

Overseas Base Realignment and Closure Coalition

U.S. MILITARY BASES OVERSEAS THE FACTS

NUMBERS

- **800 military base sites** estimated outside the 50 states and Washington, DC.
- **90-95%** of the world's foreign military bases (e.g., Russia, UK, France: 10-20 each; China: 1).¹

GEOGRAPHY

- **80 or more countries** and territories where US bases are found.
- **181 base sites** in Germany; 122 in Japan; 83 in South Korea; 50 in Italy.
- **Others**, e.g., in Aruba, Bahrain, Cuba, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Honduras, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Marshalls, Norway, Oman, Philippines, Qatar, Romania, Spain, Tunisia, UK, US Virgins, Wake Isl.
- Pentagon figure of 701 base sites omits bases in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Niger, and many other well-known (e.g., Kuwait, Kosovo) and secretive bases (Israel, Saudi Arabia).
- **15 countries** (minimum) in which the US military now has operational ground troops.²

COSTS

- **\$10,000-\$40,000** average more per year to station military personnel on overseas bases vs. domestic.
- **\$51.5 billion/year** (est.) to build and maintain infrastructure abroad.
- **\$150 billion/year** (est.) in total spending on bases and personnel abroad.
- **Alternatively**, moving half the \$51.5 billion spent on bases would mean 450,000 infrastructure jobs, 300,000 elementary school jobs, 3 million Head Start slots, or 2.2 million vets with VA health care.³

WARS

- **At least 23 times** US bases have been used to launch wars of choice or military interventions in 14 countries in the greater Middle East alone since 1980.
- **Al Qaeda recruitment** has been correlated with a US base, troop presence in the Middle East.
- **Bases have become targets** for militants, as in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq.⁴

HARMS

- **Military personnel separated** from family members during unaccompanied deployments; when family can accompany, spouses and children face disruptions to careers, schooling, relationships.
- **40 or more** countries with authoritarian or other less-than-democratic regimes host U.S. bases (e.g., Turkey, Thailand, Niger, and all Gulf states except Iran and Yemen).
- **Reckless foreign leaders** can be emboldened by a U.S. base presence to take dangerously aggressive stances against, for example, Russia or China, believing the US will back them up.
- **Environmental damage** caused by the disposal, dumping, and use of hazardous, toxic materials, facilitated by base agreements that often exempt the US from responsibility for damage, while the US asserts its own environmental laws do not apply.
- **Crimes and accidents**—including rape, murder, and other crimes and military accidents—anger local communities, incite protest as in Okinawa, and damage the international reputation of the US.
- **Exploitative prostitution** and sex trafficking linked to bases in places such as South Korea.
- **20** local, mostly indigenous, peoples displaced by base construction or expansion abroad since 1898.⁵

CLOSURES

- **Approximately 800 overseas bases** closed in Europe, Asia by both Bush presidents and Bill Clinton.
- **Local movements** worldwide are demanding base closures or a reduced US military presence.
- **19%** estimated domestic base excess capacity available to returning troops, families.

Questions about facts, citations; more information: OBRACC2018@gmail.com; www.overseasbases.net

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- **Rapid deployment from domestic bases** means most US forces can deploy virtually anywhere on earth as fast or nearly as fast as from a base abroad in case of emergency deployment.⁶

POLITICS

- **BRAC does not apply** to overseas bases, meaning the Pentagon can close overseas bases without the political challenges of closing domestic bases and the Base Realignment and Closure process.
- **Transpartisan:** Across the political spectrum people are questioning overseas bases. 3 of 4 presidential candidates in 2016 (Trump, Johnson, Stein) called for closing or questioned bases abroad.
- **Local economies** would benefit from returning personnel, families.
- **Congressmembers** have few, if any, constituents living in communities around overseas bases.⁷

ALTERNATIVES TO OVERSEAS BASES

- Maintain a streamlined, defensive, powerful military defending U.S. territory.
- Increased commitment to diplomacy, economic and cultural engagement, and international institutions, with the use of military force as a true last resort.
- Multinational operations through multinational organizations if the use of force is necessary.⁸

Citations

¹ David Vine, *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World* (Metropolitan, 2015); David Vine, "List of US Military Bases Abroad," 2017, American University, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17606/M6H599>; John Glaser, "Withdrawing from Overseas Bases: Why a Forward-Deployed Military Posture Is Unnecessary, Outdated, and Dangerous," Policy Analysis 816, CATO Institute, July 18, 2017. Frank Jacobs, "The World's Five Military Empires," BigThink.com, July 10, 2017, <http://bigthink.com/strange-maps/the-worlds-five-military-empires>; Damien Sharkov, "Russia's Military Compared to the U.S." *Newsweek*, June 8, 2018, <http://www.newsweek.com/russias-military-compared-us-which-country-has-more-military-bases-across-954328>.

² Vine, "List of U.S. Military Bases Abroad"; Glaser; Department of Defense, "Base Structure Report Fiscal Year 2015 Baseline (A Summary of DOD's Real Property Inventory)," Washington, DC, 2015; Costs of War project, "Current United States Counterterrorism War Locations," map, n.d.[2017], www.costsofwar.org.

³ Michael J. Lostumbo, et al., "Overseas Basing of U.S. Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits," report, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, April 29, 2013, p. xxv; David Vine, American University, estimate of base costs for OBRACC, vine@american.edu; Vine, *Base Nation*; National Priorities Project Trade-Offs tool, <https://www.nationalpriorities.org/interactive-data/trade-offs/>.

⁴ Andrew J. Bacevich, "Even If We Defeat the Islamic State, We'll Still Lose the Bigger War," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/even-if-we-defeat-the-islamic-state-well-still-lose-the-bigger-war/2014/10/03/e8c0585e-4353-11e4-b47c-f5889e061e5f_story.html?utm_term=.e9abf929c5a0; Vine, *Base Nation*, p. 328; Stephen Glain, "What Actually Motivated Osama bin Laden," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 3, 2011, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/stephen-glain/2011/05/03/what-actually-motivated-osama-bin-laden>; Bradley L. Bowman, "After Iraq," *Washington Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2008): 85.

⁵ Catherine Lutz, ed., *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle Against U.S. Military Posts* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Vine, *Base Nation*; David Vine, "Forty-five Blows Against Democracy: How U.S. Military Bases Back Dictators, Autocrats, and Military Regimes," TomDispatch.com, May 16, 2017, <http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/176281/>; Sharon Weiner, "Environmental Concerns at U.S. Overseas Military Installations," working paper, Defense and Army Control Studies Program, Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, July 1992; Center for Public Environmental Oversight, www.cpeo.org.

⁶ Department of Defense, "Strengthening U.S. Global Defense Posture, Report to Congress," Washington, DC, September 17, 2004, 5; Lutz; Andrew Yeo, *Activists, Alliances, and Anti-U.S. Base Protests* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Department of Defense, "Department of Defense Infrastructure Capacity," report, October 2017, <https://fas.org/man/eprint/infrastructure.pdf>; Lostumbo, et al., p. 38.

⁷ BRAC website, <https://www.acq.osd.mil/brac>; Jill Stein presidential platform, <https://www.jill2016.com/platform>; Council on Foreign Relations, "Gary Johnson," <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/campaign2016/gary-johnson>; Alan Yuhas, "Donald Trump Hails 'Evening of Love' in New Hampshire as Bush Overshadowed," *Guardian*, August 20, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/aug/20/donald-trump-new-hampshire-event-jeb-bush>.

⁸ See e.g., John Feffer, et al., "Just Security: An Alternative Foreign Policy Framework," report, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, DC, July 2007; Glaser, pp. 13-19.

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