Dear President Joseph Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, Members of Congress,

The undersigned represent a broad group of military analysts, veterans, scholars, and advocates from across the political spectrum who agree with President Biden’s directive to conduct a thorough global posture review of U.S. forces. This has the potential to be a singularly important initiative in U.S. history. As a result of a long-outdated forward deployment strategy that dates to the first years of the Cold War, the United States today maintains approximately 800 base sites in around 80 foreign countries. Many of these bases should have closed decades ago. Maintaining unnecessary bases abroad wastes tens of millions of tax dollars annually and actively undermines the safety of the country and the world.

This letter’s diverse signatories have different ideas about how many bases to close but find broad agreement about the following nine reasons to close foreign bases and improve national and international security in the process:

1. **Overseas bases cost taxpayers billions every year.** According to the RAND Corporation, it costs an average of $10,000-$40,000 more per person per year to station military personnel on overseas bases compared to domestic bases. In total, the country spends an estimated $51.5 billion annually to build and run bases abroad—at a time when trillions are urgently needed for human and environmental needs including a disease pandemic and a climate crisis.

2. **Overseas bases are now largely obsolete thanks to technological advancements.** Because of advances in air and sealift and other military technology, rapid response forces can deploy to virtually any region fast enough to be based in the continental United States. The development of extremely accurate intermediate- and long-range ballistic missiles also makes overseas bases vulnerable to asymmetric attacks that are very difficult to defend against. In northeast Asia, for example, more than 90 percent of U.S. air facilities are in high-threat areas.

3. **Overseas bases entangle the U.S. in wars.** Bases dotting the globe fuel hyper-interventionist foreign policy by making war look like an easy solution while offering targets for militants and endangering host nations.

4. **Overseas bases increase military tension.** Rather than deterring adversaries, U.S. bases can exacerbate security threats by antagonizing other countries into greater military spending and aggression. Russia, for example, justifies its interventions in Georgia and Ukraine by pointing to
encroaching U.S. bases in Eastern Europe. China feels encircled by the more than 250 U.S. bases in the region, leading to a more assertive policy in the South China Sea.

5. **Overseas bases support dictators and repressive, undemocratic regimes.** Scores of U.S. bases are in more than 40 authoritarian and less-than-democratic countries, including Bahrain, Turkey, and Niger. These bases are a sign of support for governments implicated in murder, torture, suppressing democratic rights, oppressing women and minorities, and other human rights abuses. Far from spreading democracy, bases abroad often block democracy’s spread.

6. **Overseas bases cause blowback.** In the Middle East in particular, U.S. bases and troops have provoked terrorist threats, radicalization, and anti-American propaganda. Bases near Muslim holy sites in Saudi Arabia were a major recruiting tool for al-Qaeda.

7. **Overseas bases damage the environment.** Bases abroad have a long track record of damaging local environments as a result of toxic leaks, accidents, the dumping of hazardous materials, and base construction. The DoD does not hold itself to the environmental protection standards established for domestic bases, and Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) may prohibit inspections by the host government and/or may relieve the U.S. from clean-up costs.

8. **Overseas bases damage America’s international reputation and generate protest.** Because people tend not to like their land occupied by foreign militaries, it’s unsurprising that bases abroad generate some degree of opposition almost everywhere they’re found (causing problems for the military). Local citizens are being poisoned by toxic chemicals in their water supplies (see #7) without recourse. Crimes by military personnel, including rapes and murders, and deadly accidents also damage America’s reputation and generate protest. Bases in colonized U.S. territories perpetuate their diminished sovereignty and 2nd class citizenship.

9. **Overseas bases are bad for families.** Deployments overseas can separate military personnel from their families for months and years, damaging relationships. Even when families enjoy the opportunity to accompany military personnel abroad, frequent moves are disruptive to the careers, schooling, and lives of spouses and children.

Compared to closing domestic bases, closing overseas bases is easy. Presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush closed hundreds of unnecessary bases in Europe and Asia, and the Trump administration closed some bases in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Significantly reducing the U.S. global footprint would bring home thousands of personnel and family members who would contribute to the domestic economy.

In the interest of national, global, and fiscal security, we urge President Biden and Secretary Austin, supported by Congress, to begin a process to close bases overseas and relocate military personnel and families to domestic bases, where there is well-documented excess capacity.

Sincerely,

**Affiliations are for identification purposes only.**

**Questions, more information:** [www.overseasbases.net](http://www.overseasbases.net) / vine@american.edu
Gordon Adams, Distinguished Fellow, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft

Christine Ahn, Founder and International Coordinator, Women Cross the DMZ

Andrew Bacevich, President, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft

Medea Benjamin, Co-director, Codepink for Peace

Phyllis Bennis, Director, New Internationalism Project, Institute for Policy Studies; Fellow, Transnational Institute

Déborah Berman Santana, Professor Emeritus, Mills College/Committee for the Rescue & Development of Vieques (Puerto Rico)

Leah Bolger, Commander, US Navy (Ret.); President, World BEYOND War

Noam Chomsky, Laureate Professor of Linguistics, Agnese Nelms Haury Chair, University of Arizona; Professor Emeritus Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Sasha Davis, Associate Professor, Keene State College

Cynthia Enloe, Research Professor, Clark University

John Feffer, Director, Foreign Policy In Focus

Ben Friedman, Policy Director, Defense Priorities

Eugene Gholz, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Notre Dame

Noelani Goodyear-Kaopua, Professor, University of Hawaii at Manoa

Zoltán Grossman, Professor of Geography & Native Studies, The Evergreen State College

Mark W. Harrison, Peace with Justice Program Director, The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society

William Hartung, Director, Arms and Security Program, Center for International Policy

Patrick Hiller, Executive Director, War Prevention Initiative

Daniel Immerwahr, Professor of History, Northwestern University

Kyle Kajihiro, Board Member, Hawai’i Peace and Justice

Affiliations are for identification purposes only.
Questions, more information: www.overseasbases.net / vine@american.edu
Gwyn Kirk, Member, Women for Genuine Security

Kate Kizer, Policy Director, Win Without War

Barry Klein, Conservative Activist, Foreign Policy Alliance

Lindsay Koshgarian, Program Director, National Priorities Project, Institute for Policy Studies

Dennis Laich, Major General, US Army (Ret.); Executive Director, The All-Volunteer Force Forum

Terry L. Lowman, Co-chair, Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community

Catherine Lutz, Professor, Brown University

Paul Kawika Martin, Senior Director, Policy and Political Affairs, Peace Action

Peter Kuznick, Professor of History and Director, Nuclear Studies Institute, American University

Jon Mitchell, Visiting Researcher, International Peace Research Institute, Meiji Gakuin University, Tokyo

Satoko Oka Norimatsu, Director, Peace Philosophy Centre Coordinator, International Network of Museums for Peace

Miriam Pemberton, Associate Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies

Christopher Preble, Co-Director, New American Engagement Initiative, Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, Atlantic Council

Daniel Sjursen, Major, US Army (Ret.); Senior Fellow, Center for International Policy; Contributing Editor, Antiwar.com

David Swanson, Author; Executive Director, World BEYOND War

John Tierney, Former Member of Congress; Executive Director, Council for a Livable World Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

David Vine, Professor of Anthropology, American University; Author, *Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World*

Allan Vogel, Board of Directors, Foreign Policy Alliance, Inc.

Stephen Wertheim, Director of Grand Strategy, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft

Affiliations are for identification purposes only. Questions, more information: [www.overseasbases.net](http://www.overseasbases.net) / vine@american.edu
Lawrence Wilkerson, Colonel, US Army (Ret.); Senior Fellow Eisenhower Media Network; Fellow, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft

Ann Wright, Colonel, US Army (Ret.); Advisory Board Member, Veterans for Peace

Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director, Pax Christi USA

Affiliations are for identification purposes only.
Questions, more information: www.overseasbases.net / vine@american.edu