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US Forces Under Curfew In Japan Amid Calls For Clampdown

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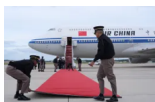
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U.S. active-duty forces in southern Japan will be placed under curfew and "enhanced supervision" after the arrest of a U.S. Marine on suspicion of murder and robbery sparked fresh outrage and opposition to U.S. military presence in the East Asian country.

Police in Okinawa said 20-year-old Devin Jacob Ballard, who was stationed at the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, was arrested in connection with the death of a 39-year-old local woman at a hotel in the city of Naha on Saturday. He is also suspected of stealing her wallet and bag.

Ballard denied the allegations, Japanese media reported.

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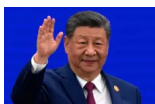
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U.S. forces must be in their assigned living quarters on base or in their homes outside military sites between midnight and 5 a.m. local time for 30 days, starting on Friday, Lieutenant General Benjamin Watson, the commander of the United States' III Marine Expeditionary Force, said in a statement made public on Tuesday.



Devin Jacob Ballard, a U.S. Marine who has been in custody in an alleged robbery and murder of a woman on Japan's southern island of Okinawa, [Read More](#) | (Kotaro Ueda/Kyodo News via AP)

A blanket ban on alcohol consumption for 48 hours came into effect at noon local time on Wednesday, along with a pause of all military operations in Okinawa.

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Watson said officials will review how much freedom U.S. service members have when deployed to Okinawa, adding "incidents like this demand we pause for reflection." In a later statement, the Marines said the new rules only applied to active-duty personnel in Okinawa across all branches of the U.S. military.

Okinawa, despite only making up a tiny percentage of Japan's landmass, hosts many of the over 50,000 U.S. military personnel—largely Marines—deployed to the country. Roughly 70 percent of U.S. facilities and military zones in Japan are in Okinawa, taking up around 8 percent of the prefecture's entire area.

Opposition from local residents has hung over U.S. military activity at the more than 30 American bases in Okinawa for decades, warring with the strategic position the prefecture occupies close to Taiwan and the divided Korean peninsula.



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The U.S. occupied the islands making up Okinawa from the end of World War II until 1972. Since that year, there have been more than 6,400 arrests for criminal offenses linked to U.S. military personnel, according to statistics attributed to the prefecture's government.

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Japan's prime minister, Sanae Takaichi, called the alleged crime "heinous," while Okinawa's newly-elected governor Genta Kōja said in a meeting with Tokyo's defense minister, Shinjirō Koizumi, on Wednesday that the "the U.S. military's human rights education has not functioned at all."

The U.S. increased off-base U.S. police patrols in Okinawa and breathalyzer tests in 2024 after two sexual assault cases involving U.S. military personnel came to light.

"Incidents and accidents involving American military personnel cause great anxiety to local residents and are unacceptable," Koizumi told reporters on Tuesday.

The Futenma base, where Ballard is stationed, sits in a densely-populated part of Okinawa and the U.S. agreed back in 1996 to return the facility to Japan.

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Construction is underway at an long-delayed alternative site to house U.S. Marines in Okinawa, but the continued U.S. grip on Futenma decades after a deal to surrender American control has fueled anger toward troops in the prefecture.

The deal was announced just months after three U.S. service members stationed in Okinawa were convicted of the 1995 rape of a 12-year-old girl, prompting thousands of people to take to the streets and demand an end to the U.S. presence on the island chain.

"The incident is certainly a serious one that could spark unrest in Okinawa again," said Chris Hughes, a professor of international politics and Japanese studies at the U.K.'s University of Warwick.

Japanese government lawmakers "clearly want to get ahead of this one by making the right noises about the seriousness of the incident and not let tensions escalate," Hughes told *Newsweek*.

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But the U.S. and Japan are unlikely to push for a reduction in American forces in Okinawa, because of how important the prefecture is in deterring China, he added.

Contact Newsweek editor on this story: [Edward Pearcey](#).



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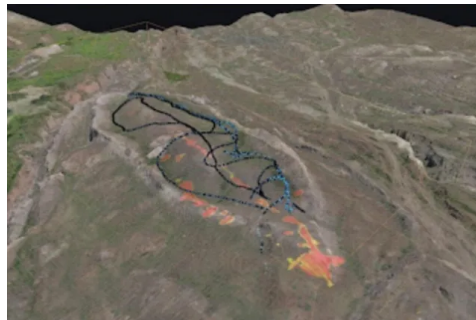
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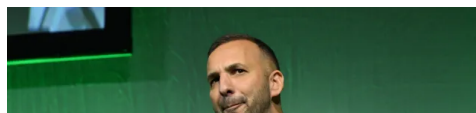
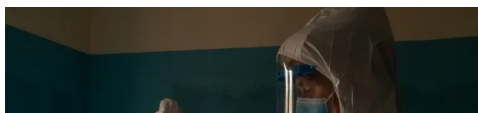
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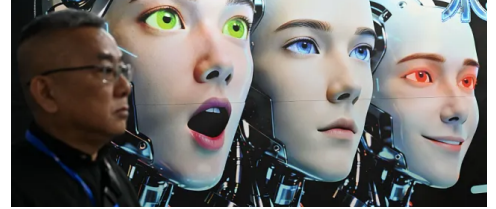
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