

Beat: News

Japan sentences 2 U.S. sailors to prison for raping young woman

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USPA News - Two U.S. Navy sailors were sentenced Friday to lengthy prison terms after they pleaded guilty to raping a young woman on the Japanese island of Okinawa last year, angering local residents who strongly object to U.S. forces being stationed in their communities. Christopher Browning, 24, and Skyler Dozierwalker, 23, pleaded guilty last week at the Naha District Court, admitting they raped a young Japanese woman near Kadena Air Base on October 16, 2012. Okinawa, which was under U.S. control from 1945 through 1972, is located south of the Japanese mainland.

Investigators said Browning and Dozierwalker approached the victim as she was walking home during the early morning hours. The woman ignored them after which the sailors grabbed her in front of her apartment door, covering her mouth and forcing her to a nearby parking lot where she was choked, raped and robbed of 7,000 yen (\$87). Prosecutors were seeking prison terms of up to 12 years in prison, but Browning and Dozierwalker were sentenced to 10 and 9 years respectively. Both sailors expressed remorse and accepted responsibility for their crimes, which were captured by security cameras in the neighborhood. Browning apologized to the victim, the Japanese people, and the U.S. military. News of the sexual assault in October angered local residents who have protested against the U.S. military being stationed there due to a number of misdeeds by American service members. One of the most shocking incidents was the rape of a 12-year-old girl by three U.S. service members in September 1995, sparking huge protests and forcing the U.S. to relocate an airbase from central to northern Okinawa. In July 2000, a Marine was arrested after molesting a 14-year-old girl while she slept in her home and an airman was detained following a hit-and-run accident. Both incidents sparked major demonstrations against U.S. presence on the island, which is host to more than half of the approximately 50,000 U.S. military personnel in Japan.

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