



Resistance against Military Bases

*Booklet with contributions to the “International Congress
on Military Bases and their Importance for Global Wars”*

in Kaiserslautern, Germany, 8-9 September 2017

Published by the campaign “Stopp Air Base Ramstein”

June 2018, edited by Karl-Heinz Peil (Germany)

Impressum

Publisher: Kampagne „Stopp Air Base Ramstein“

Editor: Karl-Heinz Peil

The booklet can be ordered in print at:

Stopp Ramstein Kampagne, Marienstr. 19/20, D-10117 Berlin

or by e-mail to: info@ramstein-kampagne.eu

Published in June 2018

Content

Foreword	4
<i>by Dave Webb (UK)</i>	
Peace movement internationally networked in action	5
<i>by Reiner Braun, Co-President IPB (International Peace Bureau)</i>	
Founding statement for the International Network against Military Bases	7
Trumping Democracy in America's Empire of Bases	8
<i>by David Vine (USA)</i>	
Coalition against U.S. Foreign Military Bases	13
<i>Unity Statement</i>	
Military bases in Germany – an overview	14
<i>by Karl-Heinz Peil (Germany)</i>	
Ramstein in Germany: Hub for global US drone war	18
<i>by Norman Solomon</i>	
AFRICOM: US-Headquarter for illegal warfare	24
<i>by Norman Solomon</i>	
Cyberwarfare in the Baltic Sea	26
<i>von Dave Webb (UK)</i>	
Shannon: Militarisation of a civil airport	28
<i>by John Lannon (Ireland)</i>	
Menwith Hill: Protests against illegal listening station	32
<i>von Dave Webb (UK)</i>	
Sicilian Struggle to protect Environment and Peace	37
<i>by NoMUOS International (Italy)</i>	
South Korea: Fighting for an environment worth living in	41
<i>by Hohyun Choi (South Korea)</i>	
Okinawa: "Not a single grain of sand for war"	44
<i>by Ikuko Ueno (Japan)</i>	
Guantánamo: Colonial Relic and Torture Prison	48
<i>by Netzwerk Cuba e.V. (Germany)</i>	

The twin challenges of war and climate change threaten our very existence – to ensure our survival we must adopt ways of working globally through mutual trust and cooperation.

The current rapidly changing security context requires a significant international dialogue which looks increasingly unlikely at this time.

The current dependence on military aggression and intervention to address international problems must be abandoned and all foreign military bases closed.

There is a growing awareness of the dangers of global militarisation and a growing resistance but it will require significant international co-operation between opposition groups and some courageous and inspirational world leaders to ensure that we survive the next 50 years or so.

Dave Webb

Peace movement internationally networked in action

by Reiner Braun, Co-President of the International Peace Bureau (IPB)



Reiner Braun at the International Peace Congress in Berlin, October 2016, Photo: Bilal El Soussi

The peace movements has always been international. The first major peace congresses at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century - influenced by Berta von Suttner - were international peace events.

The protests and rejection of the emerging First World War at the beginning of the 20th century were international, as was the "betrayal" of the anti-war position by social democracy in 1914.

The International Peace Bureau (IPB), currently the largest international peace network, can be seen as a model example of internationalism. It was founded in 1891 and was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1910.

Recent highlights of this internationalism have certainly been:

- The worldwide protests on 15.02.2003 against the imminent aggression of the USA against Iraq with more than 15 million participants worldwide. The New York Times spoke at the time of the peace movement as "the second superpower".
- The award of the Nobel Peace Prize in autumn 2017 to ICAN, a worldwide network that has received the prize for the many and varied actions against nuclear weapons programs that are taking place everywhere and again and again. Without international networking and close cooperation across all continents, the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty would never have been successful contracted.

- The international actions against NATO, which since 2009 were decisively organized by the international network No to war- No to NATO. The actions in Brussels in May 2017 were impressive both quantitatively and qualitatively. Actions will be prepared for the NATO summit in Brussels July 2018 again.

Internationalism, international cooperation and solidarity should and must be further developed and strengthened in the face of an insane armament and confrontation policy. This was an important consideration for the international conference against military bases in Kaiserslautern on 8th and 9th of September 2017 in connection with the protests of the Stop Air-Base Ramstein 2017 campaign. A result of this conference is the initiative to reactivate the international network against military bases. We are faced with one thousand foreign military bases in the world, and therefore more cooperation and coordination is needed to accompany their development and daily militaristic practice with large and small protest actions. Mutual solidarity and support is the only way to defend ourselves against a gigantic worldwide military machinery of various states, but especially the USA.

We know far too little about the activities at the military bases of this world, about the daily routines, the wars that emanate from there, but also about the resistance against it and the repression that many of the peace activists have to suffer. Exchange of information and experience is essential for the international network against military bases.

The international network against military bases founded at the World Social Forum in 2004 had its first conference in Ecuador in 2007. The then newly elected President of Ecuador, Correa, forced the US Army to withdraw from Ecuador in 2009 and the US base had to be closed.

We are now trying to reactivate this international network against military bases. This certainly cannot be done overnight but requires a longer process. We have already received many positive reactions from many parts of the world. At the same time, a US coalition has formed against US military bases abroad, which arranged a first conference in Baltimore (January 2018).

We are a small preparatory group with colleagues from Great Britain, Ireland, Sweden, Estonia, Japan, South Korea and Germany who participated in the international congress during the Ramstein actions. Dave Webb and Reiner Braun have designed a "founding statement", which was signed by activists from 6 countries.

Founding statement for the International Network against Military Bases

„The International Anti-Military Bases Network believes that the establishment of a military base by one country outside its own territory is an act of aggression. As such, they create a hostile environment, fuel fear and inflame antagonism.

We believe that peace and international security is best achieved by pursuing an approach of common security based on cooperation with neighbours, trust, understanding and diplomacy. Foreign military bases are not the form of ‘common security’ that we believe will work in the long term. They constitute a major threat to others, the environment and to world peace by threatening military action with its subsequent danger to citizens and destruction of the infrastructure and the environment.

While we also recognize that the United States has by far the highest number of military bases outside its territory and currently maintains over 800 military bases in other countries, we also recognise that others (such as the UK, France, Russia, China and the NATO military alliance) also rely on military bases to project and enlarge their power base.

Our goal is to close all foreign military bases. Military bases pose threats of political and economic expansion, sabotage and espionage, and crimes against local populations. U.S. bases in particular are the largest users of fossil fuel in the world, heavily contributing to environmental degradation and agree that the closure of U.S. and other foreign military bases is one of the first necessary steps toward a just, peaceful and sustainable world

We commit to supporting and working with all organizations and networks who campaign for the removal of foreign military bases in their countries and communities, to raise public awareness, increase political and international pressure and help as far as possible to organise and co-ordinate non-violent resistance with the aim of eventually closing them all.

We invite to join our network.”

Trumping Democracy in America's Empire of Bases

by David Vine



David Vine as first speaker in the opening session of the Baltimore conference in January 2018.

Source: Screenshot from Videostream

U.S. military bases are today found in at least 45 less-than-democratic nations and territories, as they have been for decades with support from Republican and Democratic party presidents alike. These bases range from ones the size of not-so-small American towns to tiny outposts. They are homes to tens of thousands of U.S. troops.

To ensure basing access from Central America to Africa, Asia to the Middle East, U.S. officials have repeatedly collaborated with fiercely anti-democratic regimes and militaries implicated

in torture, murder, the suppression of democratic rights, the systematic oppression of women and minorities, and numerous other human rights abuses. Forget the recent White House invitations and Trump's public compliments. For nearly three quarters of a century, the United States has invested tens of billions of dollars in maintaining bases and troops in such repressive states. From Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower to George W. Bush and Barack Obama, Republican and Democratic administrations alike have, since World War II, regularly shown a preference for maintaining bases in undemocratic and often despotic states, including Spain under Generalissimo Francisco Franco, South Korea under Park Chung-hee, Bahrain under King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, and Djibouti under four-term President Ismail Omar Guelleh, to name just four.

Many of the 45 present-day undemocratic U.S. base hosts qualify as fully "authoritarian regimes," according to the Economist Democracy Index. In such cases, American installations and the troops stationed on them are effectively helping block the spread of democracy in countries like Cameroon, Chad, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kuwait, Niger, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

This pattern of daily support for dictatorship and repression around the world should be a national scandal in a country supposedly committed to democracy. It should trouble Americans ranging from religious conservatives and libertarians to

leftists -- anyone, in fact, who believes in the democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. After all, one of the long-articulated justifications for maintaining military bases abroad has been that the U.S. military's presence protects and spreads democracy.

Far from bringing democracy to these lands, however, such bases tend to provide legitimacy for and prop up undemocratic regimes of all sorts, while often interfering with genuine efforts to encourage political and democratic reform. The silencing of the critics of human rights abuses in base hosts like Bahrain, which has violently cracked down on pro-democracy demonstrators since 2011, has left the United States complicit in these states' crimes.

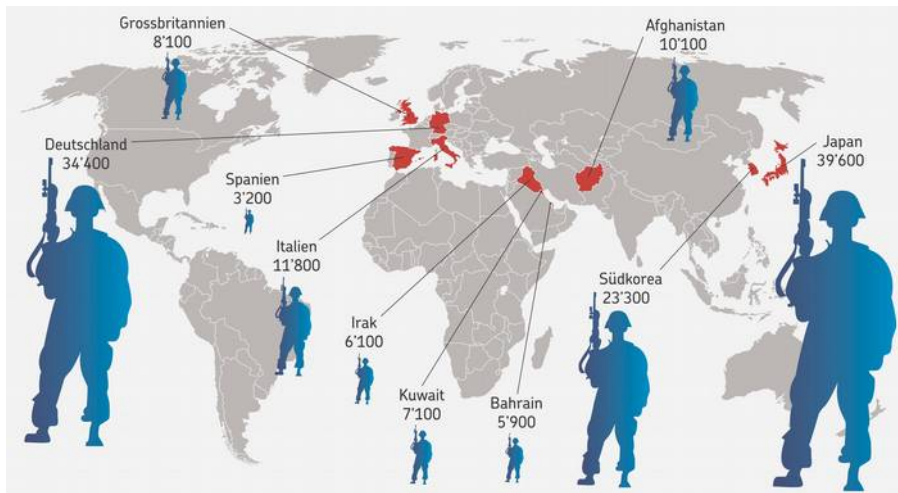
During the Cold War, bases in undemocratic countries were often justified as the unfortunate but necessary consequence of confronting the "communist menace" of the Soviet Union. But here's the curious thing: in the quarter century since the Cold War ended with that empire's implosion, few of those bases have closed. Today, while a White House visit from an autocrat may generate indignation, the presence of such installations in countries run by repressive or military rulers receives little notice at all.

Befriending Dictators

The 45 nations and territories with little or no democratic rule represent more than half of the roughly 80 countries now hosting U.S. bases (who often lack the power to ask their "guests" to leave). They are part of a historically unprecedented global network of military installations the United States has built or occupied since World War II.

Today, while there are no foreign bases in the United States, there are around 800 U.S. bases in foreign countries. That number was recently even higher, but it still almost certainly represents a record for any nation or empire in history. More than 70 years after World War II and 64 years after the Korean War, there are, according to the Pentagon, 181 U.S. "base sites" in Germany, 122 in Japan, and 83 in South Korea. Hundreds more dot the planet from Aruba to Australia, Belgium to Bulgaria, Colombia to Qatar. Hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops, civilians, and family members occupy these installations. By my conservative estimate, to maintain such a level of bases and troops abroad, U.S. taxpayers spend at least \$150 billion annually -- more than the budget of any government agency except the Pentagon itself.

For decades, leaders in Washington have insisted that bases abroad spread our values and democracy -- and that may have been true to some extent in occupied Germany, Japan, and Italy after World War II. However, as base expert Catherine



Total numbers of US soldiers deployed in foreign countries: 200'000 *.

Depicted: Top-10 countries with most US soldiers

Data source: Defense Manpower Data Center (2017) – Military and Civilian Personnel by Service/Agency by Stte/Country (June 2017)

* Active Duty (Army + Navy + Marine Corps + Air Force + Coast Guard) without reservists, National guard or civil contractors

Picture source: Swiss Institute for Peace and Energy Research - www.siper.ch/en

Lutz suggests, the subsequent historical record shows that “gaining and maintaining access for U.S. bases has often involved close collaboration with despotic governments.”

The bases in the countries whose leaders President Trump has recently lauded illustrate the broader pattern. The United States has maintained military facilities in the Philippines almost continuously since seizing that archipelago from Spain in 1898. It only granted the colony independence in 1946, conditioned on the local government’s agreement that the U.S. would retain access to more than a dozen installations there.

In Turkey, President Erdogan’s increasingly autocratic rule is only the latest episode in a pattern of military coups and undemocratic regimes interrupting periods of democracy. U.S. bases have, however, been a constant presence in the country since 1943. They repeatedly caused controversy and sparked protest -- first throughout the 1960s and 1970s, before the Bush administration’s 2003 invasion of Iraq, and more recently after U.S. forces began using them to launch attacks in Syria.

Although Egypt has a relatively small U.S. base presence, its military has enjoyed deep and lucrative ties with the U.S. military since the signing of the Camp David Accords with Israel in 1979. After a 2013 military coup ousted a democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood government, the Obama administration took months to withhold some forms of military and economic aid, despite more than 1,300 killings by security forces and the arrest of more than 3,500 members of the Brotherhood. According to Human Rights Watch, “Little was said about ongoing abuses,” which have continued to this day.

In Thailand, the U.S. has maintained deep connections with the Thai military, which has carried out 12 coups since 1932. Both countries have been able to deny that they have a basing relationship of any sort, thanks to a rental agreement between a private contractor and U.S. forces at Thailand’s Utapao Naval Air Base. “Because of [contractor] Delta Golf Global,” writes journalist Robert Kaplan, “the U.S. military was here, but it was not here. After all, the Thais did no business with the U.S. Air Force. They dealt only with a private contractor.”

Even within what are technically U.S. borders, democratic rule has regularly proved “less attractive” than preserving colonialism into the twenty-first century. The presence of scores of bases in Puerto Rico and the Pacific island of Guam has been a major motivation for keeping these and other U.S. “territories” -- American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands -- in varying degrees of colonial subordination. Conveniently for military leaders, they have neither full independence nor the full democratic rights that would come with incorporation into the U.S. as states, including voting representation in Congress and the presidential vote. Installations in at least five of Europe’s remaining colonies have proven equally attractive, as has the base that U.S. troops have forcibly occupied in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, since shortly after the Spanish-American War of 1898.

Backing Dictators

Authoritarian rulers tend to be well aware of the desire of U.S. officials to maintain the status quo when it comes to bases. As a result, they often capitalize on a base presence to extract benefits or help ensure their own political survival.

Meanwhile, opponents of repressive regimes often use the bases as a tool to rally nationalist sentiment, anger, and protest against both ruling elites and the United States. That, in turn, tends to fuel fears in Washington that a transition to democracy might lead to base eviction, often leading to a doubling down on support for undemocratic rulers. The result can be an escalating cycle of opposition and U.S.-backed repression.

Blowback

While some defend the presence of bases in undemocratic countries as necessary to deter “bad actors” and support “U.S. interests” (primarily corporate ones), backing dictators and autocrats frequently leads to harm not just for the citizens of host nations but for U.S. citizens as well. The base build-up in the Middle East has proven the most prominent example of this. Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution, which both unfolded in 1979, the Pentagon has built up scores of bases across the Middle East at a cost of tens of billions of taxpayer dollars. According to former West Point professor Bradley Bowman, such bases and the troops that go with them have been a “major catalyst for anti-Americanism and radicalization.” Research has similarly revealed a correlation between the bases and al-Qaeda recruitment.



Most catastrophically, outposts in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Afghanistan have helped generate and fuel the radical militancy that has spread throughout the Greater Middle East and led to terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States. The presence of such bases and troops in Muslim holy lands was, after all, a major recruiting tool for al-Qaeda and part of Osama bin Laden’s professed motivation for the 9/11 attacks.

Screenshot from Interview with David Vine, Source: YouTube

David Vine is associate professor of anthropology at American University in Washington, D.C. His latest book is *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World* (the American Empire Project, Metropolitan Books).

The script is excerpted with permission from:

http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/176281/tomgram%3A_david_vine%2C_trumping_democracy_in_america%27s_empire_of_bases/

For more information, visit www.basenation.us and www.davidvine.net

Coalition Against U.S. Foreign Military Bases

Unity Statement, July 2017

We, the undersigned peace, justice and environmental organizations, and individuals, endorse the following Points of Unity and commit ourselves to working together by forming a Coalition Against U.S. Foreign Military Bases, with the goal of raising public awareness and organizing non-violent mass resistance against U.S. foreign military bases.

While we may have our differences on other issues, we all agree that U.S. foreign military bases are the principal instruments of imperial global domination and environmental damage through wars of aggression and occupation, and that the closure of U.S. foreign military bases is one of the first necessary steps toward a just, peaceful and sustainable world. Our belief in the urgency of this necessary step is based on the following facts:

1. While we are opposed to all foreign military bases, we do recognize that the United States maintains the highest number of military bases outside its territory, estimated at almost 1000 (95% of all foreign military bases in the world). Presently, there are U.S. military bases in every Persian Gulf country except Iran.

2. In addition, the United States has 19 Naval air carriers (and 15 more planned), each as part of a Carrier Strike Group, composed of roughly 7,500 personnel, and a carrier air wing of 65 to 70 aircraft — each of which can be considered a floating military base.

3. These bases are centers of aggressive military actions, threats of political and economic expansion, sabotage and espionage, and crimes against local populations. In addition, these military bases are the largest users of fossil fuel in the world, heavily contributing to environmental degradation.

4. The annual cost of these bases to the American taxpayers is approximately \$156 billion. The support of U.S. foreign military bases drains funds that can be used to fund human needs and enable our cities and States to provide necessary services for the people.

5. This has made the U.S. a more militarized society and has led to increased tensions between the U.S. and the rest of the world. Stationed throughout the world, almost 1000 in number, U.S. foreign military bases are symbols of the ability of the United States to intrude in the lives of sovereign nations and peoples.

6. Many individual national coalitions — for example, Okinawa, Italy, Jeju Island Korea, Diego Garcia, Cyprus, Greece, and Germany — are demanding closure of bases on their territory. The base that the U.S. has illegally occupied the longest, for over a century, is Guantánamo Bay, whose existence constitutes an imposition of the empire and a violation of International Law. Since 1959 the government and people of Cuba have demanded that the government of the U.S. return the Guantánamo territory to Cuba.

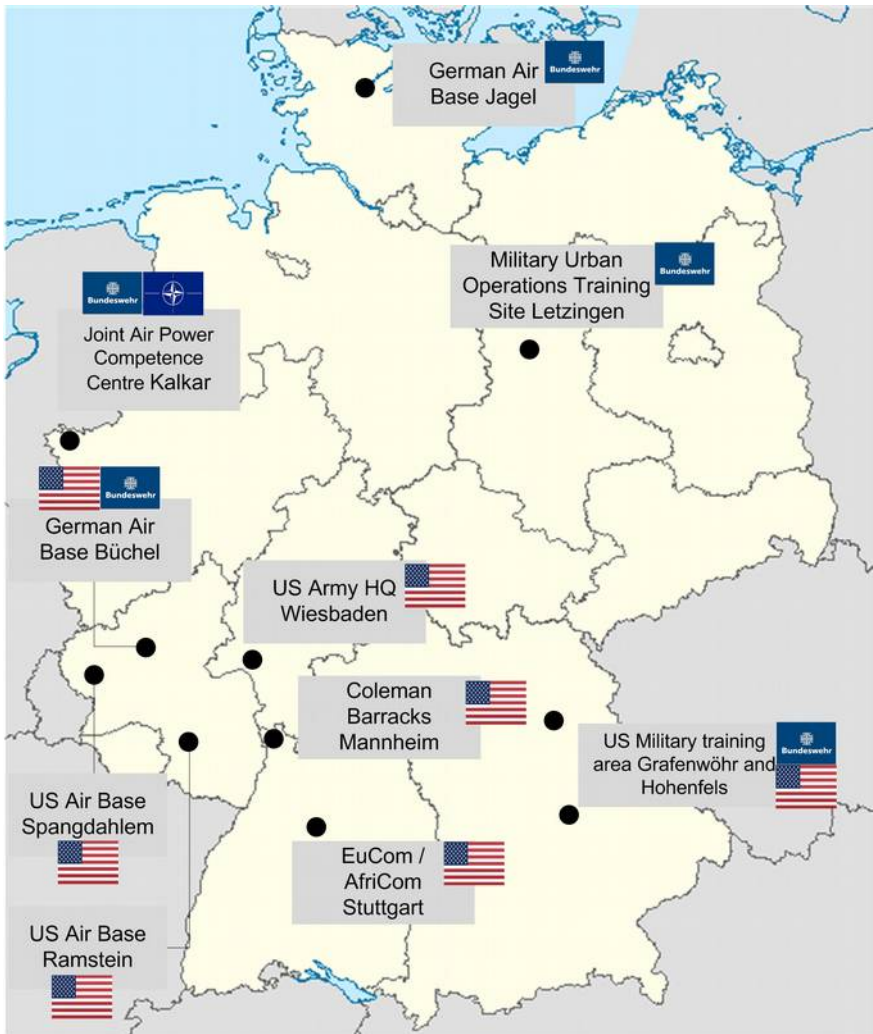
U.S. foreign military bases are NOT in defense of U.S. national, or global security. T, July 26, 2017 they are the military expression of U.S. intrusion in the lives of sovereign countries on behalf of the dominant financial, political, and military interests of the ruling elite. Whether invited in or not by domestic interests that have agreed to be junior partners, no country, no peoples, no government, can claim to be able to make decisions totally in the interest of their people, with foreign troops on their soil representing interests antagonistic to the national purpose.

We must all unite to actively oppose the existence of U.S. foreign military bases and call for their immediate closure. We invite all forces of peace, social and environmental justice to join us in our renewed effort to achieve this shared goal.

Source: <http://noforeignbases.org/345-2/>

Military bases in Germany – an overview

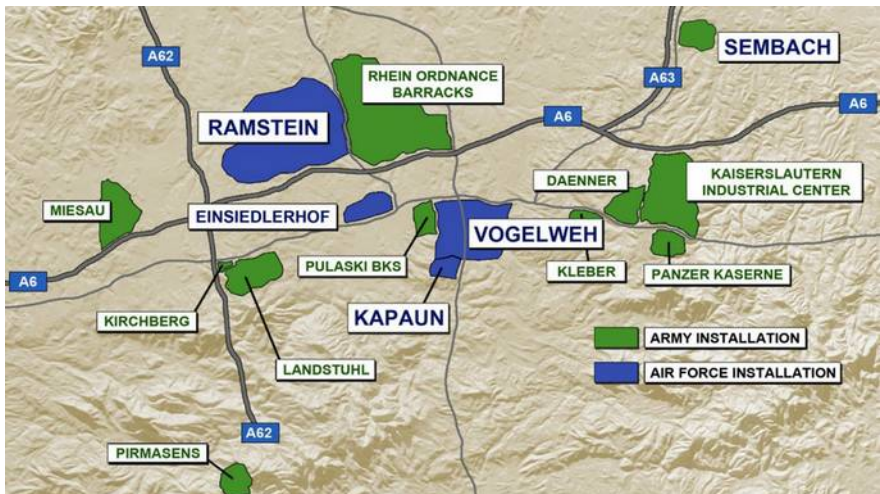
by Karl-Heinz Peil



Selected military sites in Germany

Expansion of military bases through mergers

After 1990, the number of military bases in Germany has been reduced considerably, but the remaining sites have been expanded. This is particularly evident in the concentration of US military bases on German soil, which are now concentrated in a few locations and regions, which have unfortunately received a tremendous surge of militarisation. One example of this is that the US military air hub was formerly located at Frankfurt Airport called "Gateway to Europe". The consequences of the relocation to Ramstein and Spangdahlem in the German federal state Rheinland-Pfalz, which was completed in 2005, had an eminent effect on the environment and on general health of the local population.



US locations in the greater region Kaiserslautern

In recent years, the headquarters of the US Army has been gradually relocated from Heidelberg to Wiesbaden, the capital of the German federal state Hessen. Two main reasons for the relocation might have been, that more expansion options are available on this site and anti-war protests are less likely there.

Especially during the Iraq war in 2003 - in which Germany did not officially participate - the importance of US military bases in Germany for the logistics of US world wide warfare became apparent.

No other country in the world has as many foreign soldiers, family members and service providers for the military on its own territory as Germany. These are mainly concentrated in the greater Kaiserslautern area.

Military training facilities of a new kind

The “urban operations training” facilities in Letzingen are part of the Altmark military training site in the Colbitz-Letzlinger Heide. It features several reconstructed village and city scenes to prepare German soldiers for foreign missions. The training city of Schnöggersburg, which was completed in 2017, is the only one of its kind in Germany. The facilities are not only available to the German armed forces (“Bundeswehr”), but will also be used by armed forces from other states. The citizens' movement OFFENE HEIDE has been protesting against this expansion for more than 20 years. OFFENE HEIDE was awarded the (German) Aachen Peace Prize in 2016. However, it has not yet been possible to break up existing resistance among the local population. Colbitz-Letzinger Heide in Eastern Germany is an economically weak area which explains the perceived dependence of its population and the expected economic impact of the military facilities.

Military Command Centres and NATO Centres of Excellence

These facilities are gradually developing as centres for worldwide warfare and for the preparation of future wars. The peace movement should pay great attention to the NATO AirCom in Ramstein as the headquarter of the US missile defence system in Europe and the NATO air control centre near Kalkar. Several NATO Centres of Excellence are addressing the question of how wars can (again) be made manageable in the future.

Data espionage - partly conspicuous - partly hidden

Only a fraction of listening posts for illegal data espionage are listed as military sites, e.g. the monitoring station in Bad Aibling (Bavaria), which was used by the NSA for many years and was transferred to the BND years ago. (See the article on Menwith Hill in the UK and on cyber war in the Baltic Sea region in this brochure). Some of these facilities are also hidden inconspicuously, as in the world's largest US consulate in Frankfurt/Main, where, according to WikiLeaks revelations, hundreds of CIA employees are operating.

Set-aside military facilities between conversion and reactivation

One example of this is the Coleman site in Mannheim with its huge size of over 200 hectares, which in the past has already been scheduled for closure by the US Army. Recently, however, more and more military vehicles, including hundreds of tanks, have been parked and maintained there. This must be seen in direct connection with NATO's intensified major manoeuvres on Russia's western border. For this reason, the local peace initiative in Mannheim not only demands - as has

been the case for some time - the conversion of the military areas for civilian use, but also describes the Coleman site as a hub for coming wars.

This also takes place at other locations, such as new US depots in former British barracks.

More and more mixed and secret military facilities

The examples already mentioned show an increasing militarisation of Germany and the German society that is partly hidden.

NATO demands of its member states to invest 2% of their GDP in their military budget. This budget will also be used to improve civil infrastructure for military use, e.g. by upgrading roads, bridges and rail networks for rapid military transports to the east.

Comprehensive overviews of military facilities are available

What is only mentioned here as an example can also be analysed in detail and used as a basis for local activities against arms research, arms production and war preparations. Brochures with an armaments atlas exists for several German federal states, where detailed compilations of all relevant sites can be found.



Büchel Air Base: This *Bundeswehr* location operates Tornado air planes, which are dedicated of delivering the twenty US nuclear bombs, which are stored by the US Air Force. This Air base is the only location in Germany with nuclear weapons. The German peace movement is present since years with actions like peace vigils and blockades with the slogan "Twenty weeks against twenty bombs" (permanent presence over twenty weeks). *Photo: Flickr*

Ramstein in Germany: Hub for global US drone war

by Norman Solomon, USA*

The overseas hub for America's "war on terror" is the massive Ramstein Air Base in southwest Germany. Nearly ignored by US media, Ramstein serves crucial functions for drone warfare and much more. It's the most important Air Force base abroad, operating as a kind of grand central station for airborne war—whether relaying video images of drone targets in Afghanistan to remote pilots with trigger fingers in Nevada, or airlifting special-ops units on missions to Africa, or transporting munitions for airstrikes in Syria and Iraq. Soaking up billions of taxpayer dollars, Ramstein has scarcely lacked for anything from the home country, other than scrutiny.

Known as "Little America" in this mainly rural corner of Germany, the area now includes 57,000 US citizens clustered around Ramstein and a dozen smaller bases. The Defense Department calls it "the largest American community outside of the United States." Ramstein serves as the biggest Air Force cargo port beyond US borders, providing "full spectrum airfield operations" along with "world-class airlift and expeditionary combat support." The base also touts "superior" services and "exceptional quality of life." To look at Ramstein and environs is to peer into a far-away mirror for the United States; what's inside the frame is normality for endless war.

Serving the transport needs of war efforts in Iraq and Syria as well as in many other nations, Ramstein is a central pit stop for enormous cargo jets like the C-5 Galaxy and C-17 Globemaster. The Ramstein base currently supports "fifteen different major combat operations," moving the daily supply chain and conducting urgent airlifts.

The base maintains a fleet of fourteen newest-model C-130 turboprops, now coming in mighty handy for secretive US military moves across much of Africa. With its sleek digital avionics, the cockpit of a C-130J looked impressive. But more notable was the plane's spacious cargo bay, where a pilot explained that it can carry up to 44,000 pounds of supplies—or as many as 92 Army Airborne "jumpers," who can each be saddled with enough weapons and gear to weigh in at 400 pounds. From the air, troops or freight—even steamrollers, road graders, and Humvees—leave the plane's hold with parachutes. Or the agile plane can land on "undeveloped air fields."

With Ramstein as its home, the C-130J is ideal for flying war matériel and special-operations forces to remote terrain in northern and western Africa. (The Pen-

tagon describes it as “a rugged combat transporter designed to take off and land at austere fields.”)

When Ramstein’s 60,800-square-foot Air and Space Operations Center opened in October 2011, the Air Force crowed that it “comes with 40 communication systems, 553 workstations, 1,500 computers, 1,700 monitors, 22,000 connections, and enough fiber optics to stretch from here to the Louvre in Paris.” A news release focused on “the critical mission of monitoring the airspace above Europe and Africa” and “controlling the skies from the Arctic Circle to the Cape of Needles.” But the Defense Department didn’t mention that the new hyper-tech center would be vital to the USA’s drone war.

Ramstein receives visual images from drones via satellite, then relays the images to sensor operators and pilots at computer terminals in the United States. “Ramstein is absolutely essential to the US drone program,” says Brandon Bryant, a former Air Force sensor operator who participated in drone attacks on Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia for five years while stationed in New Mexico and Nevada. “All information and data go through Ramstein. Everything. For the whole world.”

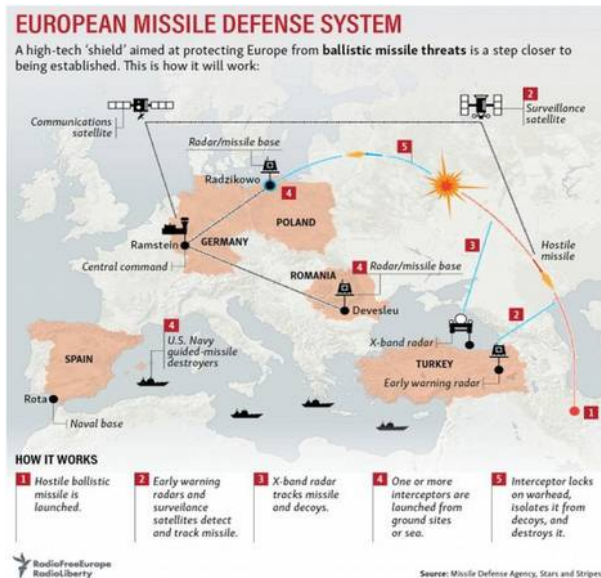
Bryant and other sensor operators had Ramstein on speed dial: “Before we could establish a link from our ground-control station in the United States to the drone, we literally would have to call Ramstein up and say ‘Hey, can you connect us to this satellite feed?’ We would just pick up the phone and press the button and it automatically dials in to Ramstein.” Bryant concluded that the entire system for drone strikes was set up “to take away responsibility, so that no one has responsibility for what happens.”

The US government’s far-flung system for extrajudicial killing uses Ramstein as a kind of digital switchboard in a process that fogs accountability and often kills bystanders. A former Air Force drone technician, Cian Westmoreland, told me that many of the technical people staffing Ramstein’s Air and Space Operations Center are apt to be “none the wiser; they would just know a signal is going through.”

Westmoreland was stationed in Afghanistan at the Kandahar Air Field, where he helped build a signal relay station that connected to Ramstein. He never moved a joystick to maneuver a drone and never pushed a button to help fire a missile. Yet, in 2016, Westmoreland speaks sadly of the commendations he received for helping to kill more than 200 people with drone strikes. “I did my job,” he said, “and now I have to live with that.”

During his work on the drone program, Westmoreland developed “a new kind of understanding of what modern warfare actually is. We’re moving towards more

network-centric warfare. So, orders [are] dealt out over a network, and making systems more autonomous, putting less humans in the chain. And a lot of the positions are going to be maintenance, they're technician jobs, to keep systems up and running."



Those systems strive to reduce the lag time from target zone to computer screen in Nevada. The delay during satellite transmission ("latency" in tech jargon) can last up to six seconds, depending on weather conditions and other factors, but once the signal gets to Ramstein it reaches Nevada almost instantly via fiber-optic cable. Permission to fire comes from an attack controller who "could be anywhere," as Bryant put it, "just looking at the same video base feeds as us pilots and sensors. He just sits in front of a screen too." As Andrew Cockburn wrote in his recent book Kill Chain, "there is a recurrent pattern in which people become transfixed by what is on the screen, seeing what they want to see, especially when the screen—with a resolution equal to the legal definition of blindness for drivers—is representing people and events thousands of miles and several continents away."

For all its ultra-tech importance, the Air and Space Operations Center at Ramstein is just a steely link in a kill chain of command, while a kind of assembly-line Taylorism keeps producing the drone war. "I think that's part of the strength of the secrecy of the program," Bryant said. "It's fragmented." Meanwhile, "We were supposed to function and never ask questions."

Worlds away, the carnage is often lethally haphazard. For example, classified documents obtained by The Intercept shed light on a special ops series of airstrikes from January 2012 to February 2013 in northeast Afghanistan, code-named Operation Haymaker. The attacks killed more than 200 people, while only 35 were the intended targets. Such numbers may be disturbing, yet they don't convey what actually happens in human terms.

Several years ago, Pakistani photographer Noor Behram described the aftermath of a US drone attack: "There are just pieces of flesh lying around after a strike. You can't find bodies. So the locals pick up the flesh and curse America. They say that America is killing us inside our own country, inside our own homes, and only because we are Muslims."

Even without a missile strike, there are the traumatic effects of drones hovering overhead. Former New York Times reporter David Rohde recalled the sound during his captivity by the Taliban in 2009 in tribal areas of Pakistan: "The drones were terrifying. From the ground, it is impossible to determine who or what they are tracking as they circle overhead. The buzz of a distant propeller is a constant reminder of imminent death."

But such matters are as far removed from Little America in southwest Germany as they are from Big America back home.

The American drone war has long been unpopular in Germany, where polling indicates that two out of three citizens oppose it. So President Obama was eager to offer assurances during a visit to Berlin three years ago, declaring: "We do not use Germany as a launching point for unmanned drones...as part of our counterterrorism activities." But such statements miss the point, intentionally, and obscure how much the drone war depends on German hospitality.

After an uproar over US National Security Agency spying in Germany caused the Bundestag to set up a special committee of inquiry, it became clear that surveillance issues are intertwined with Ramstein's role in a drone program that relies on cell-phone numbers to find targets.¹

The entire region is brandishing huge arsenals. Ten miles from Ramstein, the Miesau Army Depot is the US military's biggest storage area for ammunition outside the United States. In late February the depot received what Stars and Stripes reported as "the largest Europe-bound ammo shipment in 10 years"—more than 5,000 tons of US Army ammunition that arrived while the Pentagon was "ramping

1 Remark from the editor: Official knowledge of Ramstein's use for the US drone war was not admitted by the German government until the end of 2016. However, the Federal Government continues to ignore activities that violate international law.

up missions on the Continent, particularly along NATO's eastern flank, in response to concerns about a more aggressive Russia."

In many ways, this heavily militarized stretch of Germany is now a ground-zero powder keg. The consolidated Allied Air Command, "responsible for all Air and Space matters within NATO," has been at the Ramstein base since 2013. The command includes a center for missile defense, the nexus of the latest US scenario for a missile shield—which the Kremlin views as a threatening system that would make a first strike against Russia more tempting and more likely. Interviewed by the German newspaper *Bild* in January, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he saw "striving for an absolute triumph in the American missile defense plans."

In any event, no one can doubt that the Defense Department has become utterly enthralled with drones, officially dubbed Remotely Piloted Aircraft. "Our RPA enterprise" is now "flying combat missions around the globe," the general running the Air Combat Command, Herbert Carlisle, testified to a Senate subcommittee in March. There was no mistaking his zeal to further expand drone missions, mangled syntax notwithstanding: "They are arming decision makers with intelligence, our warfighters with targets, and our enemies with fear, anxiety and ultimately their timely end."

General Carlisle said the US military is now flying five times as many drone sorties as a decade ago—a boost that "exemplifies the furious pace at which we have expanded our operations and enterprise." But he warned that "an insatiable demand for RPA forces has stretched the community thin, especially our Airmen performing the mission." Today, almost 8,000 Air Force personnel are "solely dedicated" to Predator and Reaper drone missions. "Of the 15 bases with RPA units," Carlisle said, "13 of them have a combat mission. This mission is of such value that we plan on consistent increases in aircraft, personnel and results." Several weeks after his testimony, Reuters—citing "previously unreported US Air Force data"—revealed that "drones fired more weapons than conventional warplanes for the first time in Afghanistan last year and the ratio is rising."

Some in-house government appraisals have concluded that the drone war fails because it creates more enemies than it kills. But the "war on terror" is anything but a failure for many corporations or the individuals who spin through the revolving doors of the military-industrial complex. As a critical node in the Pentagon's global "intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance" (ISR) system, Ramstein is integral to ongoing boondoggles for contractors like Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Booz Allen Hamilton, and General Dynamics. The bottomless pit for taxpayers is a bottomless well for firms catering to the Air Force, with its jargon-larded pursuit of "a distributed ISR operation capable of providing world-

wide, near-real-time simultaneous intelligence to multiple theaters of operation through...robust reachback communications architectures.”

Looking back at the milieu of his work in the drone program, Westmoreland has concluded that “it’s more or less a for-profit venture. When you get out of the military, you expect to get a job in the defense sector, an executive position. And really it’s about racking up as many awards and decorations as you possibly can.”

At the top ranks, Westmoreland sees a conflict of interest: “They have an incentive to keep wars going.” For the military’s leadership, the available dividends are quite large.



Screenshots from: Documentary film *National Bird*

The documentary film *National Bird* includes these words from Ling: “We are in the United States of America and we are participating in an overseas war, a war overseas, and we have no connection to it other than wires and keyboards. Now, if that doesn’t scare the crap out of you, it does out of me. Because if that’s the only connection, why stop?”

After leaving the Air Force, Ling went on a humanitarian mission to Afghanistan, planting trees and distributing seeds to people she’d previously seen only as indistinct pixels. The drone war haunts her. Ling asks how we would feel if armed drones kept hovering in the sky above our own communities, positioned to kill at any moment.

In the Little America where the Ramstein Air Base is the crown military jewel, such questions go unasked. For that matter, we rarely hear them in Big America. Yet those questions must be asked, or the forever war will be.

The Whistleblower & Source Protection Program at ExposeFacts provides legal representation for the former drone operators quoted in this article.

** Remark: This script and the following one about Africom is excerpted from an article published by The Nation magazine, July 7, 2016 - with kindly permission of the author.*

Further Information: <http://www.normansolomon.com/>

AFRICOM: US-Headquarter for illegal warfare

by Norman Solomon (USA)

Whatever the state of its democracy, Germany is continuing to enable America's furtive warfare in Africa. Ramstein's many roles include serving as home to US Air Forces Africa, where a press officer gave me a handout describing the continent as "key to addressing transnational violent extremist threats." The military orders come from the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) headquarters in Stuttgart, a two-hour drive from Ramstein.

At first, AFRICOM—which calls itself "a full-spectrum combatant command"—was to be a short-term guest in southwest Germany, some 800 miles from Africa's closest shores. A State Department cable, marked "Secret" and dated August 1, 2008, said that "no decision has been made on a permanent AFRICOM headquarters location." Two months later, just as AFRICOM was going into full-fledged operation, a confidential cable from the US Embassy in Berlin reported that "the German government strongly supported the US decision to temporarily base" AFRICOM in Germany.

Yet at the outset, as US diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks show, tensions existed with the host country. Germany balked at extending blanket legal immunity under the NATO Status of Forces Agreement to every American civilian employee at the new AFRICOM facility, and the dispute applied to "all US military commands in Germany." While the two governments negotiated behind the scenes into late 2008 (one confidential cable from the US Embassy in Berlin complained about the German Foreign Office's "unhelpful positions"), AFRICOM made itself at home in Stuttgart.

Nearly ten years later, the "temporary" headquarters for AFRICOM shows no sign of budging. "AFRICOM will stay permanent in Stuttgart if Germany won't protest against it," said the Green Party's Ströbele, who has been on the Bundestag's intelligence committee for almost twenty years. He told *The Nation*: "We do not know enough about the AFRICOM facility. Nevertheless there is the assumption that this facility is used to organize and to lead US combat missions in Africa. Because of this reason no country in Africa wanted to have this facility." Whatever political hazards might lurk for AFRICOM in Germany, the US government finds those risks preferable to headquartering its Africa Command in Africa. And there are more and more interventions to sweep under rugs.

Merkel's stone wall is strengthened by the fact that some Green Party leaders have no problem with US bases. (Citing the very left-wing pasts of several key fig-

ures in today's party, one peace activist near Ramstein tartly remarked that "the Green Party changed from red to green to olive green.") In the affluent state of Baden-Württemberg, home to AFRICOM headquarters, the state's Green minister-president Winfried Kretschmann is a military booster. Likewise, the drone program has nothing to fear from Fritz Kuhn, mayor of Stuttgart, the largest city in Germany with a Green mayor. Kuhn declined to answer any of the questions that I submitted in writing about his views on AFRICOM and its operations in his city. "Mayor Kuhn wants to waive the interview," a spokesman said.

More than publicly acknowledged, the economic benefits of hosting AFRICOM's headquarters were major factors in the German government's decision to allow it to open in the first place, a member of the Bundestag told me. With the US military footprint shrinking in the country, Germany's political establishment saw the chance to welcome AFRICOM as very good news. Today, AFRICOM says that 1,500 US military and civilian personnel are stationed at its Kelley Barracks command center in Stuttgart.



On August 29, 2016 the award-winning activist-musician group "Lebenslaute" ("Sounds of Life") for several hours stopped all traffic into and out of Kelley Barracks, headquarters of AFRICOM. At 6 a.m., groups of musicians clandestinely placed themselves in front of all four gates to Kelley Barracks. Playing classical instruments and wearing formal concert clothes, they performed music ranging from German classical to Latin American to Broadway hits. German police stood by for hours and then finally carried the musicians away, one by one, to end the blockade that had caused a twelve-kilometer traffic jam in Stuttgart. The appr. 80 musicians then gathered together at 10 am at the Kelley Barracks main gate, where they performed a public concert, attended by ca. 300, that had been previously authorized by the police. Leading German regional media reported very positively about the protest. *Text: Elsa Rassbach / Foto: www.lebenslaute.net*

Cyberwarfare in the Baltic Sea

by Dave Webb, CND and Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space (UK)



Dave Webb in front of the Oahu listening station in Hawaii
Source: <http://space4peace.org>

In February 2017 a one day conference on “Making the North a Zone of Peace”, was organised by the Swedish Peace Council and the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. The Conference was the idea of Agneta Norberg a very active campaigner in the Swedish Peace Council, the Global

Network and many other groups. It was also her 80th birthday and so there were many tributes to her amazing work at a party afterwards.

The idea behind the conference was to highlight the growing militarism of the Scandinavian states. Although we often think of these countries as great supporters of peace initiatives with progressive, peace loving governments, actually the governments are no longer that progressive and are being persuaded to join in the US/NATO military exercises and become more and more integrated into NATO military systems.

These NATO military exercises are undoubtedly designed to show Russia what the West is prepared to do to ensure access to new sea routes and new resources that become available as the Arctic ice recedes due to climate change. In 2016 the Swedish government signed an agreement allowing NATO to operate more easily on Swedish territory for exercises or in the event of war. In the same year Sweden announced that it was remilitarising the Island of Gotland halfway between Sweden and Latvia in the middle of the Baltic Sea.

Esrange Space Centre

Kiruna satellite station in the north of Sweden is used extensively by the European Space Agency (ESA) with routine operations being fully automated and controlled from the European Space Operations Centre (ESOC) in Germany. Many of these operations have a military application for the US or NATO and many are

supported or provided by Swedish companies and the Swedish government. Near Kiruna is the Esrange Space Centre, part of the North European Aerospace Test Range (NEAT) covering 24,000 sq km in northern Sweden. NEAT is Europe's largest testing area for aerospace systems and also includes the Vidsel drone and missile Test Range. Esrange is also a large satellite receiving facility through which the military funnels huge amounts of data.

Cyberwar projects rising

The Baltic Sea is seen by many as a major theatre in a new type of arms race – cyberwarfare. In 2016 in Warsaw NATO agreed to recognise cyberspace as “an operational domain, alongside air, land and sea”. Thus, cyber attacks against NATO countries can potentially trigger an Article 5 military response (an attack on one country is an attack on all) – increasing the possibility of NATO taking collective military action. However, determining the source of cyber attacks is not so easy and technical evidence of them is rarely shared or clarified. Cyberwarfare and hacking techniques are being used not only to attack technical installations but also to plant false information to be used as propaganda by governments, the media and corporate interests and NATO and Russia have accused each other of spreading ‘false news’ to win over public opinion. Sweden is involved in a US cyberwar project called Quantum and one of its operations known as WINTER-LIGHT, that involves hacking targeted computer systems and with subsequent data interception, diversion and tampering.

Sweden participates in NATO Centre of Excellence

In 2014, Latvia, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, and the UK signed a memorandum to establish a StratCom Centre of Excellence in Riga, Latvia – which Sweden joined in 2015. A number of these US/NATO StratComs exist around Europe and Scandinavia and another Centre of Excellence for “Cold Weather Operations” operates in the north of Norway. The western governments and media continue to claim that the increase in US and NATO military activities and the establishment of bases along eastern European and Scandinavian borders is “in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine and Kaliningrad”. However, Russia sees NATO and the US pushing military bases and escalating aggressive military exercises ever closer to its borders – despite past promises that it would not go there.

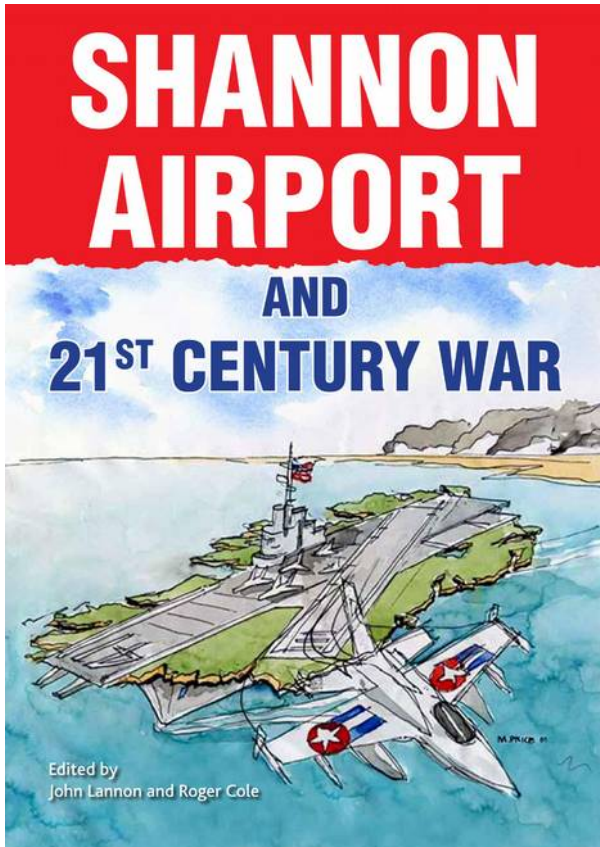
*This article is an excerpt from <https://yorkshirecnd.org.uk/dave-webbs-report-stockholm/>
Further infos: <http://www.space4peace.org/>*

Shannon: Militarisation of a civil airport

by John Lannon, Shannonwatch (Ireland)

Ireland is a neutral country!

Shannon Airport, located on the west coast of Ireland, has long been a transatlantic gateway between Europe and America. Since the 1940s it has supported a



thriving tourist industry in the region and it spawned the world's first duty free industrial zone. But at the end of the 1990s and the start of the next decade business was slack. Some airlines were cutting their services and others were operating in and out of Shannon with empty seats. At the same time, the "war on terror" was being stepped up by the US in response to the horrific September 11th 2001 attacks. The Irish Government, while claiming to support a longstanding position of neutrality, supported their illegal invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, and even went as far as making Shannon Airport available for the transit of the invading troops.

Despite repeated claims of neutrality by recent Irish Governments, approximately 2.5 million US troops have passed through Shannon Airport since 2002. When Ireland became a member of the "coalition of the willing" assembled by the US for its global "war on terror" in 2001, the US troop carriers started to appear at

the airport. They were initially taking occupation forces to and from Afghanistan but before long the airport was also providing fully fledged support for a second US led war in Iraq.

The American military at US Europe Command Headquarters in Stuttgart even assigned a permanent staff officer to Shannon Airport in 2002, meaning it has been effectively operating as a 'virtual' US airbase since then.

Government policy: Cover-up and wrong promises

In 2008 the Fianna Fail/Green Party Government set up a Cabinet Committee on Aspects of International Human Rights to review and strengthen legislation governing the search and inspection of such planes. However this committee did nothing to end Ireland's cover-up of serious human rights abuse.

At the end of 2011 there was cause for hope when the new Fine Gael/Labour government made a commitment in their Programme for Government to "enforce the prohibition on the use of Irish airspace, airports and related facilities for purposes not in line with the dictates of international law". To date they have done nothing to implement this, and as a result Irish airspace and Shannon Airport are still being used in contravention of international law.



Pictures from: Shannon Airport and 21st century war

Deadly risks: Transfer point for ammunition

The transportation of munitions through Shannon is also of grave concern from a health and safety point of view. Not only are the weapons and explosives being used to cause civilian deaths and suffering in Iraq, Afghanistan and other parts of the Middle East; they also present a grave risk to the safety of people working or visiting the airport. Shannon Airport was designed to operate as a civilian airport, not the military air base it has now become in the 21st Century.

Direct war support by the Irish government

Ireland is now directly contributing to conflict and war on a number of fronts. In addition to the ongoing US military use of Shannon Airport - and to a lesser extent of Casement Aerodrome in Baldonnel - two areas of activity are of note.

Firstly, Ireland has been supplying troops to fight the “war on terror” in Afghanistan since 2002 as part of the NATO-led multi-national ISAF force that has killed hundreds, if not thousands, of Afghans.

Secondly, Ireland is directly involved in the design, production and testing of weapons used to kill, maim and displace people from their communities and homes. A report published in the Irish Independent in June 2014² outlined how Irish-based companies are making a killing in the multibillion euro global arms and defence market. Export orders linked to military, armaments and defence industries were estimated to be worth as much as € 2.3bn a year.

Since 2008: Monthly peace vigils

Lasting for an hour, peace vigils are an opportunity for activists and others to remind the public about the unwanted US military presence at the airport and to demand accountability from the Irish authorities and political leaders for allowing Ireland to facilitate US war efforts in the Middle East.

The monthly vigils at Shannon take place outside the airport as the Gardai (police) won't allow the peaceful protests to take place anywhere near the terminal building. From a legal point of view, no proper explanation has ever been provided for this curtailment of civil liberties. Yet it's an ongoing feature of the authorities' response to visible opposition to the militarisation of Shannon Airport.

Despite a misleading and irresponsible narrative that the US military is good for business at Shannon, passing motorists, bus occupants and others generally show support for the protests. The attempts to convince the public, and in particular workers at Shannon, that war is an acceptable form of business have been ongoing over the last 15 years. Comments made by the head of the Shannon Airport

Authority, Rose Hynes, to an Oireachtas committee in January 2013 show the lengths that the airport authorities will go to. When asked about Shannon's reliance on military traffic, Ms. Hynes said: "Military traffic has been in the DNA of Shannon for many years. It is something that is important, it's lucrative and we are certainly going to go after it as much as possible." In saying this she failed to take any account of the moral and ethical responsibilities of those charged with operating the airport on behalf of the State. She also revealed the government of the day's clear intent to allow one of their airports to be used for imperialist war-mongering despite deep rooted public opposition to this policy.

Despite this, people from Limerick, Clare, Galway, Dublin and other parts of the country gather on the second Sunday of every month at 2pm in Shannon, to remind the public about the airport's complicity in war. For the protestors and the very many people that support them, killing, bombing and torture are not – or will never be - in the DNA of Shannon.



Roger Cole (PANA), Aengus Ó Snodaigh (Sinn Féin) und Edward Horgan (Shannonwatch),
Source: Flickr

Further Info: www.pana.ie / www.shannonwatch.org

Menwith Hill: Protests against illegal listening station

by Dave Webb, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (UK) and Menwith Hill Accountability Campaign (MHAC)

UK is represented worldwide by several military bases, mainly as a remnant of the British Empire. These include the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Brunei, Kenya and Brunei. Strategically important is the military base at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, which is also used by the USA. British soldiers are also represented in Afghanistan and Iraq through their participation in NATO missions. The presence abroad is currently being increased in the Baltic States.

US Military Bases in the UK

During the Second World War the UK allowed the US free access to a number of Royal Air Force (RAF) airfields. US forces have remained in a number of these and other installations which have continued to be used in US military operations and intelligence gathering.

After WW2 the USAF presence remained as part of the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). The legal basis for the US Visiting Force in the UK is primarily the NATO Status of Forces Agreement of 1951 (SOFA) and the Visiting Forces Act of 1952.

The Status of Forces Agreements allow a sending State's military forces to operate within, and at the consent of, the host state. They also provide for the status of military headquarters established in other countries. They may be bilateral or multilateral and there are no formal requirements as to the form, content, length, or title that a SOFA should take.

The Visiting Forces Act incorporates the SOFA into UK law. Together, they provide the overarching framework for the stationing of US forces in the UK. The provisions of the VFA were extended to NATO military headquarters in the UK by the International Headquarters and Defence Organisations Act 1964 and the VFA was extended in 1995 by the Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement to cover the forces of states who are not members of NATO but had agreed to participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace plan.

The removal of France from NATO in 1966 by President de Gaulle probably encouraged the US military to keep their bases in the UK and even enhance their military presence here. So, in the 1990s there were something like 100 US manned facilities in the UK although now this has dropped to about 13 or so. Of course, the US presence has not gone unchallenged.

Menwith Hill: Espionage centre of the NSA

Menwith Hill is a US base on 545 acres of land in beautiful Nidderdale (one of the Yorkshire Dales) near Harrogate North Yorkshire. The base is in an area of outstanding natural beauty (but officially left out in the early 1990s despite some of us trying to include it!). The land was compulsorily purchased by the MOD (War Office) in 1954 and access and right to use the land was given in 1955. These decisions were made by a few people, behind closed doors and never debated in Parliament.

The base is run by the National Security Agency of America. It is part of a global network of Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) bases. Menwith Hill is a key regional center for

the NSA monitoring and intercepting the world's communications. Gleaned and encrypted information is relayed to NSA HQ at Fort Meade in Maryland USA.

The land is in possession of the UK Secretary of State for Defence. The majority of the buildings and facilities at Menwith Hill (as with all US bases) are owned, and the construction paid for by the US. To date there are 33 radomes (white covered satellite dishes - looking like giant 'golf balls'). The base has grown and grown over the years. A significant development and major expansion of sophisticated operational facilities, known as Project Phoenix (costing £52 million) was completed in 2012.

What Does Menwith Hill Do?

Menwith Hill is the largest intelligence-gathering, interception and surveillance base outside the US. It has many roles which are generally for US interests only (diplomatic, military and economic) – being the hub of the ECHELON global surveillance system ([Wikipedia](#)). However, in May 2013 an unknown and very important whistle blower called Edward Snowden disclosed thousands of top secret doc-



uments which revealed the extent of the intelligence gathering and surveillance on us all by the NSA/CIA (with the help of GCHQ). Menwith Hill is mentioned several times in the documents.

The base is unaccountable, secretive and out of control of the UK government. After Edward Snowden revealed thousands of documents there have been many articles in the press about the lack of scrutiny by Parliament of US bases in general and in particular the NSA especially at NSA/NRO Menwith Hill.

Ostensibly the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) keep an eye on Menwith Hill. However the ISC are not told everything and they have restricted access to the Operations Area. The Home Affairs Select Committee said of the oversight by the ISC in their report on the security services in the UK: "We believe that the current oversight is not fit for purpose for several reasons". The US authorities decide how much to reveal. MPs can visit but this is usually on a social basis. They were not party to the inner workings of Menwith Hill. Access has even been denied to some MPs.



Menwith Hill Day of Action 2011, Source: Flickr

Campaign for the Accountability of American Bases

The CAAB evolved in 1992 out of the long campaign of protest at the American base at Menwith Hill, near Harrogate, North Yorkshire; local people having expressed their concerns at the arrival of the US Army at Menwith Hill in 1951. We have continued to build on the work and struggles of many people over the years since the arrival, occupation and control of the US Visiting Forces in the UK.

There is a demonstration every Tuesday evening (6-8pm) outside the main entrance to Menwith Hill – we are now into the 12th year. Please come and join in – one way to see the base, learn about/what the base does and a chance each week to bear witness and be a voice of opposition – saying to the people who work on the base “Tonight there are people here who oppose what you do”. Come for as long as you like – you don’t have to stay the two hours! Bring yourselves and banners.

We concentrate on the presence, role and functions of the US Visiting Forces and their Agencies in the UK (also world wide). Our long term aim is to send the US Visiting Forces and their Agencies back to within their borders.



Source: MHAC Newsletter Winter 2017-18

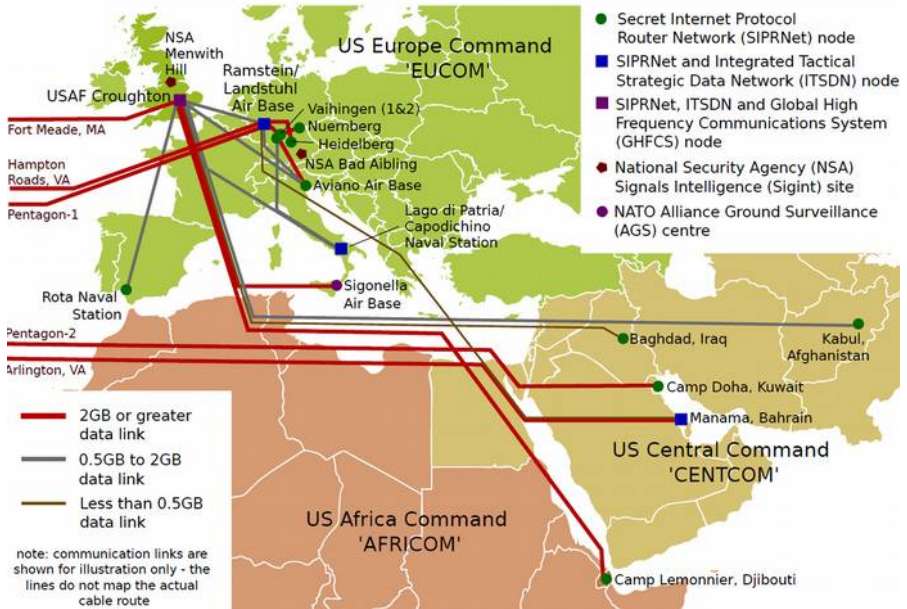
Many “RAF”-US military bases with special features

US military bases are spread all over the country, but all are known as the RAF (Royal Air Force), although in fact they are under US control.

Part of Washington's global military command and control system, Croughton was originally set up to co-ordinate an attack by US nuclear bombers. It has since evolved into a state-of-the-art relay hub for some of Washington's most sensitive material, including CIA agent communications.

"RAF" Croughton, the US Air Force base and CIA relay station near Brackley in Northamptonshire houses the 422nd Air Base Group whose function is to provide installation support, services, force protection, and worldwide communications across the entire spectrum of operations.

Croughton was named in documents leaked by the National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden as playing a key support role in embassy-based spying. The base "has a secure data link to a US counter-terrorism facility in Djibouti used for drone strikes in Yemen while questions remain about the use of other US bases in Britain, in particular the National Security Agency eavesdropping facility at RAF Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire." (*The Independent*)



Further Info: UK Military Bases, by Dave Webb;
 Presented at: "The International Congress on Military Bases and their importance for global wars"
 Kaiserslauter, Germany, 8-9 September 2017
<https://www.ramstein-kampagne.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/US-bases-in-the-UK.pdf>

Sicilian Struggle to protect Environment and Peace

by the No M.U.O.S. Movement



Demonstration on March 13, 2013, Source: Flickr

The M.U.O.S. (Mobile User Objective System) is a military telecommunication system of the USA Navy. The ground system relies on four ground stations, located in Virginia (USA), Hawaii, Australia and Niscemi, Italy. Each M.U.O.S. station has three parabolic antennas with a diameter of 18.4 meters, using the Ka band (microwave) and two helical antennas, 149 meters high, in the UHF band. Five geostationary satellites (four plus one spare) will connect the ground stations to mobile users.

The Italian M.U.O.S. ground station is located in the USA military base NRTF-8 (Naval Radio Transmitter Facility) in Niscemi, Sicily. Here, 41 antennas in the UHF band and one in the LF band are already active since 1991. The LF antenna, about 140m high and radiates at 500-2000 KW, is used to communicate with submarines. From the results of a few monitoring campaigns by the Sicilian environment pro-

tection agency (ARPAS) the concern that this installation already exceeds the limits of the Italian law on electromagnetic radiations has strong scientific grounds.

Obviously, the scope of this complex infrastructure is the control and coordination of USA military systems around the world. The system will provide communication capabilities to the so-called mobile users, especially drones, the unmanned aircrafts the are already used in the USA military base in Sigonella, Sicily.

As far as we know, three out of four ground stations have been completed. The station in Niscemi, Sicily, has been completed and is undergoing a test phase. The first satellite has been launched in February 24th 2012 and tested until July 24th 2012. The last satellite launch is scheduled before the end of 2015. Then, the system will be fully functional. Although it has been said otherwise by institutions, the M.U.O.S. will not substitute the existing system in the NRTF-8 base (i.e., the 46 antennas). Most likely, the old system will work in parallel to M.U.O.S. for several years to come.

The NRTF-8 military base is located inside the natural reserve Sughereta di Niscemi, one of the few natural cork-oak parks in Italy. The park is protected by strict rules, enforced by law, that forbid any human intervention inside the park area. The park was established in 1997 and has been declared Community Interest Site from 2000, as one of the protected natural sites of the European Community. In 2008, the territorial plan of the Provincia di Caltanissetta, decreed that in the Sughereta building infrastructures is forbidden, as well ad building cables or trellises. Violating these prohibitions, a large part of a hill has been cleared and razed to the ground to make room for the M.U.O.S. station.

Risks of M.U.O.S. and NRTF-8 technologies

The effects on the ecosystem of the Sughereta and Bosco di Santo Pietro natural parks are difficult to predict. Nonetheless, it is widely known that bees, which activity is fundamental for the biological equilibrium of that ecosystem, are particularly sensitive to strong electromagnetic fields. The radiations might also have an impact on agriculture, since EM fields influence plant growth.

The EM field induced by the transmission systems in the base could interfere with electronic devices, especially with wearable medical devices and electronic devices in hospitals. Moreover, the microwave beam generated by the MUOS system can interfere with flight instruments. The beam would pass at about 6500 m over the Comiso airport, well below the cruising altitude of civil aviation. This would impose a no-fly zone of about 35 Km from the MUOS station, during transmission. This would also affect routes from and to the Catania airport, with consequences on tourism and local economy and on the right to mobility, especially on

a prolonged crisis scenario. A similar scenario happened during the war on Lybia, when civil traffic was banned from the Trapani-Birgi airport.

The beam can also cross the skies over the Gela Gulf, which is a common route for migratory birds. Hence, MUOS can impact migration of several bird species.

The No MUOS movement

We aim at the revocation of authorisation to build and activate the MUOS station in Niscemi, Sicily. We pursue this objective at the political level, in court-rooms, in workshops, in the street.

We act on different levels: safeguarding the ecosystem of the Sughereta park, protecting the health of Sicilian citizens, especially of those who live close to the military base, independent monitoring of radiations, information campaigns and petitions, political lobbying, legal actions.

The No MUOS movement is a group of people brought together by spirit of service towards our community. We are people who feel strong responsibility towards our fellow citizens who, freely and with enthusiasm, joined our cause. Hence, we feel obliged to be free from political influence. Our movement is a complex and colourful body, where different groups work together or independently. There are town-level committees, most of which organised into a uniquely-coordinated group (coordinamento regionale dei comitati), the Movimento No MUOS Sicilia, a legally-recognised association, the committees of the well-known No MUOS Mothers, anti-mafia associations, cultural groups.

Here we report the most important initiatives.

Monitoring of EM radiation

Although MUOS has not been activated yet, 41 antennas are already active since 1991 in the NRTF-8 military base in Niscemi, Sicily. A number of experts warned against risks of EM radiation from those antennas, both for human health and for the equilibrium of the ecosystem of the Sughereta park in Niscemi. Those experts highlighted that the monitoring campaign, run from 2008 to 2009 by the Sicilian environment protection agency (ARPAS), does not conform to international standards and to the Italian law. That is why we are trying to run an independent electromagnetic monitoring campaign, looking for funding if necessary.

Collecting data on health impacts

We want to demonstrate the antennas in the military base of Niscemi, Sicily, are dangerous for human health and for the natural habitat of the Sughereta park in Niscemi. Hence, we need more than just simple data on EM emissions. We also

need information on health effects already present in the population of Niscemi. We are collecting data about the incidence of cancer and other diseases directly connected to EM radiations, in the district including Niscemi.

Spreading the word

Our demonstrations as well as our petitions have known a great success. Nonetheless, we know that our message has not reached most of our fellow citizens, yet. Still, lots of people do not have access to correct or complete information about MUOS. Our information campaign still goes on in real as well as virtual public spaces, in schools, in the institutions, through the press, and it will be boosted by producing brochures, movies, informative reports.



More Info: <http://nomuos.org/en> - <https://www.facebook.com/NoMuosInternational/>

South Korea: Fighting for an environment worth living in

by Hohyun Choi *, People's United Party PUP (South Korea)

*US training ground in Maehyangri:
harm to people and the environment*



Video screenshot from presentation at September 9, 2017

The air force training area in Maehyangri was established in 1952. From then on, up to 400 bombing exercises were carried out daily on 250 days a year. The remnants are now mountains of bomb ammunition. Sixteen civilians were killed in faulty bombings.

The health damage caused by noise pollution in this region, which has been recorded in studies, is nothing short of a nightmare:

- 25% of the population suffer from depression
- 16% suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders
- 35% suffer from hearing impairment

Added to this is the enormous pollution of the soil. The lead content is 900 times higher and the value for cadmium 37 times higher than the average.

Protests of non-violent resistance took place by blocking public open spaces or forming human chains. The great response from the population finally led to large-scale demonstrations throughout the country. In 2005, the peace movement was finally successful when the US Army decided to close the training area.

Multiple actions against the mega military base in Pyeongtaek

More than 23,000 US soldiers are still stationed in South Korea. In 2002, the US Army announced it would relocate its military headquarters in South Korea from Seoul to the existing Pyeongtaek military base, 65 km south of Seoul. Several villages had to make way for the necessary expansion, which led to massive resistance from the local rice farmers. Despite the brutal deployment of 15,000 soldiers and police officers with over 500 injured and the same number of arrests, the resistance could not be broken.

The forms of protest were manifold and ran through all age groups, with human chains, candlelight demonstrations over a period of 835 days and "Granny" protests. The unions were also present with their own demonstrations. An already closed school on the confiscated area was occupied by about 1000 military opponents and finally cleared in a forceful police operation. In the resistance movement held on until 2008 when it was ultimately crushed by police, but even today it lingers in public consciousness and serves as motivation for future protests.

GANGJEONG VILLAGE STORY



More than eight years the people in Gangjeong on Jeju Island of South Korea resisted the expansion of a military base for the South Korean navy.

Protest against THAAD stationing in Seongju

In 2016, the US and South Korea decided to station the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System) missile defense system. The peace movement in South Korea strongly opposes this because it is convinced that:

- The THAAD system is directed against China, which is also evident from counter-reactions by the Chinese government to the detriment of the South Korean economy.
- The THAAD system also increases the risk of war for South Korea, which is understood by large sections of the population.
- A new arms race in the Asia-Pacific region is thus predestined.

The deployment began in April 2016, just before the forthcoming presidential elections on 9 May, in order to create facts already completed by then.

Resistance to the deployment of the population also had an impact on the outcome of the presidential elections in May 2017, because the newly elected President Moon Jae-in strongly criticized the hasty deployment of the THAAD before the election. The protests included nationwide demonstrations and a human chain around the US embassy.

A former golf course in a rural area near Seongju was planned as the THAAD location. Seongju was once a Buddhist place of pilgrimage for those who sought peace and enlightenment. The necessary installations began in April 2017. These were obstructed with sit-in blockades by 200 locals, while thousands of police officers were called up by the authorities.



Blockade against military vehicles in Seongju on April 22, 2017, Source: Flickr

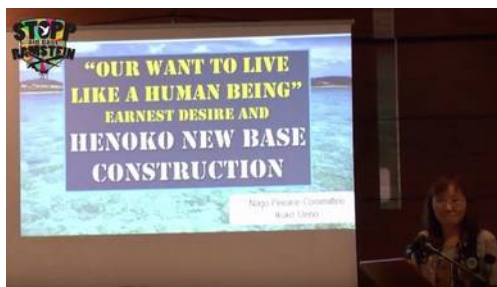
** Hohyun Choi is committed in South Korea to the release of all political prisoners from the time of the former government, especially Lee Seok-Ki, who as an anti-war activist had publicly called against a US attack on North Korea.*

Further information: <http://en.savelee.kr>

Okinawa: "Not a single grain of sand for war"

by Kukuko Ueno, Secretary General of Nago City Peace Committee (Japan)

Okinawa: From US colony to neocolonial dependency



Screenshot from presentation on the congress 2017

Okinawa is Japan's southernmost prefecture, encompassing 363 islands, about 500 kilometers from the main Japanese island and at the south east end only 125 km from Taiwan. A total of 1.4 million people live there. A US military presence in Okinawa has existed since the final battle of World War II, when a quarter of the civilian population was killed in a fierce battle in Okinawa. Since then there have been several US military bases in Okinawa. Okinawa was an indispensable base for warfare in both the Korean and Vietnam wars.

After Okinawa was handed over to the USA in 1952 following the Peace Treaty of San Francisco, it did not regain Japanese sovereignty until 1972. However almost 20% of the island area remained occupied by US military bases. Under the Japan-US agreement on joint cooperation and security, two-thirds of the US army and naval bases are deployed in Okinawa, which, along with the units in Guam, form the spearhead of the Pentagon in the Western Pacific - between China, Taiwan and Japan. For the USA, the archipelago, which extends towards Taiwan, is a perfect observation point from where the presence of the Chinese navy can be controlled.

More than half of the 43,000 US military personnel in Japan are stationed on the island. Together with their families and civilians, about 45,000 Americans live in Okinawa today. Okinawa represents only 0.6 percent of Japanese territory, yet 74 percent of US military facilities and more than half of all US forces are located in Japan.

Massive protests against the US military presence in Okinawa have taken place since the establishment, in the 1950s, when the US occupied land through forced leases. This peaked in July 2016, when about 65,000 people demonstrated against the US military presence. These protests were triggered several rape cases conducted by US soldiers, who are largely protected from prosecution by the Japanese judiciary under the current troop deployment agreement. The specific

reason for this demonstration was the murder of a Japanese woman committed by a member of the US Army.

As early as 1995, the island was shaken by similarly massive protests when a 12-year-old girl was brutally kidnapped and raped by three US soldiers and her parents had the courage to report the incident. Since then there have been negotiations between the Japanese government and the US government to close the Futenma military base in the centre of Ginowan. But a long-standing general agreement would require the construction of a new military base as a replacement.



Many years of struggle against the new Henoko military base

For this reason, the USA have made plans to relocate its air base to a sparsely populated part of the archipelago. Two US military bases already exist in the vicinity of the coastal village of Henoko. The new military base would cause serious environmental damage, in particular by destroying existing coral reefs in the area. Henoko Bay is home to 5,800 animal species, many of which are already threatened with extinction.

The US Army is planning to built an offshore runway here. For this 35 million tonnes of earth and sand would have to be dumped into the sea. Most of this



Pictures: Planning Department Nago City Office

mass would also have to be transported from to the island. Protests with the motto: "Not a single grain of sand for war" are already taking place there.

Crime by US military as a customary colonial right

Airplanes and helicopters often crash in residential areas. In 1959, for example, a US combat plane crashed into a primary school, resulting in 17 deaths and hundreds of casualties. In addition to the statistical crashes of aircraft or helicopters once a year, there are many more cases of emergency landings and detached aircraft parts, which have also been recorded since 1972. As a result, the population is constantly threatened by accidents.

Even more serious is another statistic, which make the already mentioned mass protest 2016 understandable. From 1972 to 2015, almost 6,000 individual criminal acts by the US military were recorded, including numerous violent crimes and rapes.

This high crime rate can be seen as a relic from the colonial period between 1952 and 1972, when the inhabitants of Okinawa were denied human rights and acts of violence by US military were not punished. The resulting struggle of the population for human dignity and sovereignty under a democratic constitution



Tens of thousands of Okinawa residents protested at June 19, 2016 against the military bases there. Source: Toru Yamanaka, Getty Images

finally led to the return of Okinawa to Japan in 1972. Although the Japanese constitution has been in force in Okinawa ever since, the provisions of the Stationing Agreement meant that US military personnel have never been punished for acts of violence off the military premises.

The last local elections in the provincial city of Nago (approx. 60,000 inhabitants) and the provincial elections in Okinawa Prefecture saw clear victories for the candidates who stood in opposite to the US military presence.

Today we are protesting against the start of construction of Henoko Air Base with non-violent sit-down blockades, thereby effectively obstructing the construction works, because some 200 people are sufficient to achieve such a blockade.

We will continue to fight non-violently for our goals in a struggle that has now lasted 20 years. We say: Never again war - and ultimately believe that justice is on our side. We also refer to Article 9 of our constitution, which is still in force:



“Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.”

*Demonstration on Okinawa at April 26, 2015.
Source: Natsuki Kiumra, Flickr*

*Further information: Henoko Non-Violent Action
<http://henokononviolentaction.blogspot.de/>*

Guantánamo: Colonial Relic and Torture Prison

by German Network Cuba (Netzwerk Cuba e.V.)



Photo: Kathleen T. Rhem / Wikipedia

The US naval base Guantánamo is located on a 117.6 square kilometer tract of Cuban national territory which the US has occupied since 1903. The border with Cuba is 27km long. There are currently more than 6,000 US military and civilians deployed there.

The beginnings of US rule in Cuba

In 1898, the US declared war on the declining colonial power of Spain. The pretext for this was an explosion on a US ship in the port of Havana, for which Spain was held responsible. This is considered the starting point of the imperialist expansion policy of the USA. With their victory, they took over Spain's last remaining overseas territories, including the archipelago Cuba. The US thereby prevented the imminent victory of the anti-colonial liberation movement and thus real independence of the Island.

The US itself became a colonial power. Cuba was effectively taken over by US capital and then released into political pseudo-independence. In 1901, the US military's withdrawal from Cuban Territory was made conditional upon a legislative amendment passed by the US Congress and signed by US President McKinley (the "Plat Amendment") becoming part of the Cuban constitution. It gave the US the right, which they used several times, to intervene militarily in Cuba at any time

they chose. Thus, practically, Cuba was deprived of its sovereignty and freedom of choice.

The contract for Guantanamo

In February 1903 an agreement was signed between the two governments on coal loading and marine installations. Two areas of Cuba's territory were affected: Bahía Honda and Guantánamo, but a naval base was built in the latter only.

With regard to Guantánamo and the policy of the USA, there is still one serious anomaly: the fact that the United States has continuously occupied the bay in Cuban territory since 1903 leasing it for well over 100 years. Most lease agreements however have an upper limit of 99 years. It should be mentioned here that the US occupation of the Panama Canal Zone which had likewise been contractually safeguarded since 1903 ended in 1997, as did the British occupation of Hong Kong, and the Portuguese occupation of Macao ended in 1999. The return of many colonial territories and other occupied territories to the legitimate sovereigns and peoples corresponded to the principles of self-restraint and decolonization after the Second World War. In the case of Guantánamo, however, the United States continues to claim the right to a perpetual tenancy.

Role of the base for the USA

At the beginning of the 20th century Guantánamo still served the USA as "gun-boat diplomacy". A deep water port in Cuba served the imperialist expansion policy as a naval base and as a useful spy post. But in the meantime the forms and techniques of power politics and surveillance have changed and the base has lost more and more practical significance.

The military worth of Guantanamo today is much less significant.

Mine belts were laid on both sides of the border, rendering border crossings by either large groups on the ground or an infiltration of saboteurs almost impossible.

It is contractually stipulated that the United States pay an annual rent to the Republic of Cuba which currently amounts to approximately \$ 4,000 a year (less than 40 cents per hectare), payable in annual checks. After the Revolution of 1959 Cuba refused to cash these checks.

The maintenance of the military base costs the US taxpayers one hundred million US-Dollars every year. This includes the personnel, equipment and transport costs. In addition, since the Cubans, cut off the water supply in 1964 as a reaction to the seizure of Cuban fishing boats by the US Navy, even drinking water has to be imported or obtained by costly seawater desalination on the US base.

The only purpose today behind the US continued occupation of the base is above all symbolic: this show of intransigence and arrogance of power is intended to humiliate the Cuban people.

Guantánamo as internment camp

This internationally detested and designated torture camp was established under the Bush administration. Bush's successor, Obama, in spite of his promise to dissolve the camp in his 2008 campaign, failed to fulfil his promise. According to various reports, at the beginning of 2016 about 100 prisoners from the 700 prisoners at the height of the internment remained imprisoned in these unacceptable conditions.

The current task of the local, the German and the international solidarity movement, must be to intensify the focus on the historical development of the US base as well as the present circumstances in Guantánamo. Most important is to denounce the anomaly and injustice of the US occupation, and to effectively support the legitimate Cuban demand for return.



*Banner for the 10th anniversary of the torture camp,
Photo: Amnesty international / www.amnestyusa.org*

Further information: www.netzwerk-cuba.de

Resistance against Military Bases

Military bases worldwide are a backbone of global warfare.

Mainly the USA have huge armed forces and warfare material in other countries, including atomic bombs.

In the meantime no other country in the world has so many foreign soldiers, family affiliates and civil contractors like Germany. These people and facilities are mainly located in the greater region of Kaiserslautern.

Therefore a central part of the action days 2017 by “Stopp Air Base Ramstein” was an international congress about military bases.

The well-attended event provided important impulses that will lead to a new networking of the long-standing worldwide resistance against military bases.

This anthology contains contributions from the Congress itself, as well as other materials that illustrate the worldwide diversity of resistance.