

Earth Day Celebration at Torii Station, Okinawa, Japan

In celebration of earth day 2006, the U.S. Army Garrison Japan and Sobe Ward hosted a landscaping and clean-up project at the Ukaa cultural site located on Torii Station. Used for a religious ritual, the Ukaa site is largest of eight sacred sites located on Torii Station.

Local farmers and volunteers, supported by OPW Roads and Grounds personnel and equipment, cut, raked and removed tree limbs, leaves and undergrowth at the site. All the green debris was used by the local farmers for mulching. In addition to being a cultural site, Ukaa also contains Torii Station's largest cave. Between the 1940's and the 1970's this cave was used as a solid waste dumping ground.

Under the watchful eyes of the Safety Office and the Fire Department who pre-positioned a rappel line just in case of an emergency, the volunteers navigated the 30-foot drop to the bottom of the cave. Filling a bucket that was lowered by crane, volunteers removed over a ton of refuse including tires, bicycles, dishes, bottles, deteriorated military articles and construction debris.

The clean-up effort received exceptional praise from several local politicians and residents and now provides a safer place for Okinawans to offer prayers. It is also hoped that the renewed vigor of the site will discourage others from using Ukaa as a dumping ground in the future.



Before Cleanup



After Cleanup