US GLOBAL MILITARY BASES NEWSLETTER #2, November 25, 2015.


Compiled by Dick Bennett for Peace, Justice, and the Environment.

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List of United States military bases - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Contents #2 US Bases Imperialism
U.S. Foreign Policy from the Founders' Perspective

By George Friedman

Last week I discussed how the Founding Fathers might view the American debt crisis and the government shutdown. This week I thought it would be useful to consider how the founders might view foreign policy. I argued that on domestic policy they had clear principles, but unlike their ideology, those principles were never mechanistic or inflexible. For them, principles dictated that a gentleman pays his debts and does not casually increase his debts, the constitutional provision that debt is sometimes necessary notwithstanding. They feared excessive debt and abhorred nonpayment, but their principles were never completely rigid.

Whenever there is a discussion of the guidelines laid down by the founders for American foreign policy, Thomas Jefferson's admonition to avoid foreign entanglements and alliances is seen as the founding principle. That seems reasonable to me inasmuch as
George Washington expressed a similar sentiment. So while there were some who favored France over Britain during the French Revolutionary Wars, the main thrust of American foreign policy was neutrality. The question is: How does this principle guide the United States now? Read more »

How Many Wars Is the US Really Fighting? Hint: the answer is way more than you think.

By Nick Turse. SEPTEMBER 24, 2015.

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You can find them in dusty, sunbaked badlands, moist tropical forests, and the salty spray of third-world littorals. Standing in judgement, buffeted by the rotor wash of a helicopter or sweltering beneath the relentless desert sun, they instruct, yell, and cajole as skinnier men play act under their watchful eyes. In many places, more than their particular brand of camouflage, better boots, and designer gear sets them apart. Their days are scented by stale sweat and gunpowder; their nights are spent in rustic locales or third-world bars.

This article originally appeared at TomDispatch.com. To stay on top of important articles like these, sign up to receive the latest updates from TomDispatch.com.

These men—and they are mostly men—belong to an exclusive military fraternity that traces its heritage back to the birth of the nation. Typically, they've spent the better part of a decade as more conventional soldiers, sailors, marines, or airmen before making the cut. They've probably been deployed overseas four to 10 times. The officers are generally
approaching their mid-thirties; the enlisted men, their late twenties. They’ve had more schooling than most in the military. They’re likely to be married with a couple of kids. And day after day, they carry out shadowy missions over much of the planet: sometimes covert raids, more often hush-hush training exercises from Chad to Uganda, Bahrain to Saudi Arabia, Albania to Romania, Bangladesh to Sri Lanka, Belize to Uruguay. They belong to the Special Operations forces (SOF), America’s most elite troops—Army Green Berets and Navy SEALs, among others—and odds are, if you throw a dart at a world map or stop a spinning globe with your index finger and don’t hit water, they’ve been there sometime in 2015.

THE WIDE WORLD OF SPECIAL OPS

This year, US Special Operations forces have already deployed to 135 nations, according to Ken McGraw, a spokesman for Special Operations Command (SOCOM). That’s roughly 70 percent of the countries on the planet. Every day, in fact, America’s most elite troops are carrying out missions in 80 to 90 nations, practicing night raids or sometimes conducting them for real, engaging in sniper training or sometimes actually gunning down enemies from afar. As part of a global engagement strategy of endless hush-hush operations conducted on every continent but Antarctica, they have now eclipsed the number and range of special ops missions undertaken at the height of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In the waning days of the Bush administration, Special Operations forces (SOF) were reportedly deployed in only about 60 nations around the world. By 2010, according to the Washington Post, that number had swelled to 75. Three years later, it had jumped to 134 nations, “slipping” to 133 last year, before reaching a new record of 135 this summer. This 80 percent increase over the last five years is indicative of SOCOM’s exponential expansion which first shifted into high gear following the 9/11 attacks.

Special Operations Command’s funding, for example, has more than tripled from about $3 billion in 2001 to nearly $10 billion in 2014 “constant dollars,” according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO). And this doesn’t include funding from the various service branches, which SOCOM estimates at around another $8 billion annually, or other undisclosed sums that the GAO was unable to track. The average number of Special Operations forces deployed overseas has nearly tripled during these same years, while SOCOM more than doubled its personnel from about 33,000 in 2001 to nearly 70,000 now.

Each day, according to SOCOM commander General Joseph Votel, approximately 11,000 special operators are deployed or stationed outside the United States with many more on standby, ready to respond in the event of an overseas crisis. “I think a lot of our resources are focused in Iraq and in the Middle East, in Syria for right now. That’s really where our head has been,” Votel told the Aspen Security Forum in July. Still, he insisted his troops
were not “doing anything on the ground in Syria”—even if they had carried out a night raid there a couple of months before and it was later revealed that they are involved in a covert campaign of drone strikes in that country.

“I think we are increasing our focus on Eastern Europe at this time,” he added. “At the same time we continue to provide some level of support on South America for Colombia and the other interests that we have down there. And then of course we’re engaged out in the Pacific with a lot of our partners, reassuring them and working those relationships and maintaining our presence out there.”

In reality, the average percentage of Special Operations forces deployed to the Greater Middle East has decreased in recent years. Back in 2006, 85 percent of special operators were deployed in support of Central Command or CENTCOM, the geographic combatant command (GCC) that oversees operations in the region. By last year, that number had dropped to 69 percent, according to GAO figures. Over that same span, Northern Command—devoted to homeland defense—held steady at 1 percent, European Command (EUCOM) doubled its percentage, from 3 percent to 6 percent, Pacific Command (PACOM) increased from 7 percent to 10 percent, and Southern Command, which overseas Central and South America as well as the Caribbean, inched up from 3 percent to 4 percent. The largest increase, however, was in a region conspicuously absent from Votel’s rundown of special ops deployments. In 2006, just 1 percent of the special operators deployed abroad were sent to Africa Command’s area of operations. Last year, it was 10 percent.

Globetrotting is SOCOM’s stock in trade and, not coincidentally, it’s divided into a collection of planet-girding “sub-unified commands”: the self-explanatory SOCAFRICA; SOCEUR, the European contingent; SOCCENT, the sub-unified command of CENTCOM; SOCKOR, which is devoted strictly to Korea; SOCPAC, which covers the rest of the Asia-Pacific region; SOCSOUTH, which conducts missions in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean; SOCNORTH, which is devoted to “homeland defense”; and the ever-itinerant Joint Special Operations Command or JSOC, a clandestine sub-command (formerly headed by Votel) made up of personnel from each service branch, including SEALs, Air Force special tactics airmen, and the Army’s Delta Force that specializes in tracking and killing suspected terrorists.

The elite of the elite in the special ops community, JSOC takes on covert, clandestine, and low-visibility operations in the hottest of hot spots. Some covert ops that have come to light in recent years include a host of Delta Force missions: among them, an operation in May in which members of the elite force killed an Islamic State commander known as Abu Sayyaf during a night raid in Syria; the 2014 release of long-time Taliban prisoner Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl; the capture of Ahmed Abu Khattala, a suspect in 2012
terror attacks in Benghazi, Libya; and the 2013 abduction of Anas al-Libi, an al-Qaeda militant, off a street in that same country. Similarly, Navy SEALs have, among other operations, carried out successful hostage rescue missions in Afghanistan and Somalia in 2012; a disastrous one in Yemen in 2014; a 2013 kidnap raid in Somalia that went awry; and—that same year—a failed evacuation mission in South Sudan in which three SEALs were wounded when their aircraft was hit by small arms fire.

SOCOM’S SOF ALPHABET SOUP

Most deployments have, however, been training missions designed to tutor proxies and forge stronger ties with allies. “Special Operations forces provide individual-level training, unit-level training, and formal classroom training,” explains SOCOM’s Ken McGraw. “Individual training can be in subjects like basic rifle marksmanship, land navigation, airborne operations, and first aid. They provide unit-level training in subjects like small unit tactics, counterterrorism operations and maritime operations. SOF can also provide formal classroom training in subjects like the military decision-making process or staff planning.”

From 2012 to 2014, for instance, Special Operations forces carried out 500 Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) missions in as many as 67 countries each year. JCETs are officially devoted to training US forces, but they nonetheless serve as a key facet of SOCOM’s global engagement strategy. The missions “foster key military partnerships with foreign militaries, enhance partner-nations’ capability to provide for their own defense, and build interoperability between US SOF and partner-nation forces,” according to SOCOM’s McGraw.

And JCETs are just a fraction of the story. SOCOM carries out many other multinational overseas training operations. According to data from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), for example, Special Operations forces conducted 75 training exercises in 30 countries in 2014. The numbers were projected to jump to 98 exercises in 34 countries by the end of this year.

“SOCOM places a premium on international partnerships and building their capacity. Today, SOCOM has persistent partnerships with about 60 countries through our Special Operations Forces Liaison Elements and Joint Planning and Advisory Teams,” said SOCOM’s Votel at a conference earlier this year, drawing attention to two of the many types of shadowy Special Ops entities that operate overseas. These SOFLEs and JPATs belong to a mind-bending alphabet soup of special ops entities operating around the globe, a jumble of opaque acronyms and stilted abbreviations masking a secret world of clandestine efforts often conducted in the shadows in impoverished lands ruled by problematic regimes. The proliferation of this bewildering SOCOM shorthand—SOJTFs and CJSOTFs, SOCCEs and SOLEs—mirrors the relentless expansion of the command, with its signature brand of military speak or
milspeak proving as indecipherable to most Americans as its missions are secret from them.

THE NATION IS READER FUNDED. YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL TO OUR WORK.

Around the world, you can find Special Operations Joint Task Forces (SOJTFs), Combined Joint Special Operations Task Forces (CJSOTFs), and Joint Special Operations Task Forces (JSOTFs), Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs), as well as Special Operations Command and Control Elements (SOCCEs) and Special Operations Liaison Elements (SOLEs). And that list doesn’t even include Special Operations Command Forward (SOC FWD) elements—small teams which, according to the military, “shape and coordinate special operations forces security cooperation and engagement in support of theater special operations command, geographic combatant command, and country team goals and objectives.”

Special Operations Command will not divulge the locations or even a simple count of its SOC FWDs for “security reasons.” When asked how releasing only the number could imperil security, SOCOM’s Ken McGraw was typically opaque. “The information is classified,” he responded. “I am not the classification authority for that information so I do not know the specifics of why the information is classified.” Open source data suggests, however, that they are clustered in favored black ops stomping grounds, including SOC FWD Pakistan, SOC FWD Yemen, and SOC FWD Lebanon, as well as SOC FWD East Africa, SOC FWD Central Africa, and SOC FWD West Africa.

What’s clear is that SOCOM prefers to operate in the shadows while its personnel and missions expand globally to little notice or attention. “The key thing that SOCOM brings to the table is that we are—we think of ourselves—as a global force. We support the geographic combatant commanders, but we are not bound by the artificial boundaries that normally define the regional areas in which they operate. So what we try to do is we try to operate across those boundaries,” SOCOM’s Votel told the Aspen Security Forum.

In one particular blurring of boundaries, Special Operations liaison officers (SOLOs) are embedded in at least 14 key US embassies to assist in advising the special forces of various allied nations. Already operating in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, El Salvador, France, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Poland, Peru, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, the SOLO program is poised, according to Votel, to expand to 40 countries by 2019. The command, and especially JSOC, has also forged close ties with the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the National Security Agency, among other outfits, through the use of liaison officers and Special Operations Support Teams (SOSTs).

“In today’s environment, our effectiveness is directly tied to our ability to operate with domestic and international partners. We, as a joint force, must continue to institutionalize
interoperability, integration, and interdependence between conventional forces and special operations forces through doctrine, training, and operational deployments,” Votel told the Senate Armed Services Committee this spring. “From working with indigenous forces and local governments to improve local security, to high-risk counterterrorism operations—SOF are in vital roles performing essential tasks.”

SOCOM will not name the 135 countries in which America’s most elite forces were deployed this year, let alone disclose the nature of those operations. Most were, undoubtedly, training efforts. Documents obtained from the Pentagon via the Freedom of Information Act outlining Joint Combined Exchange Training in 2013 offer an indication of what Special Operations forces do on a daily basis and also what skills are deemed necessary for their real-world missions: combat marksmanship, patrolling, weapons training, small unit tactics, special operations in urban terrain, close quarters combat, advanced marksmanship, sniper employment, long-range shooting, deliberate attack, and heavy weapons employment, in addition to combat casualty care, human rights awareness, land navigation, and mission planning, among others.

From Joint Special Operations Task Force-Juniper Shield, which operates in Africa’s Trans-Sahara region, and Special Operations Command and Control Element-Horn of Africa, to Army Special Operations Forces Liaison Element-Korea and Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Arabian Peninsula, the global growth of SOF missions has been breathtaking. SEALs or Green Berets, Delta Force operators or Air Commandos, they are constantly taking on what Votel likes to call the “nation’s most complex, demanding, and high-risk challenges.”

These forces carry out operations almost entirely unknown to the American taxpayers who fund them, operations conducted far from the scrutiny of the media or meaningful outside oversight of any kind. Everyday, in around 80 or more countries that Special Operations Command will not name, they undertake missions the command refuses to talk about. They exist in a secret world of obtuse acronyms and shadowy efforts, of mystery missions kept secret from the American public, not to mention most of the citizens of the 135 nations where they’ve been deployed this year.

This summer, when Votel commented that more special ops troops are deployed to more locations and are conducting more operations than at the height of the Afghan and Iraq wars, he drew attention to two conflicts in which those forces played major roles that have not turned out well for the United States. Consider that symbolic of what the bulking up of his command has meant in these years.

“Ultimately, the best indicator of our success will be the success of the [geographic combatant commands],” says the special ops chief, but with US setbacks in Africa Command’s area of operations from Mali and Nigeria to Burkina Faso and Cameroon; in Central Command’s bailiwick from Iraq and Afghanistan to Yemen and Syria; in
the PACOM region vis-à-vis China; and perhaps even in the EUCOM area of operations due to Russia, it’s far from clear what successes can be attributed to the ever-expanding secret operations of America’s secret military. The special ops commander seems resigned to the very real limitations of what his secretive but much-ballyhooed, highly-trained, well-funded, heavily-armed operators can do.

“We can buy space, we can buy time,” says Votel, stressing that SOCOM can “play a very, very key role” in countering “violent extremism,” but only up to a point — and that point seems to fall strikingly short of anything resembling victory or even significant foreign policy success. “Ultimately, you know, problems like we see in Iraq and Syria,” he says, “aren’t going to be resolved by us.”

Attachments area

Preview YouTube video GEN Votel Speaks about SOCOM

FROM TACOMA TO TAJIKISTAN, Google Search, July 12, 2015

1. American military bases near Iran - Google

https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zQVqvB9UmUTc...

Google

Map of major US bases within close proximity to Iran, in addition to other NATO military sites near the Islamic Republic. Locations shown are semi-permanent ...

   o Turkmenistan: Secret U.S. Base For Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran ... www.globalresearch.ca/turkmenistan-secret-u-s-base-for.../20411

Aug 2, 2010 - Turkmenistan: Secret U.S. Base For Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran Campaigns ... In September 2004, at the Mary-2 airfield, U.S. military experts ...

2. Map: US bases encircle Iran - Al Jazeera English

www.aljazeera.com/indepth/.../2012417131242767298.html

Al Jazeera

May 1, 2012 - Dozens of US and allied forces' military installations dot the region, from ... Turkey and Israel to the west, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan to the ...

3. Military Bases - Huffington Post

www.huffingtonpost.com/news/military-bases/ The Huffington Post

Did you know the U.S. military maintains roughly 1,000 military installations .... This year Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan turn ...
THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING. US 800, RUSSIA 1.

Russia is bombing ISIL forces from “the Tartus naval base on Syria’s Mediterranean coast, Russia’s only military site outside the former Soviet Union.” Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (Oct. 2, 2015), compiled by AD-G Staff from Wire Reports. In contrast, some 800 US military bases in foreign lands encircle the globe. (David Vine, Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World, 2015). The whole world, except for the clueless US public, is indignant at our claims of seeking peace and our grossly aggressive and illegal threatening, while denouncing Russia and China—and N. Korea—of being the aggressors. (The US has 10 carrier battle groups composed of six ships; China has only one recently built carrier.)

The Bases of Empire
The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts

• Edited by Catherine Lutz
• With a preface by Cynthia Enloe

378 pages
March, 2009

Table of Contents
Introduction

AUTHORS
A quarter of a million U.S. troops are massed in over seven hundred major official overseas airbases around the world. In the past decade, the Pentagon has formulated and enacted a plan to realign, or reconfigure, its bases in keeping with new doctrines of pre-emption and intensified concern with strategic resource control, all with seemingly little concern for the surrounding geography and its inhabitants.

The contributors in The Bases of Empire trace the political, environmental, and economic impact of these bases on their surrounding communities across the globe, including Latin America, Europe, and Asia, where opposition to the United States' presence has been longstanding and widespread, and is growing rapidly.

Through sharp analysis and critique, The Bases of Empire illuminates the vigorous campaigns to hold the United States accountable for the damage its bases cause in allied countries as well as in war zones, and offers ways to reorient security policies in other, more humane, and truly secure directions.

Contributors: Julian Aguon, Kozue Akibayashi, Ayse Gul Altinay, Tom Engelhardt, Cynthia Enloe, Joseph Gerson, David Heller, Amy Holmes, Laura Jeffery, Kyle Kajihiro, Hans Lammerant, John Lindsay-Poland, Catherine Lutz, Katherine McCaffrey, Roland G. Simbulan, Suzuyo Takazato, and David Vine.
"Lutz makes a real contribution to the study of the American empire of bases."

—Chalmers Johnson at Truthdig.com

"These fascinating case studies provide a powerful assessment of the worldwide network of U.S. military bases and the burgeoning anti-base campaign, and analyze the changing nature of empire building and the re-mapping of the sociopolitical terrain within the context of the 'global war on terror.' A major contribution to understanding the causes and consequences of U.S. military bases at home and abroad."

—Kimberly Theidon, Harvard University

"A real contribution to the study of the American empire of bases. . . This book is an antidote to parochialism."

—Truthdig

“Catherine Lutz’s *The Bases of Empire* is a must-read for every American and peace activist. . . Lutz does an extraordinary job distilling the history of U.S. bases and debunking common myths of why they’re needed.

—The Fellowship of Reconciliation

Opposing US Base Construction on Okinawa

Global Network [globalnet@mindspring.com]

To: GN List Serve [globenet@yahoogroups.com]

Wednesday, January 08, 2014 7:57 AM

**STATEMENT**

We oppose construction of a new US military base within Okinawa, and
support the people of Okinawa in their struggle for peace, dignity, human rights and protection of the environment

We the undersigned oppose the deal made at the end of 2013 between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Governor of Okinawa Hirokazu Nakaima to deepen and extend the military colonization of Okinawa at the expense of the people and the environment. Using the lure of economic development, Mr. Abe has extracted approval from Governor Nakaima to reclaim the water off Henoko, on the northeastern shore of Okinawa, to build a massive new U.S. Marine air base with a military port.

Plans to build the base at Henoko have been on the drawing board since the 1960s. They were revitalized in 1996, when the sentiments against US military bases peaked following the rape of a twelve year-old Okinawan child by three U.S. servicemen. In order to pacify such sentiments, the US and Japanese governments planned to close Futenma Marine Air Base in the middle of Ginowan City and move its functions to a new base to be constructed at Henoko, a site of extraordinary bio-diversity and home to the endangered marine mammal dugong.

Governor Nakaima’s reclamation approval does not reflect the popular will of the people of Okinawa. Immediately before the gubernatorial election of 2010, Mr. Nakaima, who had previously accepted the new base construction plan, changed his position and called for relocation of the Futenma base outside the prefecture. He won the election by defeating a candidate who had consistently opposed the new base. Polls in recent years have shown that 70 to 90 percent of the people of Okinawa opposed the Henoko base plan. The poll conducted immediately after Nakaima’s recent reclamation approval showed that 72.4 percent of the people of Okinawa saw the governor’s decision as a “breach of his election pledge.” The reclamation approval was a betrayal of the people of Okinawa.

73.8 percent of the US military bases (those for exclusive US use) in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa, which is only .6 percent of the total land mass of Japan. 18.3 percent of the Okinawa Island is occupied by the US military. Futenma Air Base originally was built during the 1945 Battle of Okinawa by US forces in order to prepare for battles on the mainland of Japan. They simply usurped the land from local residents. The base should have been returned to its owners after the war, but the US military has retained it even though now almost seven decades have passed. Therefore, any conditional return of the base is fundamentally unjustifiable.
The new agreement would also perpetuate the long suffering of the people of Okinawa. Invaded in the beginning of the 17th century by Japan and annexed forcefully into the Japanese nation at the end of 19th century, Okinawa was in 1944 transformed into a fortress to resist advancing US forces and thus to buy time to protect the Emperor System. The Battle of Okinawa killed more than 100,000 local residents, about a quarter of the island’s population. After the war, more bases were built under the US military occupation. Okinawa “reverted” to Japan in 1972, but the Okinawans’ hope for the removal of the military bases was shattered. Today, people of Okinawa continue to suffer from crimes and accidents, high decibel aircraft noise and environmental pollution caused by the bases. Throughout these decades, they have suffered what the U.S. Declaration of Independence denounces as “abuses and usurpations,” including the presence of foreign “standing armies without the consent of our legislatures.”

Not unlike the 20th century U.S. Civil Rights struggle, Okinawans have non-violently pressed for the end to their military colonization. They tried to stop live-fire military drills that threatened their lives by entering the exercise zone in protest; they formed human chains around military bases to express their opposition; and about a hundred thousand people, one tenth of the population have turned out periodically for massive demonstrations. Octogenarians initiated the campaign to prevent the construction of the Henoko base with a sit-in that has been continuing for years. The prefectural assembly passed resolutions to oppose the Henoko base plan. In January 2013, leaders of all the 41 municipalities of Okinawa signed the petition to the government to remove the newly deployed MV-22 Osprey from Futenma base and to give up the plan to build a replacement base in Okinawa.

We support the people of Okinawa in their non-violent struggle for peace, dignity, human rights and protection of the environment. The Henoko marine base project must be canceled and Futenma returned forthwith to the people of Okinawa.

January 2014

Norman Birnbaum, Professor Emeritus, Georgetown University
Herbert Bix, Emeritus Professor of History and Sociology, State University of New York at Binghamton
Reiner Braun, Co-president International Peace Bureau and Executive Director of International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms
Noam Chomsky, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
John W. Dower, Professor Emeritus of History, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
And more.

**CHINA FIGHTING BACK AGAINST ENCIRCLEMENT**

US Westward Imperialism newsletters are showing the history and China’s responses. In #9 we learned of China’s first aircraft carrier, its new air defense zone, and Secretary of War—oops Secretary of Pentagon State Kerry—furious and furiouser. Wong reminds us of the horrific memories embodied in one Japanese war shrine. It all seems simultaneously silly and extraordinarily dangerous when one remembers the nuclear weapons locked, loaded, and aimed at targets.

But maybe the Chinese are finding a way to defend their space that duplicates the US in a second but opposite way that does not possess the possibility of incinerating the planet. You saw the article? “Chinese Cars in Race to U.S. Debut.” *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, Jan. 7, 2014. Dastardly trick, very sly, treacherous, Japanese, S. Korean: they will grow their influence not by ships and bombs but by car dealerships, even, think of it, manufacturing them inside our country already! And maybe the worst feature of this invasion is its treacherous partnership with one of our richest investors, Warren Buffet’s Berkshire Hathaway Inc.!!

In contrast to a moment’s risible mood, all of this leads us also to a meditation on national space—from my islands, my air space….my Pacific, my E. Asia, to Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* or Stuart Elden’s *Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty*. Lefebvre wrote: “Sovereignty implies ‘space,’” and sovereignty—dominance, power—over a space involves violence to sustain and defend its space and control the people within it, “a space established and constituted by violence.” “The Control of territory is what makes a state possible” writes Elden. “Thus, control of territory accords a specific legitimacy to the violence and determines its spatial extent. Those in control of territory—states—can act in ways those not in control cannot.”

Seems obvious. The catch is, thinking Westward, where does the US state end, at Hawaii, or at Guam? It extends by the possessiveness engendered by force or simply the practicalities of presence to all the over1000 military bases outside the boundaries of the US? The US is prepared to defend one and all of them from attack because they are part of the USA? Surely absurd.

That is why the No Bases Movement arose. (Google No Bases Network.)

--Dick
First, they tried to shoot the dogs. Next, they tried to poison them with strychnine. When both failed as efficient killing methods, British government agents and U.S. Navy personnel used raw meat to lure the pets into a sealed shed. Locking them inside, they gassed the howling animals with exhaust piped in from U.S. military vehicles. Then, setting coconut husks ablaze, they burned the dogs' carcasses as their owners were left to watch and ponder their own fate.

The truth about the U.S. military base on the British-controlled Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia is often hard to believe. It would be easy enough to confuse the real story with fictional accounts of the island found in the *Transformers* movies, on the television series *24*, and in Internet conspiracy theories about the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370.

Continue Reading...
American military bases encircle the globe. More than two decades after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. still stations its troops at nearly a thousand locations in foreign lands. These bases are usually taken for granted or overlooked entirely, a little-noticed part of the Pentagon's vast operations. But in an eye-opening account, *Base Nation* shows that the worldwide network of bases brings with it a panoply of ills—and actually makes the nation less safe in the long run.

**NATION DAILY: SEPTEMBER 14, 2015**

Tomgram: David Vine, Our Base Nation

Posted by David Vine at 6:30pm, September 13, 2015.
Follow TomDispatch on Twitter @TomDispatch. Also republished in Space Alert!

It's not that I knew nothing about U.S. military bases before I met Chalmers Johnson. In
certain ways, my idea of the good life had been strongly shaped by such a base. Admittedly, it wasn’t in Germany or Japan or South Korea or some other distant land, but on Governor’s Island, an Army base just off the southern tip of New York City. In the 1950s, my father ran a gas station there. On Saturday mornings, I would often accompany him to work on a ferry from downtown Manhattan and spend a dreamy suburban-style day there amid zipping Jeeps and marching troops and military kids, playing ball, wandering freely, catching cowboy or war flicks at the island’s only movie house, and imagining that this was the best of all possible worlds. And yet between that moment and the moment in September 1998 when Johnson’s proposal for a book to be called Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire fell into my editorial hands, I probably never gave our country’s bases another thought.

In that, I was like millions of Americans who, as soldiers or civilians, had cycled through such bases at home and around the world and never considered them again. And we were hardly alone when it came to the hundreds and hundreds of foreign garrisons that made up what Johnson termed our “empire of bases.” Historians, political scientists, and journalists, among many others, paid them little mind. Our overseas garrisons were seldom discussed or debated or covered in the media in any significant way. No one in Congress challenged their existence. No president gave a speech about them. Though I hesitate to use the term, there was something like a conspiracy of silence around them -- or perhaps a sense of discomfort that they even existed led everyone to act as if they didn’t. And yet they were the face of this country to significant parts of the world. In their profusion and their reach, they represented a staggering reality for which there was no historical precedent. Billions and billions of dollars poured into them. Hundreds of thousands of troops and their dependents were stationed on them. It should have told us all something that they were quite so unremarked upon, but until Johnson came along, they were, in essence, not so much our little secret as a secret we kept even from ourselves. As he wrote with a certain wonder in the second book in his Blowback Trilogy, The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic, “The landscape of this military empire is as unfamiliar and fantastic to most Americans today as Tibet or Timbuktu were to nineteenth-century Europeans.”

Johnson broke the silence around them -- repeatedly. And yet, in an era in which such bases, still being built, have played a crucial role in our various wars, conflicts, bombing and drone assassination campaigns, and other interventions in the Greater Middle East, they remain a barely acknowledged aspect of American life. Why this is so should be considered both a curiosity and a mystery. Is it that a genuine acknowledgement of the existence of a vast network of global garrisons would lead to uncomfortable conclusions about the imperial nature of this country? I’m not sure myself. That they remain largely surrounded by an accepted and acceptable silence, however, continues to be an American reality.

Thank heavens, then, that, almost five years after Chalmers Johnson’s death, TomDispatch regular David Vine has produced a groundbreaking new book, Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World, which should once again bring that empire of bases back into the national discussion. Today, Vine offers an
Garrisoning the Globe
How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Undermine National Security and Harm Us All
By David Vine

David Vine, a TomDispatch regular, is associate professor of anthropology at American University in Washington, D.C. His book, Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World, has just been published as part of the American Empire Project (Metropolitan Books). He has written for the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Guardian, and Mother Jones, among other publications. For more information and

With the US military having withdrawn many of its forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, most Americans would be forgiven for being unaware that hundreds of US bases and hundreds of thousands of US troops still encircle the globe. Although few know it, the United States garrisons the planet unlike any country in history, and the evidence is on view from Honduras to Oman, Japan to Germany, Singapore to Djibouti.

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Like most Americans, for most of my life, I rarely thought about military bases. Scholar and former CIA consultant Chalmers Johnson described me well when he wrote in 2004, “As distinct from other peoples, most Americans do not recognize—or do not want to recognize—that the United States dominates the world through its military power. Due to government secrecy, our citizens are often ignorant of the fact that our garrisons encircle the planet.”

To the extent that Americans think about these bases at all, we generally assume they’re essential to national security and global peace. Our
leaders have claimed as much since most of them were established during World War II and the early days of the Cold War. As a result, we consider the situation normal and accept that US military installations exist in staggering numbers in other countries, on other peoples’ land. On the other hand, the idea that there would be foreign bases on US soil is unthinkable.

While there are no freestanding foreign bases permanently located in the United States, there are now around 800 US bases in foreign countries. Seventy years after World War II and 62 years after the Korean War, there are still 174 US “base sites” in Germany, 113 in Japan, and 83 in South Korea, according to the Pentagon. Hundreds more dot the planet in around 80 countries, including Aruba and Australia, Bahrain and Bulgaria, Colombia, Kenya, and Qatar, among many other places. Although few Americans realize it, the United States likely has more bases in foreign lands than any other people, nation, or empire in history.

Oddly enough, however, the mainstream media rarely report or comment on the issue. For years, during debates over the closure of the prison at the base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, nary a pundit or politician wondered why the United States has a base on Cuban territory in the first place or questioned whether we should have one there at all. Rarely does anyone ask if we need hundreds of bases overseas or if, at an estimated annual cost of perhaps $156 billion or more, the United States can afford them. Rarely does anyone wonder how we would feel if China, Russia, or Iran built even a single base anywhere near our borders, let alone in the United States.

THE BASE NATION’S SCALE

Our 800 bases outside the 50 states and Washington, D.C., come in all sizes and shapes. Some are city-sized “Little Americas”—places like Ramstein Air Base in Germany, Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, and the
little known Navy and Air Force base on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. These support a remarkable infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, power plants, housing complexes, and an array of amenities often referred to as “Burger Kings and bowling alleys.” Among the smallest US installations globally are “lily pad” bases (also known as “cooperative security locations”), which tend to house drones, surveillance aircraft, or pre-positioned weaponry and supplies. These are increasingly found in parts of Africa and Eastern Europe that had previously lacked much of a US military presence.

Other facilities scattered across the planet include ports and airfields, repair complexes, training areas, nuclear weapons installations, missile testing sites, arsenals, warehouses, barracks, military schools, listening and communications posts, and a growing array of drone bases. Military hospitals and prisons, rehab facilities, CIA paramilitary bases, and intelligence facilities (including former CIA “black site” prisons) must also be considered part of our Base Nation because of their military functions. Even US military resorts and recreation areas in places like the Bavarian Alps and Seoul, South Korea, are bases of a kind. Worldwide, the military runs more than 170 golf courses.

The Pentagon’s overseas presence is actually even larger. There are US troops or other military personnel in about 160 foreign countries and territories, including small numbers of marines guarding embassies and larger deployments of trainers and advisors like the roughly 3,500 now working with the Iraqi Army. And don’t forget the Navy’s 11 aircraft carriers. Each should be considered a kind of floating base, or as the Navy tellingly refers to them, “four and a half acres of sovereign US territory.” Finally, above the seas, one finds a growing military presence in space.

The United States isn’t, however, the only country to control military bases outside its territory. Great Britain still has about seven bases and France five in former colonies. Russia has around eight in former Soviet republics. For the first time since World War II, Japan’s “Self-Defense Forces” have a
foreign base in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, alongside US and French bases there. South Korea, India, Chile, Turkey, and Israel each reportedly have at least one foreign base. There are also reports that China may be seeking its first base overseas. In total, these countries probably have about 30 installations abroad, meaning that the United States has approximately 95% of the world’s foreign bases.

“FORWARD” FOREVER?

Although the United States has had bases in foreign lands since shortly after it gained its independence, nothing like today’s massive global deployment of military force was imaginable until World War II. In 1940, with the flash of a pen, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a “destroyers-for-bases” deal with Great Britain that instantly gave the United States 99-year leases to installations in British colonies worldwide. Base acquisition and construction accelerated rapidly once the country entered the war. By 1945, the US military was building base facilities at a rate of 112 a month. By war’s end, the global total topped 2,000 sites. In only five years, the United States had developed history’s first truly global network of bases, vastly overshadowing that of the British Empire upon which “the sun never set.”

After the war, the military returned about half the installations but maintained what historian George Stambuk termed a “permanent institution” of bases abroad. Their number spiked during the wars in Korea and Vietnam, declining after each of them. By the time the Soviet Union imploded in 1991, there were about 1,600 US bases abroad, with some 300,000 US troops stationed on those in Europe alone.

Although the military vacated about 60% of its foreign garrisons in the 1990s, the overall base infrastructure stayed relatively intact. Despite additional base closures in Europe and to a lesser extent in East Asia over the last decade and despite the absence of a superpower adversary, nearly 250,000 troops are still deployed on installations worldwide. Although there are about half as many bases as there were in 1989, the number of
countries with US bases has roughly doubled from 40 to 80. In recent years, President Obama’s “Pacific pivot” has meant billions of dollars in profligate spending in Asia, where the military already had hundreds of bases and tens of thousands of troops. Billions more have been sunk into building an unparalleled permanent base infrastructure in every Persian Gulf country save Iran. In Europe, the Pentagon has been spending billions more erecting expensive new bases at the same time that it has been closing others.

Since the start of the Cold War, the idea that our country should have a large collection of bases and hundreds of thousands of troops permanently stationed overseas has remained a quasi-religious dictum of foreign and national security policy. The nearly 70-year-old idea underlying this deeply held belief is known as the “forward strategy.” Originally, the strategy held that the United States should maintain large concentrations of military forces and bases as close as possible to the Soviet Union to hem in and “contain” its supposed urge to expand.

But the disappearance of another superpower to contain made remarkably little difference to the forward strategy. Chalmers Johnson first grew concerned about our empire of bases when he recognized that the structure of the “American Raj” remained largely unchanged despite the collapse of the supposed enemy.

Two decades after the Soviet Union’s demise, people across the political spectrum still unquestioningly assume that overseas bases and forward-deployed forces are essential to protect the country. George W. Bush’s administration was typical in insisting that bases abroad “maintained the peace” and were “symbols of... US commitments to allies and friends.” The Obama administration has similarly declared that protecting the American people and international security “requires a global security posture.” 

Support for the forward strategy has remained the consensus among politicians of both parties, national security experts, military officials, journalists, and almost everyone else in Washington’s power structure.
Opposition of any sort to maintaining large numbers of overseas bases and troops has long been pilloried as peacenik idealism or the sort of isolationism that allowed Hitler to conquer Europe.

THE COSTS OF GARRISONING THE WORLD

As Johnson showed us, there are many reasons to question the overseas base status quo. The most obvious one is economic. Garrisons overseas are very expensive. According to the RAND Corporation, even when host countries like Japan and Germany cover some of the costs, US taxpayers still pay an annual average of $10,000 to $40,000 more per year to station a member of the military abroad than in the United States. The expense of transportation, the higher cost of living in some host countries, and the need to provide schools, hospitals, housing, and other support to family members of military personnel mean that the dollars add up quickly—especially with more than half a million troops, family members, and civilian employees on bases overseas at any time.

By my very conservative calculations, maintaining installations and troops overseas cost at least $85 billion in 2014—more than the discretionary budget of every government agency except the Defense Department itself. If the US presence in Afghanistan and Iraq is included, that bill reaches $156 billion or more.

While bases may be costly for taxpayers, they are extremely profitable for the country’s privateers of twenty-first-century war like DynCorp International and former Halliburton subsidiary KBR. As Chalmers Johnson noted, “Our installations abroad bring profits to civilian industries,” which win billions in contracts annually to “build and maintain our far-flung outposts.”

Meanwhile, many of the communities hosting bases overseas never see the economic windfalls that US and local leaders regularly promise. Some areas, especially in poor rural communities, have seen short-term economic booms touched off by base construction. In the long-term,
however, most bases rarely create sustainable, healthy local economies. Compared with other forms of economic activity, they represent unproductive uses of land, employ relatively few people for the expanses occupied, and contribute little to local economic growth. Research has consistently shown that when bases finally close, the economic impact is generally limited and in some cases actually positive—that is, local communities can end up better off when they trade bases for housing, schools, shopping complexes, and other forms of economic development.

Meanwhile for the United States, investing taxpayer dollars in the construction and maintenance of overseas bases means forgoing investments in areas like education, transportation, housing, and healthcare, despite the fact that these industries are more of a boon to overall economic productivity and create more jobs compared to equivalent military spending. Think about what $85 billion per year would mean in terms of rebuilding the country’s crumbling civilian infrastructure.

THE HUMAN TOLL

Beyond the financial costs are the human ones. The families of military personnel are among those who suffer from the spread of overseas bases given the strain of distant deployments, family separations, and frequent moves. Overseas bases also contribute to the shocking rates of sexual assault in the military: an estimated 30% of servicewomen are victimized during their time in the military and a disproportionate number of these crimes happen at bases abroad. Outside the base gates, in places like South Korea, one often finds exploitative prostitution industries geared to US military personnel.

Worldwide, bases have caused widespread environmental damage because of toxic leaks, accidents, and in some cases the deliberate dumping of hazardous materials. GI crime has long angered locals. In Okinawa and elsewhere, US troops have repeatedly committed horrific acts of rape against local women. From Greenland to the tropical island of Diego Garcia, the military has displaced local peoples from their lands to
build its bases.

In contrast to frequently invoked rhetoric about spreading democracy, the military has shown a preference for establishing bases in undemocratic and often despotic states like Qatar and Bahrain. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia, US bases have created fertile breeding grounds for radicalism and anti-Americanism. The presence of bases near Muslim holy sites in Saudi Arabia was a major recruiting tool for al-Qaeda and part of Osama bin Laden’s professed motivation for the September 11, 2001, attacks.

Although this kind of perpetual turmoil is little noticed at home, bases abroad have all too often generate grievances, protest, and antagonistic relationships. Although few here recognize it, our bases are a major part of the image the United States presents to the world—and they often show us in an extremely unflattering light.

CREATING A NEW COLD WAR, BASE BY BASE

It is also not at all clear that bases enhance national security and global peace in any way. In the absence of a superpower enemy, the argument that bases many thousands of miles from US shores are necessary to defend the United States—or even its allies—is a hard argument to make. On the contrary, the global collection of bases has generally enabled the launching of military interventions, drone strikes, and wars of choice that have resulted in repeated disasters, costing millions of lives and untold destruction from Vietnam to Iraq.

By making it easier to wage foreign wars, bases overseas have ensured that military action is an ever more attractive option—often the only imaginable option—for US policymakers. As the anthropologist Catherine Lutz has said, when all you have in your foreign policy toolbox is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail. Ultimately, bases abroad have frequently made war more likely rather than less.
Proponents of the long-outdated forward strategy will reply that overseas bases “deter” enemies and help keep the global peace. As supporters of the status quo, they have been proclaiming such security benefits as self-evident truths for decades. Few have provided anything of substance to support their claims. While there is some evidence that military forces can indeed deter imminent threats, little if any research suggests that overseas bases are an effective form of long-term deterrence. Studies by both the Bush administration and the RAND Corporation—not exactly left-wing peaceniks—indicate that advances in transportation technology have largely erased the advantage of stationing troops abroad. In the case of a legitimate defensive war or peacekeeping operation, the military could generally deploy troops just as quickly from domestic bases as from most bases abroad. Rapid sealift and airlift capabilities coupled with agreements allowing the use of bases in allied nations and, potentially, pre-positioned supplies are a dramatically less expensive and less inflammatory alternative to maintaining permanent bases overseas.

It is also questionable whether such bases actually increase the security of host nations. The presence of US bases can turn a country into an explicit target for foreign powers or militants—just as US installations have endangered Americans overseas.

Similarly, rather than stabilizing dangerous regions, foreign bases frequently heighten military tensions and discourage diplomatic solutions to conflicts. Placing US bases near the borders of countries like China, Russia, and Iran, for example, increases threats to their security and encourages them to respond by boosting their own military spending and activity. Imagine how US leaders would respond if China were to build even a single small base in Mexico, Canada, or the Caribbean. Notably, the most dangerous moment during the Cold War—the 1962 Cuban missile crisis—revolved around the construction of Soviet nuclear missile facilities in Cuba, roughly 90 miles from the US border.

The creation and maintenance of so many US bases overseas likewise
encourages other nations to build their own foreign bases in what could rapidly become an escalating “base race.” Bases near the borders of China and Russia, in particular, threaten to fuel new cold wars. US officials may insist that building yet more bases in East Asia is a defensive act meant to ensure peace in the Pacific, but tell that to the Chinese. That country’s leaders are undoubtedly not “reassured” by the creation of yet more bases encircling their borders. Contrary to the claim that such installations increase global security, they tend to ratchet up regional tensions, increasing the risk of future military confrontation.

In this way, just as the war on terror has become a global conflict that only seems to spread terror, the creation of new US bases to protect against imagined future Chinese or Russian threats runs the risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. These bases may ultimately help create the very threat they are supposedly designed to protect against. In other words, far from making the world a safer place, US bases can actually make war more likely and the country less secure.

BEHIND THE WIRE

In his farewell address to the nation upon leaving the White House in 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously warned the nation about the insidious economic, political, and even spiritual effects of what he dubbed “the military-industrial-congressional complex,” the vast interlocking national security state born out of World War II. As Chalmers Johnson’s work reminded us in this new century, our 70-year-old collection of bases is evidence of how, despite Ike’s warning, the United States has entered a permanent state of war with an economy, a government, and a global system of power enmeshed in preparations for future conflicts.

America’s overseas bases offer a window onto our military’s impact in the world and in our own daily lives. The history of these hulking “Little Americas” of concrete, fast food, and weaponry provides a living chronicle of the United States in the post-World War II era. In a certain sense, in these last seven decades, whether we realize it or not, we’ve all come to
live “behind the wire,” as military personnel like to say.

We may think such bases have made us safer. In reality, they’ve helped lock us inside a permanently militarized society that has made all of us—everyone on this planet—less secure, damaging lives at home and abroad.

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DAVID VINE  

David Vine is assistant professor of anthropology at American University, in Washington, DC. He is the author of *Island of Shame: The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base on Diego Garcia* (Princeton University Press, 2009). He has written for the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, and *Mother Jones*, among other places. He is currently completing a book about the more than 1,000 U.S. military bases located outside the United States.

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**Base Nation**

*How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World*

By David Vine

From Italy to the Indian Ocean, from Japan to Honduras, a far-
reaching examination of the perils of American military bases overseas

American military bases encircle the globe. More than two decades after the end of the Cold War, the U.S. still stations its troops at nearly a thousand locations in foreign lands. These bases are usually taken for granted or overlooked entirely, a little-noticed part of the Pentagon’s vast operations. But in an eye-opening account, Base Nation shows that the worldwide network of bases brings with it a panoply of ills—and actually makes the nation less safe in the long run.

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U.S. MILITARY BASES ABROAD, 2015

As of 2015, the United States controlled approximately 800 bases outside the fifty U.S. states and Washington, D.C. The sheer number of bases as well as the secrecy and lack of transparency of the overseas base network make any graphic depiction challenging. This map reflects the bases’ relative number and positioning given the best available information.

Photos from Base Nation

Trailer for Base Nation

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