

Topics

(1) Why was Uchinada selected as the weapons testing site?

Outside of Uchinada, Hachinohe (Aomori Prefecture), Omaezaki (Shizuoka Prefecture), and Irigo (Aichi Prefecture), were also selected as viable sites. The reason Uchinada was chosen out of this pool is closely related to the state of international relations and the expectations the government was facing at that time.

To contextualize why the need for a testing range was so urgent, it is important to remember that the Korean War broke out in 1950. American soldiers stationed in Japan were deployed to the Korean Peninsula and ordered a large quantity of arms and supplies from Japanese corporations. Because shells had to be performance tested before they were purchased, there was a need for the government to guarantee a suitable testing range as quickly as possible. Its location was also conveniently close to the Komatsu Plant, a factory owned near the dunes that started to produce shells on September 17th, 1952, after receiving a 150-million-yen contract from the American military.

Finally, the Uchinada Dunes had been repeatedly used as a training ground for the Japanese army since the Meiji period, so at that time the land was mostly owned by the state with few residential areas and farmland. This meant that—should the land be requisitioned—the government would have to pay very little in fiscal compensation. For all these reasons, Uchinada was chosen as the site for the testing range.