

JEJU NAVY BASE: HYPE VS. FACT

Part of the Lee regime’s “full-spectrum domination” has been iron-fisted control of the mainstream media, which has presented thoroughly inaccurate and imbalanced reports on the proposed navy base, with no room for alternative voices. Below, we address much of the government hype, and set the facts straight.

GOVERNMENT OF REPUBLIC OF KOREA (ROK): All environmental laws have been strictly followed in the construction of the “Civilian-Military Complex Tour Beauty.” (*This is the government’s official name for the navy base.*)

FACT: From the very beginning of planning the base, the Korean government has left in its wake a trail of broken environmental laws. In 2009, the Mayor of Gangjeong and 437 villagers sued the Minister Of Defense for granting permission to begin the naval base construction before the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed. The lower courts agreed, voiding the construction plans. The Navy appealed, but even while the case was still being considered, the military began base construction in March 2010.

After a suit by villagers, the Navy finally conducted an EIA, an incomplete one. The Korean Federation of Environmental Movements informed the Navy that several endangered species failed to make it into the report. The EIA also failed to study or even acknowledge the existence of the numerous coral species within the area of the base construction. It only examined coral species immediately *outside* the construction area, including in the UNESCO biosphere reserve area surrounding Tiger Island. Sixty-six separate coral species thrive here. And though the path of enormous cruise liners and destroyer warships will pass through the buffer zone of this UNESCO reserve, the EIA makes no mention of it whatsoever, let alone the tremendous impact these ships will have on the UNESCO reserve.

These are but a few of the countless laws which have been violated in connection to base construction. There are many more. For example, Gangjeong villagers are acutely distressed that no adequate impact study was ever conducted of their legendary freshwater source, which has been contaminated by blasting. Another example of disregard for the law was revealed in a May 2012 Headline Jeju story that reported that the massive ten-story, 8,800-ton concrete caissons that have been placed amongst the corals have been improperly and illegally reinforced with insufficient steel. Yet another example is the continual dredging and blasting that has taken place without functional silt protectors to protect coral colonies from construction sediment. The ROK government continues to flout the law, just to push this mega-construction project through.

In the face of these numerous, egregious violations, IUCN Director-General Marton-Lefevre said, “We trust that the Korean government has complied with all relevant domestic laws in planning and developing this port.”

ROK: Public meetings have been conducted to ensure fair and democratic participation by the communities impacted.

FACT: According to the Gangjeong villagers, the only accurate tally of their feelings on the base was at an August 20, 2007 referendum. Ninety-four percent of the villagers who voted opposed the base. However, the ROK government refuses to acknowledge this legal referendum. (*See p. 2 article: DEMOCRACY IN ACTION.*)

ROK: The navy base was solely the idea of the Republic of Korea, and will be operated with no U.S. involvement.

FACT: The military relationship between South Korea and the U.S. is complex and requires knowledge of the current trends in the latest Pentagon priority to militarize the Asia-Pacific. The fashion these days is to practice what’s called “inter-operability,” an economical, expedient way for the U.S. to ensure economic dominance over markets, trade routes, resources and energy.

Part of “inter-operability” is when U.S. allies make the “sovereign” agreement to share their bases, troops and weapons systems. For example, the Philippines is agreeing to give the U.S. permission to use its former bases, even though they will still be “officially” Filipino bases. Same with the new base agreement with Darwin, Australia. Other similar negotiations are in the works with Vietnam and Myanmar.

Inter-operability with the proposed Jeju base also has other aspects to it. First, the stated military necessity for the Jeju base is to serve as a port for Lockheed-Martin-manufactured Aegis-missile systems mounted on destroyer warships. And the hallmark of the Aegis missile system, and all satellite-based military technology, is the capability for “inter-operability.” In this case, “inter-operability” means that the machinery is all compatible with an enormous, interlinked satellite network system for communicating, tracking missiles and shooting them down. By selling Aegis missile systems to Korea and other countries, the U.S. is able to get these nations to interlink with the American technological systems, and its inherent U.S. agenda. Sort of like buying all Apple products that are compatible with only their own or certain other brands. Once the other countries are on the U.S. system, the U.S. can rely on these allies – and save significant amounts of money -- to handle jobs that the U.S. itself might formerly have had taken responsibility for, through its own overseas base. At the same time that the U.S. saves money letting another country do the job, inter-operability enables American arms manufacturers to profit prodigiously in exports. It’s “win-win” for everyone, without the unsavory image of the U.S. as a colonizer.

At the same time, inter-operability is a key method by which the delineations of nation-states dissolve into the shadow of corporate dominance. For example, Samsung, South Korea’s mega-powerful corporation that owns the nation’s biggest department stores and minimart chains, as well as owning a huge construction division, and the country’s most successful electronics manufacturer, also has three arms divisions. Samsung also manufactures electronic thermal imaging systems for Israeli tanks, in partnership with the French arms manufacturer Thales. Hyundai, another Korean mega-corporation, partners with Lockheed-Martin in the manufacture of Aegis missile technology. South Korea is the world’s second largest importer of arms and the government has stated that its goal is to become the seventh largest exporter by 2015. It soon becomes apparent that this merging of military technologies between countries – a function of “inter-operability” – is less about supporting one’s allies, as it is about realigning global power along the lines of the militarized elite versus everyone else and the natural world. When all is said and done, it doesn’t really matter what nation is behind the Jeju base; these bases are all serving only

the same international cadre of defense manufacturers.

But that is not to say that the nation-state dimension does not exist. The U.S. views a rising China as a threat. As a result, two camps of nations are globally coalescing to give us a new Cold War for the 21st century. Countries will be lucky to remain neutral and escape pressures to collaborate with either one or the other superpowers. And poor Korea, because of its geographic positioning, is smack dab in the middle of the front lines. There is an ancient Korean saying, “When the whales fight, the shrimp gets his back broken.”

As mentioned earlier, South Korea has stated that the primary purpose of this base is to berth Aegis warships. And the U.S. has already stated its intention to encircle both China and Russia with Aegis missile destroyers. Strategically, the Jeju base is perfectly positioned for this, since it is located only 300 miles from China. Because the Aegis technology has a far greater success rate if it can strike another missile as it makes its way up, it is crucial that the base be this close to China where it can catch one of China’s hypothetical missiles on the upswing. Many Koreans find this excruciatingly disconcerting, since China is a friendly trading partner, the beloved historical and cultural forbear, and certainly not an enemy. However, should any skirmishes, such as the current tinderbox in the South China Sea, devolve into all-out war, Jeju will be China’s first-strike target. Jeju Islanders do not want to be the sacrificial lambs to the U.S.’s competition with China for global dominance.

Finally, there is the definitive connection between the U.S. military and the proposed Jeju base. That is the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty, which enables U.S. troops to use any Korean base they wish at any time, and that during a state of “emergency,” the South Korean military shall become subordinate to the U.S. military. Such an agreement results from the fact that no peace treaty to the Korean War was ever signed. The war is officially still ongoing, which has been a great boon to arms manufacturers over the decades which have everything to lose from a peaceful, unified Korean peninsula.

ROK: The “Civilian-Military Complex Tour Beauty” will boost Jeju’s economy through its capacity to harbor two 150,000-ton cruise ships.

FACT: The name of the proposed 20-warship base was officially euphemized as the “Civilian-Military Complex Tour Beauty” in order to gain public support. However, only 5% of the \$970 million budget has been allocated for civilian use. The port was conceived as a military base and is intended to function primarily as one.

One of the lures of the “Civilian-Military Complex Tour Beauty” has been a slickly produced artist’s rendering that features two 150,000-ton cruise ships berthed within the breakwater, no doubt transporting thousands of eager tourists who are on Jeju to spend money. They don’t mention that there are only six such ships in the world. In fact, cruise ships over 100,000 tons have entered Korea only twice in the past. It is outright fantasy to conjecture that two such ships would be simultaneously harbored at the “Civilian-Military Complex,” as advertised. What’s more, there is already one commercial port capable of harboring large cruise ships on Jeju, and it’s appropriately close to the airport. There’s no need for another. The “Civilian-Military Complex Tour Beauty” is balderdash.

But the real giveaway to this outrageous scam is the result of an investigation last February conducted by a committee within the prime minister’s office, which showed serious flaws in the base plan. To begin with, the base is preposterously situated not in a protected harbor as all well-planned ports are, but rather, exposed to open seas. Naturally, such a plan poses serious problems with wind and cross-wind pressure, as the government report confirms. In fact, in late August, Typhoon Bolaven pummeled the construction site, setting the project back, and leaving the ocean floor and coastline littered with concrete chunks of 8,800-ton caissons and tetrapods.

An equally critical design flaw is the too-narrow turning field within the breakwater – **not even 14,000-ton military ships have enough space to turn around**, let alone 150,000-ton cruise ships! Nonetheless, the Ministry of National Defense was unwilling to admit the non-functionality of the port, even though two of its own officials worked on the study. That’s because fixing the flawed plan would require another time-consuming environmental assessment, which would mean at least another year’s delay in construction – and a delay in huge profits to Samsung and other base contractors. As a result, they are plowing ahead, come hell or high water.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly responded to the revelatory report by whacking a whopping 96% off the base-construction budget for 2012, withholding funds presumably until a functional plan can be drawn up. However, because 75% of the 2011 budget still remained unused due to delays caused by protests, the Lee regime continues to bulldoze the project through on last year’s budget, against the wishes of the nation’s representative body. So much for democracy in South Korea.

ROK: The most pressing needs addressed by constructing this new base relate to national security.

FACT: There are well over 100 U.S. and Korean military installations in South Korea, and a binding Korea-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty in place. The small nation of South Korea does not need another base. What it needs is to conserve its few remaining areas of biodiversity, and a fair and honest government.

So far, Jeju Island has escaped the taint of industrialized militarism, unlike scores of traditional sustainable communities throughout South Korea that have been bulldozed for base-building. This is one reason why Jeju’s designation as “Peace Island” is particularly significant.

ROK: Numerous burials at the construction site have been properly cared for.

FACT: No special care was given to the remains of deceased villagers. Selected descendants were given monetary compensation as bulldozing and construction continues over the gravesites.

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Image: Gangjeong UK

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WCC 2012 UNDERWAY AMIDST ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN-RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Only four miles to the east of the Jungmun Resort, in traumatized Gangjeong Village, construction has begun on a huge new military base, big enough to house 7,000 navy personnel, 20 warships, including nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, submarines and Aegis Missile Defense destroyers, in a thinly veiled threat against the U.S.’s new global competitor — China. Construction crews are rapidly devastating a region of rare beauty, vibrant soft-coral habitats, pure freshwater springs, numerous endangered species, and traditional sustainable cultures and villages, while police actions are brutalizing local populations who attempt to oppose the development.

BEFORE

Image: Jung Woo-Chul



Until March 2012, pure freshwater springs bubbled up from the rocky Gureombi coastline.

Nothing could be more diametrically opposed to the values espoused by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which describes the World Conservation Congress (WCC) as “the world’s largest and most important conservation event,” aiming “to improve how we manage our natural environment for human, social and economic development.” In fact, the base-construction project violates every principle and sub-principle of the Earth Charter, which IUCN adopted in 2004 as a “guide to IUCN policy and programme.”

Yet when environmental groups beseeched IUCN leadership to take a stance on the project which was railroaded through in violation of numerous civil-rights and environmental laws, the Director-General and President passed the buck: “IUCN recognizes that the Republic of Korea has a responsibility for its own national security...”

This newsletter has been created by people who risked arrest, their jobs, and deportation, in order to bring you the truth.

On the other hand, Gangjeong mayor Kang Dong-Kyun, asks, “What about the security of the villagers whose lives depend on corals, clean water and farmland? Without these resources, our future generations have no more security.”

The stance taken by IUCN leadership begs the question: At what point do we stop giving carte blanche to any government or contractor who uses the excuse of “national security” to tear up the planet with impunity?

Crimes Against Nature

Five years ago, the South Korean government announced that it would begin blasting the rare, sacred and unique lava-rock coast (affectionately called “Gureombi”). Samsung Corporation, lead contractor (and major supporter of the 2012 World Conservation Congress), began dynamiting in earnest in March 2012, despite continuous passionate protests from local Gangjeong residents. It has already transformed an extraordinary coastline into an ecological disaster area. Uniquely beautiful soft-coral forests, with very high levels of native biodiversity, extend widely across the area, directly in front of the base project. Many of the corals have been killed by the silt from construction. So far, six of a total of 144 ten-story-tall concrete caissons have been dropped amidst coral habitats. A mere mile away is the exquisite UNESCO biosphere reserve of Tiger Island. Its UNESCO buffer zone will be directly in the path of warships passing through to access the port.

The coastline features a single massive *Andesite* bed rock, with year-round fresh water streams and springs. Bubbling through the lava for millennia, these precious waters have now been contaminated by the blasting.

These places provide habitats for 400 plant species, 504 invertebrate species, 86 species of seaweed, 58 species of fish, and a 7.4-hectare soft-coral forest.

Since March 2012, concrete and construction have crushed the Gureombi habitats that had provided, for thousands of years, the many seaweeds that comprise a main source of sustenance to coastal peoples.



Image: Paço Booyah

AFTER

Threatened endangered species include the Boreal Digging Frog (*Kaloula borealis*), which is on IUCN’s Red List. Other endangered species threatened include the Red-footed Crab (*Sesarma intermedium*); the endemic Jeju Freshwater Shrimp (*Neocaridina denticulata keenbaei*); and mollusks such as the Gisoogal godong (*Clithon retropictus*).

Another endangered species doomed by the development is Korea’s last 100 Indo-Pacific Bottle-nosed Dolphins (*Tursiops aduncus*), which pass closest to Jeju off the Gangjeong coast.

Crimes Against Humanity

This base construction is not only a crime against nature, but a crime against humanity. In a single blow, the base will destroy not just ecosystems and endangered

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DEMOCRACY IN ACTION: GANGJEONG VILLAGERS UNIFIED AGAINST BASE – DENIED RIGHT TO SPEAK

Since the moment that the plan to construct the base was announced, villagers have used every possible democratic means to overturn the decision. In a 2007 referendum, 94 percent of villagers voted against base construction, but the Ko-rean government refuses to recognize this legal vote.

For five long years, they have squatted on their farmland that was seized by the government, laid down in front of cement trucks, and clambered up the floating dredging barge – anything to stop the destruction. They have filed several lawsuits pointing out the glaring deficiencies in the EIA. They have held numerous press conferences, exhibiting videos and photos that depict the Navy construction crews violating environmental regulation. They have been arrested multiple times. They have languished in prison.

And while Mayor Kang Dong-Kyun has cited continual environmental violations by the construction crews, the Navy was never punished. Instead, the government sends hundreds of riot police to arrest protestors every day for holding prayer vigils at the gates to the construction site. They are charged with “obstruction of government activities” or “obstruction of business.”

Mayor Kang, who himself was jailed for three months, observed, “If the villagers have committed any crime, it is the crime of aspiring to pass on their beautiful 400-year-old hometown to their descendants. What else? Protesting against the illegal naval base construction should not be considered a crime.”

Backstory

On April 24, 2007, Gangjeong’s now-deposed village chief Yoon Tae Jun announced his approval of the planned base and said that an application to the Jeju governor, would be made. Typically a meeting to discuss similar civic action is held after a one-week waiting period, but this time it was scheduled for only three days later. On April 26, only 87 of the Gangjeong electorate – less than 10 per-cent – were present. In an unprecedented manner, a vote to endorse the base was held by clapping. Never before in Gangjeong history had a vote been conducted this way. Yoon said he would hold another village committee meeting within 10 days and promised that if more people opposed the base, he would revoke his ap-proval. But he never followed through.

On May 14, Jeju governor Kim Tae Hwan announced that Gangjeong village would be the site. The outraged villagers mobilized, forced the village chief out of

GREENWASHING TYRANNY

The Lee Myung-bak regime competed fiercely to host the IUCN 2012 World Conservation Congress, according to insiders. The government offered the IUCN formidable sums of sponsorship money, and finally won the bid, counting on the event to thoroughly greenwash not only the naval base project, but also other irreversibly destructive projects, such as the euphemistically named Four Major Rivers Restoration Project. (This project has nothing to do with “restoration,” but, rather, is a sweetheart deal for the nation’s largest construction conglomer-ates to “straighten” Korea’s major rivers and its most loved riparian habitats into concrete canals.) Some Korean NGOs have called this Lee’s most spectacular public-relations stunt yet, and “government and corporate collusion of the highest magnitude.” It is believed that, as long as former-Hyundai-CEO Lee and his construction-industry cronies can keep the lid on everything throughout the duration of the Congress, the Korean government can come out smelling like a rose – and Samsung, Daelim, Daewoo and other contractors can rake in hundreds of millions of dollars in government contracts for base construction.

Full-spectrum domination

The hallmark of the Lee regime is its full-spectrum domination -- over free press, immigration, ability to find work, and everything else -- draconian edicts reminis-cent of the notorious Park Chung-hee dictatorship (whose daughter Park Geun-hye is the favored candidate for president this fall).

As a result, most Koreans know only the government’s fabricated story that the villagers of Gangjeong democratically elected to bring the base to their village. Foreigners are treated no better; numerous peace and environmental activists

power, and held a referendum on the proposed base in August 2007. According to Mayor Kang, “On Aug 20 we held another referendum. 94 percent opposed the base. 725 people participated. 680 voted against, only 36 for, and nine votes were defective. The central government only recognized the first vote by the villagers committee; the second one wasn’t recognized.”

IUCN Complicit

Workshop organizers who had invited Gangjeong villagers to speak on the base resistance were told by IUCN members to “dis-invite” them, because “proper procedure” required the controversial topic to be dealt with by the WCC Korean Organizing Committee.

The “Korean Organizing Committee” sounds like a benign bureau of the IUCN, working in the interest of “a just world that value and conserves nature;” actu-ally, it is not part of the IUCN at all. It is a Korean government agency, entirely separate from the IUCN, chaired by a former prime minister of South Korea. It answers to a government which has done its best to brutally crush all opposition to the navy base at Gangjeong.

IUCN spokesperson John Kidd commented, “We’d like people to learn the back-ground of these [base] issues... and to look at both sides and the facts behind the issues, versus the politics...” However, the villagers have been unable to gain official access to the Congress. The IUCN has blocked them from having their own booth, and the Korean government has banned any rallies within a two-kilometer radius of the Jeju Convention Center. Serious attempts have been made to silence the Gangjeong villagers, both inside and outside, from defending their ancestral homeland, which, ironically, is being used to host this year’s Congress. Fortunately, though, several IUCN member groups have quietly invited local leaders to tell their side of the story in the groups’ own scheduled workshops (see GANGJEONG-RELATED EVENTS, facing page).

GANGJEONG MAYOR KANG: “If the villagers have com-mitted any crime, it is the crime of aspiring to pass on their beautiful 400-year-old hometown to their descendants.”



State brutality is a daily part of life for Gangjeong village.

Image: No Seung-Min

have been deported on arrival at the airport, including officials with Greenpeace. Foreign clergy and journalists are warned that if they are caught participating in nonviolent rallies protesting the base construction, they will be deported. And nonviolent protests are especially illegal in Gangjeong village. In fact, it is now against the law in Gangjeong to kayak in the sea, an ineffective move intended to keep protestors out of the water.

“Important Discovery” — Bronze-Age Ruins at Construction Site

Shortly after the navy sealed off access to the coast, sizeable ruins were found at the base-construction site, of a relic-filled village dating back 4,000 years to the Bronze Age. Hwang Pyeong-woo, director of the Korean Cultural Heritage Policy Research Institute, described the ruins of round dwellings, dug about 1.5 meters into the earth for warmth, “This is a very important discovery.” But despite his calls to preserve the antiquities, the Korean govern-ment assessed that the finds are not historically significant enough to alter any change in schedule or scope of the base construction. Construction continues, unabated, and with no regard to preservation laws, lamented Dr. Hwang, who cited that posts have been illegally driven into the ruins in order to support the construction fence.



Part of the site where ruins of a 4,000-year old village was discovered at the navy base construction

VISITING GANGJEONG

Visiting Gangjeong is well worth it. Base construction has destroyed only ten per-cent of the beloved Gureombi. This is a place where some of the world’s largest, most biodiverse octocoral ecosystems can still thrive, where women divers may still pull diverse foods from the sea, and where pure spring water can still bubble up through the lava coastline – if only the base construction is stopped immedi-ately.

Until the coastline was sealed off last September, villagers had lived as they had for millennia. Nowhere in South Korea was human activity balanced with nature so harmoniously. For thousands of years, pre-dating even 400-year-old Gangjeong village, this coast’s fishing and farming traditions have sustained local resources. These ecosystems are some of the richest on the planet. That’s why, in 2006, the government named Gangjeong an “Ecological Excellent Village,” akin to the Slow City or Transition Town designations.

To get to Gangjeong, take the #600 bus, which stops directly in front of the con-vention center every 15-20 minutes. In ten minutes, you will be in Gangjeong.

Lava-wall-lined lanes, tangerine orchards and quaint houses characterize Gangjeong village.



Image: Emily Wang

Former National Assembly Member Chains Herself to Intersection for Three Months, Blocking Construction

Last fall, former National Assembly member Hyun Ae-Ja chained herself to an intersection for three months straight, to block construction trucks from entering a farm road. Hyun said that “ultimately the Jeju naval base will bring the destruction of the community and life.” The building crew was forced to build the otherwise straight construction fence around her, as she remained in continual resistance.

The road Hyun was blocking was one of three farm roads that converge to make the “samgeori,” Korean for “three-way intersection.” Historically significant, this spot is only as stone’s throw from the sizeable ruins of the recently discovered Bronze Age village.

GANGJEONG-RELATED EVENTS DURING WCC 2012

(for all events taking place in Gangjeong, meet ten minutes early at the Peace Center in center of village)

NOTE: Candlelight vigils take place in Gangjeong every night at 8:00. Everyone welcome.

Sept 2 (Sun) 10:30 a.m. - Gangjeong

Press conference on one-year anniversary of erection of fence separating the village from the Gureombi coastline and to signal the start of International Solidarity Week, Sept. 2-9.

Sept 5 (Wed) All day from 2 p.m. - Gangjeong

Traditional Jeju shaman ritual, village tour, dinner & candlelight vigil.

2:00-6:30 - World Local Governments Summit - Jungmun

National Assembly member and Jeju native Jang Hana to speak.

Sept 7 (Fri) 11:00-1:00 Knowledge Café - Rm. 102 (Forum 623)

Presentations on Four Rivers Project and Jeju Navy Base.

Sept 8 (Sat) All day - Gangjeong Village Festival

Visitors from all over South Korea come to support the anti-base movement.

2:00-4:00 Maritime Ecocide Tour (meet outside Convention Center)

Boat ride through a UNESCO biosphere reserve, and see how the navy-base project will destroy many endangered species there. 20 person limit. 10,000 won.

Sept 9 (Sun) 2:30-4:30 - Just World Pavilion (Forum 11)

“Strengthening Community Voices Through Just Conservation” (w/anti-base activists)

Sept 10 (Mon) All day - Jungmun

11:00-1:00 Workshop - Room 203 (Forum 129)

“Earth Democracy and the Biosphere Ethics Initiative: Ethical arguments in biodiversity conservation” (CEL official session).

2:00-2:30 - Lotte Hotel, Crystal Ballroom 3 (Forum 767)

Discussion of relationship between Gangjeong sacred sites and policy.

7:00-9:00 - Tamna Hall – Film: “Standing on Sacred Ground” (Forum 1088)

Film followed by musical performance.

Sept 11 (Tue) 1:00-5:30 p.m. - Gangjeong Ecocide Tour (meet outside Convention Center)

Tour Gangjeong’s sacred sites on both land and at sea, and the military desecration. 20 person limit. 10,000 won.

For up-to-the-minute info: 010-4767-1053 | gangjeongintl@gmail.com | savejejunow.org

Please Support Emergency Motion!

Since the May deadline for motions, there have been many new, important rev-elations uncovered about the Jeju Navy Base project. Because of this new and unforeseen information, and due to the urgent nature of the crisis, a motion to condemn the Jeju Navy Base project qualifies for “emergency status.” Please sup-port and co-sponsor such a motion by writing to gangjeongintl@gmail.com.



Image: Dopehead Zo

Former National Assembly member, Hyun Ae-Ja (center), with supporters, chained to intersection.

WCC Underway Amidst Violations...

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species, but also resilient livelihoods within a thriving traditional village. The soft corals, the farms and the spring water have provided for the local village for centuries. And yet, the government has razed many acres of tangerine farms, and removed people from their land and their corals in order to make room for a military base.

The Los Angeles Times has reported: “The new base will subsume the pictur-esque harbor, and its security perimeter will shut out fishermen and women who for generations have fished for abalone, sea cucumber and brown sea-weed.”

One “haenyo” (traditional woman sea diver) says that pollution from the naval base has already turned the clean seawater to gray, threatening the haenyos’ livelihoods. “The Naval base will destroy the natural resources. I see cranes and large machinery at the base. I can’t believe it.”

Last June, the villagers were notified that the government will be seizing more

land to build high-end housing for 600 military officers who, with their families, will outnumber the 1,930 villagers. New businesses will open to service the newcomers: Big box stores will replace village gardens; parking lots will replace farms; bars and prostitution will replace Jeju’s women divers. Gangjeong, as it has miraculously existed for centuries, will be wiped off the face of the Earth.

According to Jeju media, the base controversy has caused increased suicide rates in Gangjeong. Last year, one villager drank pesticide in a failed attempt to kill himself. He said he couldn’t live with all the destruction. This year, another tried to hang himself.

The IUCN is at a crossroads. Will it “turn a blind eye” to atrocities taking place on the Congress’ doorstep, and in doing so, severely undermine its credibility as a conservation institution? Or, will it rise to its greatest potential, and provide a watershed opportunity for the world’s leading environmentalists to show mean-ingful solidarity with the people of Gangjeong?

The choice will be manifest as the 2012 World Conservation Congress unfolds.