

RARE TRANSPARTISAN COALITION CALLS FOR MAKING AMERICA SAFER, SAVING BILLIONS BY CLOSING US MILITARY BASES OVERSEAS

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EVENT LIVESTREAM/PHONE-IN: <https://zoom.us/j/943926933> / 1-646-876-9923 (ID: 943 926 933)

Washington, DC—November 29, 1:00 p.m., in Russell Senate Office Building, Room SR-188, military experts from across the ideological spectrum will hold a public event to release an open letter arguing for the closure of wasteful, damaging, and unneeded US military bases abroad. In an era of bitter divisions between right and left, consensus is growing around a long-overlooked but crucial part of how the United States engages with the world: the nearly 75-year-old strategy of maintaining some 800 US military bases in 80 foreign countries.

The open letter is addressed to the Trump administration and Congress and was drafted by the new transpartisan *Overseas Base Realignment and Closure Coalition (OBRACC)*. The Coalition reflects growing agreement among military experts that reducing the excessive US military footprint could, counterintuitively, make the country safer while saving billions of dollars a year.

The signatories to the letter include Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, Greens, and Independents. They span a retired Army General and other retired military officers; peace advocates; a former GOP member of Congress; Clinton, Reagan, and George W. Bush administration officials; and academics and think tank analysts across the ideological spectrum.

Speakers at the event are scheduled to include **Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson**, (US Army, Ret.), former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell; **Dr. Catherine Lutz**, Professor of Anthropology and International Studies, Brown University; **John Glaser**, Director, Foreign Policy Studies, Cato Institute; **Sayo Saruta**, Director, New Diplomacy Initiative (Japan); and **David Vine**, Professor of Anthropology, American University.

An *embargoed* draft version of the letter and a list of signatories follows below.

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson commented about the letter, “It’s encouraging to see experts from across a broad political spectrum finally questioning our Cold War-era overseas basing strategy. That strategy today is wasting billions of dollars, making the US and the world less secure, and inviting constant military responses to threats that rarely concern the vital interests of America.”

Another signatory, Col. Andrew Bacevich, added, “Persisting in the Cold War policy of stationing vast numbers of US troops in hundreds of bases around the globe is obsolete and counterproductive. We must chart a different course.”

The Cato Institute’s John Glaser said, “US overseas basing creates needless cost and danger. A less aggressive strategy requiring fewer overseas bases would greatly reduce both military spending and security dangers to the United States.”

ADDITIONAL MEDIA CONTACTS

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FINAL TEXT TO BE RELEASED NOVEMBER 29, 2018 AT EVENT ABOVE**

**Overseas Base Realignment and Closure Coalition
Transpartisan Letter on Closing Military Bases Abroad
to Improve National and International Security**

November 29, 2018

Dear President Donald J. Trump, Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis, Members of Congress,

The undersigned represent a broad group of military analysts, scholars, advocates, and other military base experts from across the political spectrum who support closing U.S. military bases overseas. As a result of a 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. The rest of the world's nations together have fewer than 80 foreign bases.

The signatories have different ideas about how many bases to close but find broad agreement about the following nine reasons to begin closing foreign bases and improve national and international security in the process:

- 1. Overseas bases cost taxpayers billions every year.** It costs an average of \$10,000-\$40,000 more per year to station military personnel on overseas bases compared to domestic bases. The country spends an estimated \$51.5 billion annually to build and run bases abroad—at a time when the national debt exceeds \$21 trillion and domestic infrastructure is crumbling.
- 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 USA. 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 US in wars.** Bases dotting the globe fuel a hyper-interventionist foreign policy by making war look like an easy solution while offering targets for militants.
- 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, Thailand, 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 the spread of democracy.

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.

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 are found (causing problems for the military). 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. The Trump administration can do the same. This would mean bringing 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 Trump and Secretary Mattis, 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,

Gordon Adams, Professor Emeritus, School of International Service, American University

Christine Ahn, Founder and International Coordinator, Women Cross DMZ

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

Andrew Bacevich, Professor Emeritus of International Relations and History, Boston University,
Colonel, US Army (Ret.)

Medea Benjamin, Author and Co-director, CODEPINK for Peace

Phyllis Bennis, Director, New Internationalism Project, Institute for Policy Studies

Hon. Kerry Bentivolio, 113th US Congress (2013-15)/US Army (Ret.)

Leah Bolger, Commander, US Navy (Ret.)/Chair, World Beyond War

Ivan Eland, Director, Center on Peace and Liberty, The Lighthouse Institute

Cynthia Enloe, Research Professor, Political Science, Clark University

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David C. Hendrickson, Professor of Political Science, Colorado College

Patrick Hiller, Executive Director, War Prevention Initiative

Amy Holmes, Associate Professor, American University in Cairo/Visiting Scholar, Harvard University

Kyle Kajihira, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa/Hawaii Peace and Justice

Gwyn Kirk, Women for Genuine Security

Kate Kizer, Policy Director, Win Without War

Lawrence Korb, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower Installations and Logistics

Lindsay Koshgarian, Program Director, National Priorities Project

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

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

John Lindsay-Poland, Coordinator, Stop US Arms to Mexico Project/Global Exchange

Catherine Lutz, Thomas J. Watson, Jr. Family Professor of Anthropology and International Studies, The Watson Institute and Department of Anthropology, Brown University

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Mandy Smithberger, Director, Straus Military Reform Project, Center for Defense Information, Project on Government Oversight

Del Spurlock, Former General Counsel and Assistant Secretary of the US Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

David Swanson, Coalition Against U.S. Foreign Military Bases/Director, World Beyond War

David Vine, Professor of Anthropology, American University

Allan Vogel, Director, Foreign Policy Alliance, Inc.

Lawrence B. Wilkerson, Colonel, US Army (Ret.)/Former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell/Visiting Professor of Government and Public Policy, College of William and Mary

Ann Wright, Colonel US Army (Ret.)/Former Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassies in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, and Mongolia