

70 years after WWII / Nagaoka fireworks set for Pearl Harbor rite



① Fireworks similar to those seen in Nagaoka's annual summer festival in Niigata Prefecture will be set off in Pearl Harbor on Aug. 15 in a gesture aimed at consoling the spirits of the deceased in the Pacific War.

② The fireworks display in Pearl Harbor, located in the suburbs of Honolulu, is one of many events held to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

③ "The 70th anniversary is a big event. It's what we call one of the milestones," said Edwin Hawkins, president emeritus of Japan-America Society of Hawaii, who wants the fireworks display there to be remembered in connection with the start of four years of hostility between the two nations in World War II.

④ Nagaoka is the birthplace of Isoroku Yamamoto, who served as commander in chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy's combined fleet until his death in 1943.

⑤ Despite Yamamoto's objections to starting a war with the United States, he commanded Japan's Pearl Harbor attack in 1941. Nagaoka was also devastated by a U.S. air raid on Aug. 1, 1945, which killed about 1,500 residents.

⑥ A big part of the city's summer festival, Nagaoka's Grand Fireworks Festival has been held since before World War II with a hiatus during the war.

⑦ Two years after the U.S. air raid on the city and the war's end, the Nagaoka fireworks display was revived in the hope of comforting the souls of the war dead and praying for postwar reconstruction.

⑧ Today, the annual summer event is one of the largest and spectacular fireworks shows in Japan. Fireworks include "shiragiku," or white chrysanthemum, which was first displayed as a symbolic flower of condolence offered by a local pyrotechnician to a comrade soldier who died in a Siberian detention camp after the war.

⑨ Nagaoka and Honolulu became sister cities in 2012. Since then, fireworks from Nagaoka have been launched at Waikiki Beach in the Hawaiian capital every March.

⑩ Setting up the fireworks display was no easy task, given the naval port was home to the U.S. Pacific Fleet. There are strict entry restrictions.

⑪ About 2,400 Americans died in the attack on Pearl Harbor. Many of the victims lie inside USS Arizona, which was sunk in the attack.

⑫ "In America, fireworks are generally launched during festivals," Hawkins said, adding that setting off fireworks in Pearl Harbor was unthinkable. To hold a fireworks display at the naval port, he said the U.S. military and the families of the deceased had to understand the significance of displaying Nagaoka fireworks as a means of consoling the spirits of war victims and praying for peace.

⑬ With this in mind, the Nagaoka city government worked with Hawkins and others to explain to the families and U.S. military officers of the significance of a fireworks display. 中略

⑭ Three shiragiku fireworks will be set off at Pearl Harbor on Aug. 15 and about 2,000 fireworks of Nagaoka origin on Aug. 16. The shiragiku has three aims — pacify the spirits of the U.S. war dead, console the souls of the Japanese war victims and pray for international peace.

⑮ The fireworks display will also be attended by students from Nagaoka and Honolulu. "Youth from Hawaii and Nagaoka will play a meaningful role in the ceremony's program ... and carry a message of peace and cooperation to the future," Hawkins said. "That, is my desire and hope."【Aug. 12, 2015/The Yomiuri Shimbun】

③ milestone : 画期的な事件 ④ in chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy's combined fleet : 連合艦隊司令官 ⑥ hiatus : 中断 ⑧ condolence : お悔やみ、弔意 pyrotechnician = pyrotechnist: 火薬技術者、花火師 comrade: 同士 console: 慰める

★Ice breaker for active discussion★

1. Please give a short summary of the article.
2. What do you know about the Pearl Harbor?
3. What do you think about the relationship between Honolulu and Nagaoka?
4. What does white chrysanthemum symbolize in Japan?
5. Please share your memories related to fireworks and fireworks displays.
6. Make sentences using the following words: milestone, fleet, hiatus, comrade, console and condolence.

NEWS de TALK by PHILOS

長岡まつりで知られる新潟県長岡市の花火大会は、日本三大花火大会の一つ。アメリカでは花火は「お祝い」の象徴とされ、当初、海軍や遺族は難色を示したが、関係者が鎮魂の花火「白菊」の趣旨を説明し理解を得た。追悼式典には日米からおよそ450人が出席し、戦艦アリゾナ歴史顕彰碑で献花し、両市が共同制作した記念碑を除幕。灯籠流しの後、花火が打ち上げられた。また、長岡市の中学生とホノルルの中高生が「青少年平和サミット宣言」を発表した。