



U.S. ARMY OKINAWA

☆ TORII STATION ☆



LEGAL ASSISTANCE

• 652-4332 / 4742 • BUILDING 218, ROOM 220 •

BE CAREFUL BUYING A USED CAR ON OKINAWA

Welcome to Okinawa! You have taken your driving test and are ready to start driving on the left side of the street. Are you ready to buy a car and start exploring this subtropical paradise? There are many used or pre-owned car dealers on Okinawa, and there are also some “lemon” lots. Know the advantages and disadvantages to both.

Lemon Lots offer a wide selection of vehicles sold by private owners. Some of these private owners maintained their vehicles while others did not even change the oil. One thing is almost certain: When you buy something at the lemon lot, you are buying it “AS IS,” which means there is no warranty. There are many good deals to be found at the lemon lot, but there are also some bad ones. If you buy a car at a lemon lot, you may want to have a mechanic inspect it before you close the deal. Most of these lemon lot agreements are irrevocable. You could really be buying a “lemon” if the vehicle you purchase has hidden defects or needs expensive repairs. Your legal remedies are very limited and you should be aware or you could become a victim of a dishonest private owner.

Used Car Lots also offer a wide selection of vehicles at comparatively higher prices than lemon lots. Unlike the typical private seller, used car lots usually offer warranties. Also, unlike some used car lots that prey on servicemen near CONUS military bases, the used car lots on Okinawa are usually reputable and will honor their warranties. There have been some “bad apples,” but these are the exception rather than the rule. Notwithstanding the good reputation of most local used car lots, there are still some things you should look for when considering to purchase a used car. As mentioned above, used car lots offer warranties, but what does the warranty cover, and for how long? Some of these warranties can be negotiated. What does the contract say? These contracts are relatively simple, but feel free to consult with the Legal Assistance office to have an attorney review your paperwork before you sign it. In addition to warranty information, the typical contract states the payment terms. This includes information about default, repossession, and contacting your supervisor if you are delinquent or do not make timely payments. Historically, the military has taken an interest in service members staying current on their car payments because it affects the reputation of American Service members.

Most newcomers are excited to get their own car, but it may be more prudent to take your time and get the right vehicle and right deal for you. Be sure to ask a few people who have been on Okinawa for a while before you sign on the dotted line. Of course, if the engine is smoking, that is probably a good sign that you do not want to buy that vehicle. Please contact the Legal Assistance office for assistance and feedback when you start your shopping for a new vehicle.