the naval base gate. Every Wednesday, we will hold a maritime demonstration by kayak and yacht in the sea. Next year, I will sail to Okinawa and Taiwan on a boat with young people. I hope this voyage of peace would comfort and encourage residents suffering from military bases there and appeal to solidarity with them. We will not be able to eliminate war and all military bases in our generation. Still, for the sake of our children, we can shut down military bases that have entered our villages. I believe it is not our option but our duty to do so.
Common issues for the improvement of the Jeju EIA system

By Yoon Yea-yl, sociologist

On Jan. 14, 2022, there was a panel discussion titled, ‘Environment Impact Assessment and sites at issue,’ in Jeju City. Current conflicts due to development in Jeju include the Jeju 2nd airport in Seongsan, the naval base entry road in Gangjeong, the Bijarim-ro in Songdang, the Animal Theme Park in Seonheul 2-ri, the city bypass in Seogwipo City. Regardless of their different aspects, all are closely related to the issues of the Environment Impact Assessment (hereafter, ‘EIA’) process. The purpose of the panel discussion was to examine the situations in the five sites focused on the matter of the EIA and to seek direction for the improvement of the EIA. The speakers were: Oum Mun-hee (People Protecting Gangjeong Stream), Kim Soon-ae (People Doing All Things to Save the Bijarim-ro), Lee Sang-young (Seonheul 2-ri), Seo Shin-shim (People Who Want a Green Zone Park Instead of Seogwipo City Bypass), and Lee Young-ung (Jeju People’s Assembly Against the 2nd Airport). These common issues were confirmed: Firstly, the matter of poor and false investigation. A common experience was that investigation methods were arbitrary and investigation content was unreliable in the EIA writing. Secondly, the matter of accuracy and fairness in the investigation process and assessment: Because of the subordinate relationship between the entrepreneur and the assessment agent, there are many cases that an EIA cannot be ethically performed. Therefore, people raised the necessity of residents’ joining in the EIA, forming an EIA review committee with open meeting notes, and if necessary, having an EIA conflict-arbitration council and expert committee to review issues of falsehoods and poor discipline.

President-elect should call off pledge to pursue Jeju 2nd airport

Yoon Suk-yeol, elected president on Mar. 9, emphasized the drive for the Jeju 2nd airport project more than other presidential candidates in the election campaign. Announced in 2015, the Jeju 2nd airport is planned to be built in an area of around 5,450,000㎡ in Seongsan, eastern Jeju. Many islanders suspect it would be an air force base. The islanders have continued to protest against the 2nd airport. In the public poll jointly conducted by the Jeju Island government and Jeju Council in Feb. 2021, a majority of islanders voiced their opposition to the project. According to the Jeju People’s Assembly Against the 2nd Airport, the islanders directly confronted the ‘ecological destruction, deterioration of living environment and deepening climate crisis.’ However, the Moon Jae-in government and ruling party wasted time with various excuses even though they were supposed to immediately cancel the 2nd airport project. Further, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport is continuing service work despite the Ministry of Environment’s returning-back of the strategic environmental impact assessment last July. Currently in the sky of Seongsan, people have even noticed a flying HH-60P (Black Hawk) which can hardly be seen in Jeju. The people’s struggle against the 2nd airport project will continue under the new government.

Resumption of construction

Despite concern about environmental damage, construction projects which are suspected to be connected with the Jeju 2nd airport project were resumed or are likely to resume sooner or later. One is the Bijarim-ro road expansion project which was halted for the last two years. In February, the Yeongsan River Basin Environmental Office approved the Jeju government’s environmental reduction measures for the Bijarim-ro road construction. But People Doing All Things to Save the Bijarim-ro filed a lawsuit to nullify the Jeju Island government decision last December. The court dismissed the lawsuit but the people appealed and trials are now in process in the higher court. Meanwhile, in January, the Jeju Island government started construction on the Seogwipo City bypass, a project to install a 4.2 km six lane highway across the city. The People Who Want a Green Zone Park Instead of Seogwipo City Bypass call for a prompt halt to construction, saying that the construction would destroy the environment, citizens’ pleasant livelihood and rights to an educational environment. Otherwise, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport is enforcing the construction of the Jeju Southern Area Airway Radar installation with the Jeju government’s permission. Construction resumed in March on a parasitic cone at the 1100m point of Halla mountain. The project had been pending for five months amid controversy on the environment damage and illegal approval process. Civic groups in Jeju assert that all the reckless development and militarization which aggravates the climate crisis should be stopped.
Hosting International Visitors at the Alddreu Memorial

I visited Gangjeong Village with nine young adults from the United States, Germany, and Japan in December, and we were invited to participate in the commemoration of the 84th anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre. Our visit to Gangjeong and learning about the history of 4.3 gave us an opportunity to consider the true meaning of peace. The young adults from Germany said they thought nothing else would surprise them because they had already known and learned about the dark realities of the Nazi regime, the main culprit of World War II. However, when we learned how brutal militarism was still continuing on this dazzlingly beautiful island, they did not know how to describe their emotions. This reminded me that we need to learn from our history and never forget so we do not repeat these mistakes. The young adults from the United States said that they had a meaningful and precious time learning about a painful but important history regarding their own country acting on this small island in Korea. Even if the US was not directly involved with the Nanjing massacre, it is not at all unrelated when you consider the US-Japan agreements on the colonization of Korea. This ruthless massacre 84 years ago is a horrific incident that took place in China, where hundreds of thousands of Chinese civilians were illegally and brutally slaughtered and deprived of their livelihoods by the Japanese military. Remembering and commemorating these events gives us a direction for how we should live in the present. We will listen and learn eagerly about the history and the ongoing struggles, so that we can return to our own countries and share these lessons with our friends and communities. Even if it is a small act, we promise to put into practice the act of peace we learned from our Gangjeong friends and apply it to our lives.
Heading into “New Space” imperialism more and more

On Dec. 29, 2021, there was a 2nd launch test of a rocket made by Perigee Aerospace Co. and supported by KAIST in Yongsu-ri, Hangyeong-myeon, Jeju. The small, 3.2 meter long, 51 kg rocket dropped a few seconds after launch due to a gust of wind. More than that, it was a shock to see a group of birds who were flying in a v shape suddenly lose their ways and scatter around the rocket launch area. The Jeju government’s Dec. 28 press release said that with this launch, it expected “an opportunity for Jeju to join the space competition in the era of New Space, as well as to overcome the vulnerability of Jeju industry structure focused on agriculture, fishing and tourism, and spark a transition into future industry such as technology-intensive aerospace.” Fourteen civic groups made a joint statement in opposition to the rocket launch which accelerates ecological system destruction, the climate crisis, reckless development and the militarization of space. The third test was held closed to the public on Mar. 24.

Otherwise, the South Korean government has rocket launch, satellite, and space-probe implementation plans all for this year, for the first time in the history of South Korean space development, costing around 600 million USD in 2022, which is an increase of 18.9% from 2021. It also plans to equip a nuclear powered battery in a landing module to the moon in 2030. On Mar. 19, South Korean Air Force Chief of Staff Park In-ho had a bilateral meeting with James Dickinson, Commander of the United States Space Command, to strengthen the ROK-US space partnership. South Korea plans to create a space operation command in 2030. On Mar. 30, the South Korean Agency for Space Development stated that it succeeded in the first test launch for the verification of efficiency performance of the solid propulsion of a space launch vehicle. Solid-propellent engines are mainly for military use. Meanwhile, President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol has emphasized the combination of aerospace technology with defense. South Korea is heading into imperialism more and more under the name of ‘New Space.’

Resisting to the attempt to secure a supply line for THAAD

The United States has obstinately demanded the South Korean government to secure a supply line for the THAAD base which has illegally been installed in Soseong-ri. This would facilitate the smooth operation of THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense), a strategic weapon against China. The South Korean government yielded to the US demand and started to mobilize a large-scale police force since last May, which has enforced the operation to secure a normal land route to the base more than 90 times as of March 17, 2022, and the police operation currently continues three days a week. The securing of a land route to the THAAD base at all times means complete and permanent deployment of THAAD which threatens the peace of Korea. The residents of Soseong-ri and many citizens nationwide who demand the demolition of THAAD are continuing their persistent struggle to protect the nation's sovereignty so that Korea does not fall victim to the heated US vs. China confrontation.

Regrettably, Yoon Seok-youl, who was elected this March as the next president of South Korea, is a very bellicose figure who adopts an aggressive anti-North Korea strategy with the pretext of North Korea's nuclear and missile threat, has a blind faith in the ROK-US alliance, and openly talks about acts of invasion (pre-emptive strike) which are strictly stipulated as illegal in international law and the South Korean Constitution. However, we, the people, will never give up the struggle to demolish THAAD and extend the scope of the struggle to the issues of US bases and US forces of Korea.

War drill updates

From Jan. 5 to 20 off Guam, six nations which included the Quad of Australia, India, Japan, & the United States, along with Canada and South Korea conducted an annual anti-submarine exercise called the Sea Dragon 22, which is focused on countering China. From Feb. 25 to Mar. 4, the South Korean navy also joined a multi-nation joint marine exercise called Milan 2022 off Visakhaptnam, hosted by India. 16 nations including the Quad joined and 30 nations' observed. And from Feb. 2 to 18, there was a joint air drill called Cope North joined by the United States, Australia, and Japan. The US Pacific Air Forces said it was for “dissuading North Korea or any potential adversaries from military action.”

On Mar. 21, the US Defense Department reconfirmed its position that ROK-US combined drills are ‘a principal method’ of combined alliance readiness. The United States Forces Korea told the VOA that they “remain at a high level of “fight tonight” readiness” in relation to the North Korean media's criticism that the ROK-US combined drills continue despite the ROK's promise to halt drills. On Mar. 30, ROK and US top military chairmen met in Hawaii and updated joint wartime contingency plans. The 2022 GFP (Global Firepower) ranked the military power of South and North Korea respectively at 6th and 30th.
Whales Will Save the World’s Climate—Unless the Military Destroys Them First (Excerpts)

By Koohan Paik-Mander

Until now, sonar in the oceans has been exclusively used for military purposes. This is about to change. There is a “subsea data network” being developed that would use sonar as a component of undersea Wi-Fi for mixed civilian and military use. Scientists from member nations of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), including, but not limited to Australia, China, the UK, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, are creating what is called the “Internet of Underwater Things,” or IoUT. They are busy at the drawing board, designing data networks consisting of sonar and laser transmitters to be installed across vast undersea expanses. These transmitters would send sonar signals to a network of transponders on the ocean surface, which would then send 5G signals to satellites. Utilized by both industry and military, the data network would saturate the ocean with sonar waves. This does not bode well for whale wellness or the climate. And yet, promoters are calling this development the “smart ocean.” The military is orchestrating a similar overhaul on land and in space. Known as the Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2), it would interface with the subsea sonar data network. It would require a grid of satellites that could control every coordinate on the planet and in the atmosphere, rendering a real-life, 3D chessboard, ready for high-tech battle. In service to the JADC2, thousands more satellites are being launched into space. Reefs are being dredged and forests are being razed throughout Asia and the Pacific as an ambitious system of “mini-bases” is being erected on as many islands as possible—missile deployment stations, satellite launch pads, radar tracking stations, aircraft carrier ports, live-fire training areas and other facilities—all for satellite-controlled war. The system of mini-bases, in communication with the satellites, and with aircraft, ships and undersea submarines (via sonar), will be replacing the bulky brick-and-mortar bases of the 20th century. Its data-storage cloud, called JEDI (Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure), will be co-developed at a cost of tens of billions of dollars. The Pentagon has requested bids on the herculean project from companies like Microsoft, Amazon, Oracle and Google...Viewed from a climate perspective, the Department of Defense is flagrantly barreling away from its stated mission, to “ensure our nation’s security.” The ongoing atrocities of the U.S. military against whales and marine ecosystems make a mockery of any of its climate initiatives. While the slogan “Save the Whales” has been bandied about for decades, they’re the ones actually saving us. In destroying them, we destroy ourselves. For the full text, see "Whales Will Save the World’s Climate—Unless the Military Destroys Them First," Dec. 2021

US Indo-Pacific Strategy to exacerbate regional tensions

by Curry

Since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, commentators have hypothesized whether or not outcomes would be similar to the war in Ukraine if China invaded Taiwan. Recently, tensions have mounted around Taiwan amid increasingly provocative language and military maneuvers by both the US and China. Meanwhile, the Biden administration released an updated Indo-Pacific Strategy. Warning of China’s “coercion and aggression” as it “seeks to become the world’s most influential power,” the document declares, “The United States is investing in [...] competing with the PRC [China] [...] building a balance of influence in the world that is maximally favorable to the United States.” Taking for granted the US military presence around the world and ignoring US coercion and aggression (including invasions), the document portrays the US as a proponent of a so-called “free and open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient” Indo-Pacific, while in fact outlining strategies to maintain US dominance as “the world’s most influential power” by modernizing alliances (including the Quad, AUKUS, cooperation with NATO in the region, and ‘strengthened ties’ between South Korea and Japan), “increasing the scope and complexity of our joint exercises and operations,” “deepen[ing] our interoperability,” and “link[ing] our defense industrial bases.” The document reiterates the US policy of “supporting Taiwan’s self-defense capabilities.” US arms sales to Taiwan have been contentious throughout the history of US relations with the PRC, and recent arms sales, US troops in Taiwan, and visits by high-ranking former officials have stoked tensions. On Jan. 27, Chinese ambassador to the US Qin Gang warned, “If the Taiwanese authorities, emboldened by the United States, keep going down the road for independence, it most likely will involve China and the United States, the two big countries, in the military conflict.” The US double standard does not deter but actually encourages competitors like Russia and China to use military aggression to dominate other peoples and natural resources. Without de-escalation and demilitarization, the region and world cannot be truly secure. References: “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States” (Feb. 2022), Michael Klare, “The Geopolitics of Hell” (Mar. 7, 2022).

Yoon drives for Nuclear Power Plant

Eleven years have passed since the Fukushima nuclear power accident. The majority of South Korean public polls supported denuclearization and the incumbent Moon Jae-in government advocated a policy to phase-out nuclear power plants. (At the same time, it also promoted the export of nuclear power plants and drove for the introduction of a nuclear submarine). However, president-elect Yoon Suk-Yeol has adopted the slogan, ‘most powerful nation for nuclear power plants.’ The presidential transition committee plans to include nuclear power plants in the K-Green Taxonomy and foster a nuclear power industry including the Small Modular Reactor (SMR). South Korea is the nation with the highest density of nuclear power plants in the world and the risk of nuclear power plant accidents is growing. Otherwise, if Fukushima’s nuclear-contaminated water is released next spring, its first landfall may be Jeju. Citizens’ fight for denuclearization and halting the release of nuclear-contaminated water will become ever more critical.
Hawaii Groups Wary of Military’s Sudden Decision to Shut Down Red Hill

by Ann Wright

After stalling for decades in addressing the dangers of the massive Red Hill jet fuel storage facility in Honolulu, in a surprising move on March 7, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin ordered the leaking 80-year-old jet fuel tanks to be drained of their 180 million gallons of jet fuel and the facility permanently closed. The decision comes after years of protest by the community and endless warnings by the Honolulu Board of Water Supply that the continued leaks in the tank system, which includes twenty 20 story tanks and tens of miles of pipes, was headed for a catastrophic leak that could endanger the water supply of Honolulu which is located only 100 feet below the tanks that were built in World War II. The predicted massive leak occurred in November 2021 and contaminated the drinking water of 93,000 persons, including many of the military’s own families.

[...] Sierra Club-Hawaii and Earthjustice [...] have led the legal challenge to the military’s continued operation of the leaking tanks. [...] O’ahu Water Protectors, one of the major citizen activist groups that organized numerous press conferences, educational webinars and sign-wavings, demanded that the Red Hill facility be defueled and shut down as soon as possible as fuel in the tanks present[s] an imminent threat to Honolulu’s aquifer and that DOD pay for remediation of the aquifer and contaminated sites. [...] They also call for the reimbursement to affected families [...] and establishment of a Community Oversight board. Camille Kalama, an organizer for Ka‘ohewai, a coalition of Hawaiian organizations that came together for Kapukaki or Red Hill, said “This is a first step. The decision has been made but the actual defueling, decommissioning, and rehabilitating the surrounding area is going to take time. We are committed to seeing that through. [...]”

In November 2021 [...] an overflow drainpipe [...] released an estimated 19,000 gallons of jet fuel into the Red Hill drinking water. [...] The contaminated Red Hill well provided the drinking water for over 93,000 persons who live in residential area[s] on military bases and the surrounding civilian neighborhoods. [...] Thousands of military and civilian family members went to emergency rooms with rashes, headaches, hair loss, burning skin and throats, vomiting, motor dysfunction and other neurological issues all consistent with petroleum poisoning. Activists fear that the Department of Defense will “slow roll” its decision to drain the tanks and keep the Red Hill fuel tanks open on a “temporary” basis that could last years. Residents of O‘ahu remind the US military that as residents on an island filled with four major military bases that are considered to be vital national security facilities, that the health and safety of the inhabitants of the island must be also be considered as a vital national security imperative even more important than the international political issues of the region. (excerpted from the article published at PopularResistance.org on March 9)

“Water is Life: Choosing Water Over War”

A webinar hosted by World Beyond War on Feb. 19/20 (available on Youtube) featured speakers from Hawaii, Guahan, the Philippines, Okinawa and Jeju. Each of these islands has experienced overthrow of local governance, militarization extending US geopolitical dominance, desecration of sacred places, and contamination of drinking waters. Kamanamaikalani Beamer recognized that often, these days, water is not appreciated until it is gone, destroyed by people in power who follow a ‘take, plunder, consume, conquer, kill philosophy.” Shinako Oyakawa shared an Okinawan expression that if your water is dirty, you can't just wash it. Sunghee Choi suggested we can start organizing based on wide-spread awareness about the climate crisis and environmental destruction. Walden Bello called for demilitarization to be a political priority. Maria Hernandez reminded us that our work is for the futures of our children.

“Love Letters to Water”

In honor of International Women’s Day (Mar. 8) and World Water Day (Mar. 22), Margo Okazawa-Rey, Kim Compoc and Gwyn Kirk of the International Women’s Network Against Militarism hosted a conversation between women in California, Guahan, Hawai‘i, Japan, Jeju, Okinawa and the Philippines to share about their precious water resources- oceans, aquifers, rivers, and wells, point out the devastation caused by military pollution, and celebrate the inspiring women water protectors who monitor damage caused by the military, speak out, organize protests, and build community. The conversation was recorded for radio and can be heard at archives.kpfa.org/data/20220313–Sun2100.mp3 and supplemental photos and background information can be found at instagram.com/genuine_security.
Gangjeong has no expectations for Yoon

On Mar. 9, 2022, Yoon Suk-yeol, a conservative, won over Lee Jae-Myung of the ruling Democratic Party in the South Korean presidential election, with a razor-thin margin of 0.73%. (In Jeju, Lee won over Yoon by a margin of about 10%). Yoon came to Gangjeong Village in February during the campaign. He said that the Jeju Naval Base “opened the prelude for self-reliance and peace based on strong power.” Moon Jae-in, the incumbent president, had also emphasized “peace through power.” Both big ruling and opposition parties have no true concern with peace. They all advocate militarism regardless of their styles. Yoon is a little plainer.

A few days after being elected, he appointed Kim Tae-hyo, a former secretary to the president for international strategy to lead the foreign policy/ security branch of the presidential transition committee. Kim was involved in the poll-manipulating ‘comment operation’ which impacted nationally important issues such as the Jeju navy base project, taking a linking role between the Lee Myung-bak presidential office and the military cyber command in 2012. He was finally indicted in 2018 and is still waiting for a Supreme Court sentence. He also created a stir for his closed-door drive for the ROK-Japan GSOMIA (General Security of Military Information Agreement) in 2012. On May 27, 2019, the South Korean National Police Agency’s truth investigation committee on human rights violations urged the national government, Jeju Island government, and various state institutes “to apologize and hold a truth examination on their unjust acts against anti-navy base people.” However, it was not done under the Moon government, except for deceptive lip-service apologies. Truth examination became more far away. With the incoming Yoon government, people’s struggle for peace will be more necessary to stop South Korea from falling deeper and deeper into the trap of US outposts against China, and to save people and Earth from capitalist exploitation and the climate crisis. Given that peace in Korea is one of the keys for Northeast Asia and the world, there is no time for despair. See also ‘South Korea’s New Conservative President Will Likely Setback Peace and Gender Equality’ by Christine Ahn, founder and executive director, Women Cross DMZ, March 2022

Shamefully Aggressive Arms Exports

It was shameful to see President Moon Jae-in visit Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and UAE in January to sell South Korean-made arms such as Cheongung II, a medium range surface-to-air missile and K-9 self-propelled artillery, followed by the navy chief of staff who visited Indonesia and Oman in February for military industry cooperation and military exchange. South Korea became the 6th ranking arms export nation, with exports exceeding imports for the first time in 2021. It is largely thanks to the aggressive sales by the government, military authorities, and arms corporations all together. According to the UN Comtrade database, South Korea’s arms exports increased 332% since 2008. The contract between Hanwha Defense and the Australian government for 1 trillion KRW of K-9 self-propelled artillery last December is noticeable, as Hanwha is now pursuing various expanded projects of construction, space, satellite, finance, and security in Australia based on such security partnership. Worse, South Korea has been infamous for selling arms especially to conflict zones, such as selling arms to Israel who attacks Palestine. In 2011, Hanwha’s Barracuda armored car was even deployed to oppress people who joined the West Papua People’s Council. What a shame!

Kim Jin-suk’s 37 year struggle

There are many workers who are in solidarity with Gangjeong. One of them is Kim Jin-suk (62). 37 years ago, she was laid off for her labor union activities by the Korea Shipbuilding Corporation (which was later transferred to Hanjin Heavy Industry Co.). Since then, she has been fighting together with many other comrades against the oppression of workers. In 2011, she climbed up a crane and staged a 309-day high-altitude sit-in there, which inspired a nationwide ‘Hope Bus’ solidarity project. Just before reaching retirement age on Dec. 30, 2020, she walked from Busan to the Presidential Office in Seoul along with many supporters, including other laid-off workers, to demand her reinstatement. More than 800 people fasted in solidarity with her. Not long after Dongbu Construction Consortium took over Hanjin Heavy Industry, discussion on her reinstatement accelerated. Finally on Feb. 23, an agreement on her honorary reinstatement and retirement was realized. On Feb. 25, an event for her reinstatement was carried out at the company square on Dec. 30, 2020, she walked from Busan to the Presidential Office in Seoul along with many supporters, including other laid-off workers, to demand her reinstatement. More than 800 people fasted in solidarity with her. Not long after Dongbu Construction Consortium took over Hanjin Heavy Industry, discussion on her reinstatement accelerated. Finally on Feb. 23, an agreement on her honorary reinstatement and retirement was realized. On Feb. 25, an event for her reinstatement was carried out at the company square of Hanjin Heavy Industry in Busan. Many people participated, including Fr. Mun Jeong-hyeon who, along with the late Paik Ki-wan, has supported Kim for a long time and flew from Gangjeong to join her on that happy day.

Trial Updates

On Dec. 7, 2021, South Korea’s Supreme Court dismissed an appeal by Hwang Yong-woon, an activist opposing the Jeju 2nd airport. Hwang had been charged with injury to a government employee during the Jeju government’s crack-down on the anti-2nd airport sit-in tent on Jan. 17, 2019. Hwang pled not guilty, but the original court made a decision of 700,000 KRW fines against him. The higher court also dismissed his appeal. On Dec. 17, 2021, the Jeju local court sentenced Lee Hyoung-lae to 1.5 million KRW in fines with one year probation on and Kim Gug-sang to 1 million KRW in fines with one year probation. The two, along with Kim Kuk-nam and Br. Yang Un-gi, had been charged with obstruction of business for their anti-Jeju navy base protests during 2013-2014. The latter two were exempted from punishment on the same day as they had already gone through punishments for the same charges in other prior trials. All four had been ruled not-guilty in their 1st and higher courts but on Oct. 28, 2021, the Supreme Court remanded their cases after reversing the rulings, saying they are all guilty. Such cases of the Supreme Court reversing from not-guilty to guilty and remanding court decisions have been very rare in the 15 year struggle against the Jeju navy base.
Presente!

Rev. Kim Hong-sul!
Rev. Kim Hong-sul, an activist for the poor people in Busan passed away on Feb. 5. He was 67 years old. He came to Gangjeong whenever he had time. He was arrested for anti-base protests in 2012 and for that, chose prison instead of paying fines in 2015. When Yang Yoon-mo carried out a hunger strike in prison in 2013, Rev. Kim made a solidarity fast outside the prison, too. He also carried out a 43 days’ fast following the Sewol ferry tragedy in 2014.

Rev. Paul Schneiss!
Rev. Paul Schneiss passed away on Feb. 11 at the age of 89. He was born in Germany in 1933. For decades, he supported and made solidarity with the South Korean democracy, human rights, peace and reunification movements. He received the May 18 Memorial Foundation’s “special merit prize” in 2021. He visited Gangjeong in 2012 and 2013 and showed continued solidarity for Gangjeong and Jeju since then. He wrote in 2014: “Peace does not come by itself, we have to fight for it.”

Joan G. Engel!
Joan G. Engel, an American, passed away on Mar. 2, 2022, a few days short of 86 years of age. She and her husband Ron visited Gangjeong in 2012, during the IUCN meeting in Jeju. Moved by the beauty of Gangjeong, they encouraged the people’s anti-Jeju navy base struggle with warm hearts and prayers. According to Ron, Joan “profoundly lamented the tragic events of our times, and prayed that the suffering of so many millions across the world could somehow be lifted.”

Hyun Lee!
Hyun Lee passed away on Mar. 7, 2022, at the age of 52. She was born in Korea but moved with her family to the United States in her teenage years. She was one of the leaders of the Korean American peace movement with her excellent ability and integrity. She was also a strong supporter of the Gangjeong movement against the Jeju navy base. In 2016, along with Juyeon Rhee, she was denied entry by the South Korean government which was afraid of their leadership in the peace movement. Women Cross DMZ and Korea Peace Now! wrote in memoriam of her, “This multi-generational, grassroots, people-powered movement that Hyun helped create is what led to the first Congressional resolution calling for an end to the Korean War with a peace agreement.”

Stop the War in Ukraine!

How You Can Help
1. Write a letter to the South Korean government to close the Jeju base and to the US government to stop the use of it.
2. Stay updated by joining our Facebook groups and following us on twitter.
3. Organize a solidarity event (concert, movie screening, protest, etc…)
4. Then share about it on social media.
5. Visit Gangjeong!
6. For other ways to help and more visit us on the web.

For More Information
http://www.SaveJejuNow.org
http://www.facebook.com/groups/NoNavalBase
http://www.facebook.com/SaveJeju
http://www.twitter.com/SaveJejuNow

For Gangjeong related videos, visit savejejunow.org
or check these Vimeo/Youtube users :
Vimeo : cho sung bong / DH Song / Regis Tremblay
Youtube : Gang-Jeong Il-Gi / Shalomsea / 1234yz100 / Sungbong2012

“Want peace talks, not war drills and military confrontation,” 356 civil society organizations from around the world joined the Korea Peace Appeal’s statement opposing the provocative ROK-US war drills planned for mid-April. “Deeply concerned about the recent increase in military tensions on the Korean Peninsula,” “we urge the governments of the ROK and the United States to suspend the combined military exercises and to instead actively pursue a path to peace.” See more and join the Korea Peace Appeal at endthekoreanwar.net

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