

Advance Readings for Sept. 26, 2013 Foreign Affairs discussion at the Burlington Public Library:

U.S. Military Troops Abroad: Where, Why What?

N.B. The figures of numbers of troops shown in these readings are all suspect, even the official government figures. For example, Wikipedia quotes the Department of Defense saying the Djibouti has 139 soldiers at the end of 2012. Today, the website for the base in Djibouti says they have over 4,000 personnel there. This does include contractors, but they have had more than 139 Marines for there at least six years that I know of. The dates of the counts also differ. Then there is the definition of who should actually be counted as being overseas. Much of the material on this subject is from leftist sites. The facts don't differ much between right and left, but you can tell from the language which is which.

[The military of the United States](#) is deployed in more than 150 countries around the world, with 172,966 of its 1,372,522^[1] active-duty personnel serving outside the United States and its territories. Most of these overseas personnel are deployed in combat zones in the Middle East, as part of the War on Terror. Many of the remainder are located at installations activated during the Cold War, by which the US government sought to challenge the Soviet Union in the aftermath of World War II.^[2]

U.S. personnel are seeing active combat in Afghanistan. Others are deployed as part of several peacekeeping missions, military attachés, or are part of embassy and consulate security.

The following are countries, listed by region, in which U.S. military personnel are deployed. The most current numbers are based on [United States Department of Defense](#) statistics as of December 31, 2012.^[1] These numbers do not include any military or civilian contractors or dependents. Countries with fewer than 75 U.S. personnel deployed are omitted. The United States employs around 81,425 local foreigners across the World

Combat zones

Country	Total	Army	Navy	USMC	USAF	Reference
 Afghanistan	About 63,000					^[3]

Africa and the Middle East

Country	Total	Army	Navy	USMC	USAF	Reference
 Kuwait	15,000					^[4]
 Bahrain	2,902	23	2,316	534	29	^[1]
 Qatar	800	377	7	226	190	^[1]

Diego Garcia	516	0	480	0	36	[1] (Diego Garcia is British territory.)
 Egypt	292	217	19	26	30	[1][5]
 Saudi Arabia	278	154	22	25	77	[1]
 United Arab Emirates	193	13	13	73	94	[1]
 Djibouti	139	1	1	137	0	[1]
 Jordan	100-200					[1]

Asia-Pacific

Country	Total	Army	Navy	USMC	USAF	Reference
 Japan	52,692	2,461	19,295	18,408	12,528	[1][6]
 South Korea	28,500	19,755	274	242	8,815	[7]
 Australia	183	30	70	28	55	[1]
 Singapore	180	8	142	17	13	[1]
 Philippines	131	9	8	103	11	[1]
 Thailand	114	43	9	38	24	[1]

Europe

Country	Total	Army	Navy	USMC	USAF	Reference
 Germany	45,596	30,696	475	345	14,080	[1]
 Italy	10,916	3,306	3,525	41	4,044	[1]
 United Kingdom	9,310	305	326	62	8,617	[1]
 Spain	1,600	65	1,093	75	367	[1]
 Turkey	1,491	62	7	12	1,410	[1]
 Belgium	1,165	630	104	31	400	[1]
 Portugal	713	14	52	14	633	[1]
 Netherlands	374	162	16	13	183	[1]
 Greece	361	11	310	6	34	[1]
 Norway	90	28	11	10	41	[1]

Western Hemisphere

Country	Total	Army	Navy	USMC	USAF	Reference
 Cuba Guantanamo Bay	988	384	473	131	0	[1]
 Honduras	388	236	2	7	143	[1]
 Canada	146	7	47	10	82	[1]
 Greenland	138	0	0	0	138	[1]

United States

There are 1,199,556^[1] personnel on [active duty](#) in the United States and its territories:

Country	Total	Army	Navy	USMC	USAF	Reference
 CONUS	1,123,219	438,112	264,618	159,321	261,168	[1]
 United States						
Hawaii	49,242	22,549	14,984	6,579	5,130	[1]
Alaska	21,280	13,643	44	16	7,577	[1]
 Guam	5,646	68	3,404	183	1,991	[1]
 Puerto Rico	162	92	20	21	29	[1]

U.S. Marine Corps

Japan : [Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa](#). *Note: these camps are dispersed throughout Okinawa, but still under the administration of the MCB complex.* [Camp Courtney](#); [Camp Fuji, Shizuoka Prefecture](#); [Camp Foster](#); [Camp Gonsalves \(Jungle Warfare Training Center\)](#); [Camp Hansen](#); [Camp Kinser](#); [Camp Lester](#); [Camp McTureous](#); [Camp Schwab](#). [Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Okinawa](#); [Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Yamaguchi Prefecture](#)

U.S. Army

Bulgaria: [Bezmer Air Base](#); [Novo Selo Range](#), [Aitos Logistics Center](#), [Graf Ignatievo Air Base](#)

Germany: [Anderson Barracks](#), [Dexheim](#) (will reopen); [Artillery Kaserne, Garmisch-Partenkirchen](#); [Askren Manors Housing Area, Schweinfurt](#) (scheduled to close 2015); [Bamberg Local Training Area, Bamberg](#) (scheduled to close 2015); [Barton Barracks, Ansbach](#); [Bismarck Kaserne, Ansbach](#); [Bleidorn Housing Area, Ansbach](#); [Campbell Barracks, Heidelberg](#) (Scheduled to close 2015); [Gen. Lucius D. Clay Kaserne](#) (former Wiesbaden Army Airfield, renamed 2012), [Wiesbaden](#); [Coleman Barracks, Mannheim](#) (Scheduled to close 2013); [Conn Barracks, Schweinfurt](#) (scheduled to close 2015); [Dagger Complex, Darmstadt Training Center Griesheim](#); [Germersheim Army Depot, Germersheim](#); [Grafenwöhr Training Area, Grafenwöhr/Vilseck](#); [Hammonds Barracks, Mannheim](#); [Heidelberg Army Airfield, Heidelberg](#); [Hohenfels Training Area/Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels \(Upper Palatinate\)](#); [Husterhoeh Kaserne, Pirmasens](#); [Kaiserslautern Military Community; Katterbach Kaserne, Ansbach](#); [Kelley Barracks, Stuttgart](#); [Kleber Kaserne, Kaiserslautern Military Community](#); [Lampertheim Training Area, Lampertheim](#) (Scheduled to close 2015); [Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Landstuhl](#); [Ledward Barracks, Schweinfurt](#) (scheduled to close 2015); [Mark Twain Village, Heidelberg](#) (Scheduled to close 2013); [McCully Barracks, Wackernheim](#); [Miesau Army Depot, Miesau](#); [Nachrichten Kaserne, Heidelberg](#) (Scheduled to close 2013); [Oberdachstetten Storage Area, Ansbach](#); [Panzer Kaserne, Stuttgart](#); [Patch Barracks, Stuttgart](#); [Pulaski Barracks, Kaiserslautern](#); [Patrick Henry Village, Heidelberg](#) (Scheduled to close 2013); [Patton Barracks, Heidelberg](#) (Scheduled to close 2013); [Rhein Ordnance Barracks,](#)

[Kaiserslautern](#); [Robinson Barracks, Stuttgart](#); [Rose Barracks, Vilseck](#), [Rottershausen Storage Area, Schweinfurt](#); [Sembach Kaserne, Kaiserslautern](#); [Shipton Kaserne, Ansbach](#); [Smith Barracks, Baumholder](#); [Spinelli Barracks, Mannheim](#) (Scheduled to close 2013); [Storck Barracks, Illesheim](#); [Stuttgart Army Airfield, Filderstadt](#); [Sullivan Barracks, Mannheim](#) (Scheduled to close 2013); Storage Station, [Mainz-Kastel](#); [Warner Barracks, Bamberg](#) (Scheduled to close 2015); [USAG Wiesbaden Military Training Area, Mainz, Gonsenheim/Mombach](#); [USAG Wiesbaden Training Area, Mainz Finthen Airport](#); [USAG Wiesbaden Radar Station, Mainz Finthen Airport](#); [Urlas Housing and Shopping Complex, Ansbach](#); [Yorktown Housing Complex, Schweinfurt](#) (scheduled to close 2015)

Israel: [Dimona Radar Facility](#) is an American-operated radar base in the [Negev](#), staffed by 120 US military personnel.

Italy: [Caserma Ederle](#), near [Vicenza](#) ; [Camp Darby, Pisa-Livorno](#)

Japan: Hardy Barracks, Yokohama North Dock, [Camp Zama](#), Sagami General Depot, [Sagamihara Housing Area](#), Akizuki Ammunition Depot, Kawakami Ammunition Depot, Hiro Ammunition Depot, Kure Pier No.6, Haigamine Communication Site, Torii Communications Station, Gesaji Communication Site, [Naha Port](#), Army POL Depots, [Camp Zama, Tokyo, Fort Buckner](#);

Kosovo: [Camp Bondsteel](#)

Kuwait: • [Ali Al Salem Air Base](#), [Camp Arifjan](#), [Camp Buehring](#), ["K" Crossing](#), [Camp Virginia](#) (closing in 2013), [Camp Patriot](#)

South Korea: [Camp Carroll](#), [Camp Casey](#), [Camp Castle](#), [Camp Coiner](#), [Camp Hovey](#) , [Camp Humphreys](#), [Camp Jackson](#), [Camp Kim](#), [Camp Red Cloud](#), [Camp Stanley](#), [Camp Walker](#), [K-16 Air Base](#), [USAG Yongsan](#)

U.S. Navy

Bahrain: [Naval Support Activity Bahrain](#)

British Indian Ocean Territory: [Diego Garcia](#)

Brazil: [São Paulo, Naval Support Detachment](#)

Cuba: [Guantanamo Bay Naval Base](#)

Djibouti: [Camp Lemonnier](#) (Camp Lemonnier is the primary base of operations for U.S. Africa Command in the Horn of Africa.)

Greece: [Naval Support Activity Souda Bay](#), [Souda Bay](#), [Crete](#)

Guam: [Naval Base Guam](#)

Israel: The [Port of Haifa](#) maintains facilities for the [United States Sixth Fleet](#).

Italy: [Naval Air Station Sigonella](#); [Naval Support Activity Gaeta](#); [Naval Support Activity Naples](#); [NCTS Naples](#)

Japan: [Naval Air Facility Atsugi](#) ; [Naval Forces Japan, Okinawa](#); [United States Fleet Activities Yokosuka](#); [United States Fleet Activities Sasebo](#); Kamiseya Communications Station; Ikego Housing Area and Navy Annex; New Sanno U. S. Forces Center

Kuwait: [Kuwait Naval Base](#)

South Korea: [Commander Fleet Activities Chinhae](#)

Spain: [Rota Naval Station](#)

United Arab Emirates: [Fujairah Naval Base](#); [Port of Jebel Ali](#)

U.S . Air Force

Afghanistan: [Bagram Airfield](#); [Herat International Airport](#); [Jalalabad Airport](#); [Kabul International Airport](#); [Kandahar International Airport](#); [Mazar-i-Sharif Airport](#); [Shindand Air Base](#)

Bahrain: [Bahrain International Airport](#); [Sheikh Isa Air Base](#)

Bulgaria: [Bezmer Air Base](#); [Graf Ignatievo Air Base](#)

Germany: [Ansbach](#); [NATO Air Base Geilenkirchen](#), [Ramstein Air Base](#); [Spangdahlem Air Base](#)

Greenland: [Thule Air Base](#)

Guam: [Andersen Air Force Base](#)

Italy: [Aviano Air Base](#); [Camp Darby \(Pisa-Livorno\)](#); [Sigonella Naval Air Station](#)

Japan: [Kadena Air Base, Okinawa Prefecture](#); [Misawa Air Base, Misawa, Aomori](#); [Yokota Air Base, Tokyo](#)

Kuwait: [Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base](#); [Ali Al Salem Air Base](#)

Kyrgyzstan: [Manas Air Base](#)

Netherlands: [Joint Force Command Brunssum](#)

Oman: [Masirah Air Base](#); [Thumrait Air Base](#)

Pakistan: [PAF Base Nur Khan](#); [PAF Base Shahbaz](#); [PAF Base Samungli](#)

Philippines: [Mactan Air Base](#)

Portugal: [Lajes Field](#), [Azores](#)

Qatar: [Al Udeid Air Base](#)

Saudi Arabia: [Eskan Village](#)

Singapore: [Paya Lebar Air Base](#)

South Korea: [Kunsan Air Base](#), [Osan Air Base](#)

Spain: [Morón Air Base](#), [Andalucia](#)

Turkey: [Incirlik Air Base](#)

United Arab Emirates: [Al Dhafra Air Base](#)

United Kingdom: [RAF Alconbury](#), [Cambridgeshire](#); [RAF Croughton](#), [Northamptonshire](#); [RAF Lakenheath](#),
Brandon, Suffolk; [RAF Menwith Hill](#), [Yorkshire Dales](#); [RAF Mildenhall](#), [Mildenhall](#) ^[3]

NATO Military Bases

The Atlantic Alliance (NATO) has its own Network of military bases, thirty in total. The latter are primarily located in Western Europe:

Whiteman, U.S.A., Fairford,
Lakenheath and Mildenhall in United Kingdom,
Eindhoven in Netherlands,
Brüggen, Geilenkirchen, Landsberg, Ramstein, Spangdahlem, Rhein-Main in Germany,
Istres and Avord in France.
Morón de la Frontera and Rota in Spain,
Brescia, Vicenza, Piacenza, Aviano, Istrana, Trapani, Ancora, Pratica di Mare, Amendola,
Sigonella, Gioia dell Colle, Grazzanise and Brindisi in Italy,
Tirana in Albania,
Incirlik in Turkey,
Eskan Village in Soudi Arabia and
Ali al Salem in Koweit

<http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/unifiedcommand/>



The World and Territories Under the Responsibility of a Combatant Command or Under a Command Structure

Territories under a Command are: the Northern Command (NORTHCOM) (Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado), the Pacific Command (Honolulu, Hawaii), the Southern Command (Miami, Florida – Map 5), The Central Command (CENTCOM) (MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida), the European Command (Stuttgart-Vaihingen, Germany), the Joint Forces Command (Norfolk, Virginia), the Special Operations Command (MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida), the Transportation Command (Scott Air Force Base, Illinois) and the Strategic Command (STRATCOM) (Offutt Air Force Base, Omaha, Nebraska).

The Amphibious Ready Group

More information is available on each of the types of ships shown here. To view, the information on the particular type of ship, select the ship's silhouette. This will take you to the *Navy Fact File*. Note: To return here, you will need to use your "Back" button."



[Amphibious Assault Ship
\(LHA\)](#)

The Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) centers on the flexibility and readiness of a combined expeditionary unit and an [amphibious readiness group](#) (ARG). The total ARG provides operational freedom and expanded warfare capabilities, not only by land with embarked Marines, but at sea, as well.

 <p>Amphibious Assault Ship (LHD)</p>	<p>The exact make-up of an Amphibious Ready Group is in the process of being defined, but currently consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Amphibious Assault Ship (LHA or LHD) □ Primary landing ships, resembling small aircraft carriers, designed to put troops on hostile shores. In a secondary role, using AV-8B <i>Harrier</i> aircraft and anti-submarine warfare helicopters, these ships perform sea control and limited power projection missions. • An Amphibious Transport Dock (LPD) Ship □ Warships that embark, transport, and land elements of a landing force for a variety of expeditionary warfare missions. • A Dock Landing Ship (LSD) □ Dock Landing Ships support amphibious operations including landings via Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC), conventional landing craft and helicopters, onto hostile shores. The three classes of LSDs are the <i>Harpers Ferry</i> class, <i>Whidbey Island</i> class, and <i>Anchorage</i> class. • Attack Submarine □ in a direct support role seeking out and destroying hostile surface ships and submarines • A Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) □ missions range from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to major theater war • AV-8B Harrier II □ Attack and destroy surface targets under day and night visual conditions. • CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters □ Transportation of heavy equipment and supplies during the ship-to-shore movement of an amphibious assault and during subsequent operations ashore. • CH-46D Sea Knight helicopters □ Medium lift assault helicopter, primarily used to move cargo and troops. • AH-1W Super Cobra helicopters □ Provides fire support and fire support coordination to the landing force during amphibious assaults and subsequent operations ashore.
 <p>Amphibious Transport Dock (LPD)</p>	
 <p>Dock Landing Ship (LSD)</p>	
 <p>Attack Submarine (SSN)</p>	
 <p>AV-8B Harrier II</p>	
 <p>CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters</p>	
 <p>CH-46D/E Sea Knight helicopters</p>	
 <p>AH-1W Super Cobra helicopters</p>	

Last Update: 10 January 2012

The Carrier Strike Group

More information is available on each of the types of ships shown here. To view the information on the particular type of ship, click on the ship's silhouette. This will take you to the *Navy Fact File*.

First, it is important to note that there really is no real definition of a strike group. Strike groups are formed and disestablished on an as-needed basis, and one may be different from another. However, they all are comprised of similar types of ships. Typically a carrier strike group might have:



[Nimitz-class carrier](#)



[Ticonderoga-class
cruiser](#)



[Arleigh Burke-class
destroyer](#)



[Los Angeles-class
attack submarine](#)



[Supply-class
replenishment ship](#)

- **a carrier** □ The carrier provides a wide range of options to the U.S. government from simply showing the flag to attacks on airborne, afloat and ashore targets. Because carriers operate in international waters, its aircraft do not need to secure landing rights on foreign soil. These ships also engage in sustained operations in support of other forces.
- **a guided missile cruiser** □ multi-mission surface combatant. Equipped with *Tomahawks* for long-range strike capability.
- **two guided missile destroyers** □ multi-mission surface combatants, used primarily for anti-air warfare (AAW)
- **an attack submarine** □ in a direct support role seeking out and destroying hostile surface ships and submarines
- **a combined ammunition, oiler, and supply ship** □ provides logistic support enabling the Navy's forward presence; on station, ready to respond

The Carrier Strike Group (CSG) could be employed in a variety of roles, all of which would involve the gaining and maintenance of sea control:

- Protection of economic and/or military shipping.
- Protection of a Marine amphibious force while enroute to, and upon arrival in, an amphibious objective area.
- Establishing a naval presence in support of national interests.

[Surrounded: How the U.S. Is Encircling China with Military Bases](#)

Posted By [John Reed](#) ▪ Tuesday, August 20, 2013 - 7:15 PM

The U.S. military is encircling China with a chain of air bases and military ports. The latest link: a small airstrip on the tiny Pacific island of Saipan. The U.S. Air Force is planning to lease 33 acres of land on the island for the next 50 years to build a "divert airfield" on an old World War II airbase there. But the residents [don't want it](#). And the Chinese are in no mood to be surrounded by Americans.

The Pentagon's big, new strategy for the 21st century is something called Air-Sea Battle, a concept that's nominally about combining air and naval forces to punch through the increasingly-formidable defenses of nations like China or Iran. It may sound like an amorphous strategy -- and truth be told, a lot of Air-Sea Battle is still in the conceptual phase. But a very concrete part of this concept is being put into place in the Pacific. An important but oft-overlooked part of Air-Sea Battle calls for the military to operate from small, bare bones bases in the Pacific that its forces can disperse to in case their main bases are targeted by Chinese ballistic missiles.

Saipan would be used by American jets in case access to the U.S. superbase at Guam "or other Western Pacific airfields is limited or denied," reads [this](#) Air Force document discussing the impact building such fields on Saipan and nearby Tinian would have on the environment there. (Residents of Saipan actually want the Air Force to use the historic airbases on Tinian that the U.S. Marines [are already refurbishing](#) and flying F/A-18 Hornet fighters out of on an occasional basis.)

Specifically, the Air Force wants to expand the existing Saipan International Airport -- built on the skeleton of a World War II base used by Japan, and later the United States -- to accommodate cargo, fighter, and tanker aircraft along with up to 700 support personnel for "periodic divert landings, joint military exercises, and joint and combined humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts," according to Air Force documents on the project.

This means the service plans on building additional aircraft parking space, hangars, fuel storage tanks, and ammunition storage facilities, in addition to other improvements to the historic airfield. And it's not the only facility getting an upgrade.

In addition to the site on Saipan, the Air Force plans to send aircraft on regular deployments to bases ranging from Australia to India as part of its bulked up force in the Pacific. These plans include regular deployments to Royal Australian Air Force bases at Darwin and Tindal, Changi East air base in Singapore, Korat air base in Thailand, Trivandrum in India, and possibly bases at Cubi Point and Puerto Princesa in the Philippines and airfields in Indonesia and Malaysia, a top U.S. Air Force general [revealed](#) last month.

The Saipan announcement comes as Chinese defense minister, Gen. Chang Wanquan, visited Washington to talk with U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel. The specific topic of U.S. bases in

the Pacific didn't come up during a joint press conference held by the two officials on Aug. 20, but Wanquan said in response to a question about the U.S. military's increased focus on the Pacific that "China is a peace-loving nation. And we hope that [America's] strategy does not target a specific country in the region."

While the U.S. military insists that Air Sea Battle, and the military's entire pivot to Asia, isn't about China, these bases are indeed a check against any future Chinese expansion into the Pacific ocean, according to Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"China will be much more discreet throughout the entire region because U.S. power is already there, it's visible; you're not talking theory, you're already there in practice," he said.

This will also reassure America's allies in the region that the U.S. commitment to the Pacific is legit.

"As part of this rebalancing to the Pacific, you have to show people it's real at a time when so much of U.S. power is increasingly questioned by our budget debates," Cordesman added.

Gen. Herbert "Hawk" Carlisle, commander of all U.S. Air Force assets in the Pacific, said that the United States is planning on operating tankers, fighters, and bombers out of a string of bases throughout the South Pacific and Southwest Asia. Like the sites at Tinian and Saipan, these facilities aren't slated for permanent occupation by American aircraft -- or at least that's what American commanders say. Instead, these sites will see a steady stream of U.S. and northern Pacific based units visiting on a regular basis.

"We're not gonna build any more bases in the Pacific" to support the U.S. Air Force's increased presence there, said Carlisle. And technically, he's telling the truth: no "new" bases, just expansions of existing airports and rebuilds of abandoned facilities like the sites at Saipan and Tinian. In fact, one of the fields being rebuilt by the Marines on Tinian is the place where the B-29 Enola Gay took off on its mission to drop the atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima.

The refurbished airfields also hearken back to the Cold War era, when American units were constantly rotated in and out of Europe to keep the Soviets at bay. To counter a new foe, the Air Force will continuously deploy units based in the United States and the northern Pacific to a string of airfields in Southeast Asia.

"Back in the late, great days of the Cold War, we had a thing called Checkered Flag: We rotated almost every CONUS [Continental United States] unit to Europe," said Carlisle. "Every two years, every unit would go and work out of a collateral operating base in Europe. We're turning to that in the Pacific."

Not only does this dispersal allow the United States to hide its planes from destruction, it's also "a way to build up relations with partners in that part of the world," explains Jan Van Tol of the Center for Strategic And Budgetary Assessments, a Washington think tank that helped the Pentagon develop of the Air-Sea Battle concept. "It has to do with establishing interoperability, relationships, and experience in the actual areas" where the United States may have to fight.

When asked what other old bases the United States might consider expanding to, Van Tol said "people in different discussions will mention bases they might like to see, like Wake Island or, I think, Palau." Both feature the remains of American airstrips from World War II. Wake, in fact, already has a very limited American military presence. Meanwhile, Palau has [openly invited](#) the U.S military to return and use one of its World War II airstrips there.

Cordesman says the U.S. is likely looking at a three-tiered system of such bases in the Pacific. Some will be strictly American, others like those in Australia to India will be operated by allies who host the Americans on deployments, and the third tier will probably be a more secret string of austere, emergency bases.

"You want forward bases in some areas to show that the United States can operate on its own, then you want that build up interoperability and cooperation with our allies, and then you want contingency capabilities -- and with those you want to leave people guessing," said Cordesman.

It's another sign that, when comes to the Pacific, what's old is new again.

Why the United States Should Open More Bases in the Middle East

By: [Michael E. O'Hanlon](#) and [Bruce Riedel](#)

With the U.S. defense budget shrinking and Iran's nuclear capabilities growing, it is time for some creative thinking. In recent years, the United States has increasingly preferred to base its combat aircraft in the Middle East on aircraft carriers in and near the Persian Gulf. But now it should change course, moving more of them on land, to bases in two or more of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. That would allow the United States to modestly downsize its overall aircraft carrier fleet, a cost-saving measure, and strengthen its deterrent in the region by providing visible evidence of the United States' strong bonds with key countries of the Arabian Peninsula.

DOLLARS AND SENSE

It costs the Pentagon, on average, more than \$1 million per year to station a single service member in Afghanistan. Therefore, many assume, basing American military personnel on land abroad is generally a bad economy -- although strategically necessary at times. But that logic doesn't hold in many situations, and the Persian Gulf is a key case in point.

The United States relies almost exclusively on aircraft carriers, each with about 72 jets, to provide the airpower that it would need during a possible conflict with Iran, its most likely adversary in the region. Over the past decade, several squadrons of land-based combat jets in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia have largely [returned home](#). Although the United States occasionally rotates fighter jets through the small states of the GCC and maintains command-

and-control and support facilities in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, its permanent onshore combat power in the region is very limited.

But a modern aircraft carrier, which costs about \$12 billion, is about ten times as expensive as even a large and well-fortified facility on land. And it can take five or six ships in a fleet of 11 to maintain one continuous overseas patrol in the Gulf. In short, depending on carriers, rather than land bases, to provide constant combat airpower in a given region is a generally a dubious economic proposition if you know that the threat is going to be around for a while.

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The Startling Size of US Military Operations in Africa

The Pentagon's Africa Command will tell you there's one military base on the entire continent. Don't believe them.

—By [Nick Turse](#)

| Fri Sep. 6, 2013 3:00 AM PDT

They're involved in Algeria and Angola, Benin and Botswana, Burkina Faso and Burundi, Cameroon and the Cape Verde Islands. And that's just the ABCs of the situation. Skip to the end of the alphabet and the story remains the same: Senegal and the Seychelles, Togo and Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia. From north to south, east to west, the Horn of Africa to the Sahel, the heart of the continent to the islands off its coasts, the US military is at work. Base construction, security cooperation engagements, training exercises, advisory deployments, special operations missions, and a growing logistics network, all undeniable evidence of expansion—except at US Africa Command.

To hear AFRICOM tell it, US military involvement on the continent ranges from the miniscule to the microscopic. The command is adamant that it has only a single "military base" in all of Africa: Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. The head of the command [insists](#) that the US military maintains a "small footprint" on the continent. AFRICOM's chief spokesman has consistently minimized the scope of its operations and the number of facilities it maintains or shares with host nations, asserting that only "a small presence of personnel who conduct short-duration engagements" are operating from "several locations" on the continent at any given time.

With the war in Iraq over and the conflict in Afghanistan winding down, the US military is [deploying](#) its forces far beyond declared combat zones. In [recent years](#), for example, Washington has very publicly [proclaimed](#) a "[pivot to Asia](#)," a "rebalancing" of its military resources eastward, without actually [carrying out](#) wholesale policy changes. Elsewhere, however, from the Middle East to South America, the Pentagon is increasingly engaged in [shadowy operations](#) whose details emerge piecemeal and are rarely examined in a comprehensive way. Nowhere is this truer than in Africa. To the media and the American people, officials insist the US military is engaged in small-scale, innocuous operations there. Out of public earshot, officers running America's secret wars say: "Africa is the battlefield of tomorrow, today."



Green markers: US military training, advising, or tactical deployments during 2013

Yellow markers: US military training, advising, or tactical deployments during 2012

Purple marker: US "security cooperation"

Red markers: Army National Guard partnerships

Blue markers: US bases, forward operating sites (FOSes), contingency security locations (CSLs), contingency locations (CLs), airports with fueling agreements, and various shared facilities

Green push pins: US military training/advising of indigenous troops carried out in a third country during 2013

Yellow push pins: US military training/advising of indigenous troops carried out in a third country during 2012

The US Military's Pivot to Africa, 2012-13/TomDispatch/Google

The proof is in the details—a seemingly ceaseless string of projects, operations, and engagements. Each mission, as AFRICOM insists, may be relatively limited and each footprint might be "small" on its own, but taken as a whole, US military operations are sweeping and expansive. Evidence of an American pivot to Africa is almost everywhere on the continent. [Few](#), however, have paid [much notice](#).

If the proverbial picture is worth a thousand words, then what's a map worth? Take, for instance, the one created by *TomDispatch* that documents US military outposts, construction, security cooperation, and deployments in Africa. It looks like a field of mushrooms after a monsoon. US Africa Command recognizes 54 countries on the continent, but refuses to say in which ones (or even in how many) it now conducts operations. An investigation by *TomDispatch* has found recent US military involvement with no fewer than 49 [African nations](#).

In some, the US maintains bases, even if under other names. In others, it trains local partners and proxies to [battle militants](#) ranging from Somalia's al-Shabaab and Nigeria's Boko Haram to members of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Elsewhere, it is building facilities for its allies or infrastructure for locals. Many African nations are home to multiple US military projects. Despite what AFRICOM officials say, a careful reading of internal briefings, contracts, and other official documents, as well as open source information, including the command's own press releases and news items, reveals that military operations in Africa are already vast and will be expanding for the foreseeable future.

A Base by Any Other Name...

What does the US military footprint in Africa look like? [Colonel Tom Davis](#), AFRICOM's Director of Public Affairs, is unequivocal: "Other than our base at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti,

we do not have military bases in Africa, nor do we have plans to establish any." He [admits](#) only that the US has "temporary facilities elsewhere...that support much smaller numbers of personnel, usually for a specific activity."

AFRICOM's chief of media engagement Benjamin Benson echoes this, telling me that it's almost impossible to offer a list of forward operating bases. "Places that [US forces] might be, the range of possible locations can get really big, but can provide a really skewed image of where we are...versus other places where we have ongoing operations. So, in terms of providing a number, I'd be at a loss of how to quantify this."

A briefing prepared last year by Captain Rick Cook, the chief of AFRICOM's Engineering Division, tells a different story, making reference to forward operating sites or FOSes (long-term locations), cooperative security locations or CSLs (which troops periodically rotate in and out of), and contingency locations or CLs (which are used only during ongoing operations). A separate briefing prepared last year by Lieutenant Colonel David Knellinger references seven cooperative security locations across Africa whose whereabouts are classified. A third briefing, produced in July of 2012 by US Army Africa, identifies one of the CSL sites as Entebbe, Uganda, a location from which US contractors have flown secret surveillance missions using innocuous-looking, white Pilatus PC-12 turboprop airplanes, [according](#) to an investigation by the *Washington Post*.

The 2012 US Army Africa briefing materials obtained by *TomDispatch* reference plans to build six new gates to the Entebbe compound, 11 new "containerized housing units," new guard stations, new perimeter and security fencing, enhanced security lighting and new concrete access ramps, among other improvements. Satellite photos indicate that many, if not all, of these upgrades have, indeed, taken place.

A 2009 image (above left) shows a bare-bones compound of dirt and grass tucked away on a Ugandan air base with just a few aircraft surrounding it. A satellite photo of the compound from earlier this year (above right) shows a strikingly more built-up camp surrounded by a swarm of helicopters and white airplanes.

Initially, AFRICOM's Benjamin Benson refused to comment on the construction or the number of aircraft, insisting that the command had no "public information" about it. Confronted with the 2013 satellite photo, Benson reviewed it and offered a reply that neither confirmed nor denied that the site was a US facility, but cautioned me about using "uncorroborated data." (Benson failed to respond to my request to corroborate the data through a site visit.) "I have no way of knowing where the photo was taken and how it was modified," he told me. "Assuming the location is Entebbe, as you suggest, I would again argue that the aircraft could belong to anyone...It would be irresponsible of me to speculate on the missions, roles, or ownership of these aircraft." He went on to suggest, however, that the aircraft might belong to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([MONUSCO](#)) which does have a presence at the Entebbe air base. A request for comment from MONUSCO went unanswered before this article went to press.

This buildup may only be the beginning for Entebbe CSL. Recent contracting documents examined by *TomDispatch* indicate that AFRICOM is considering an additional surge of air assets there—specifically hiring a private contractor to provide further "dedicated fixed-wing airlift services for movement of Department of Defense (DoD) personnel and cargo in the Central African Region." This mercenary air force would keep as many as three planes in the air at the same time on any given day, logging a total of about 70 to 100 hours per week. If the military goes ahead with these plans, the aircraft would ferry troops, weapons, and other materiel within Uganda and to the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan.

Another key, if little noticed, US outpost in Africa is located in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. An airbase there serves as the home of a Joint Special Operations Air Detachment, as well as the Trans-Sahara Short Take-Off and Landing Airlift Support initiative. According to military documents, that "initiative" supports "high-risk activities" carried out by elite forces from Joint Special Operations Task Force-Trans Sahara. Lieutenant Colonel Scott Rawlinson, a spokesman for Special Operations Command Africa, told me that it provides "emergency casualty evacuation support to small team engagements with partner nations throughout the Sahel," although official documents note that such actions have historically accounted for only 10% of its monthly flight hours.

While Rawlinson demurred from discussing the scope of the program, citing operational security concerns, military documents again indicate that, whatever its goals, it is expanding rapidly. Between March and December 2012, for example, the initiative flew 233 sorties. In the first three months of this year, it carried out 193.

In July, Berry Aviation, a Texas-based longtime Pentagon contractor, was awarded a nearly \$50 million contract to [provide](#) aircraft and personnel for "Trans-Sahara Short Take-Off and Landing services." Under the terms of the deal, Berry will "perform casualty evacuation, personnel airlift, cargo airlift, as well as personnel and cargo aerial delivery services throughout the Trans-Sahara of Africa," according to a statement from the company. Contracting documents indicate that Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia are the "most likely locations for missions."

Special Ops in Africa

Ouagadougou is just one site for expanding US air operations in Africa. Last year, the 435th Military Construction Flight (MCF)—a rapid-response mobile construction team—[revitalized](#) an airfield in South Sudan for Special Operations Command Africa, according to the unit's commander, Air Force lieutenant Alexander Graboski. Before that, the team also "installed a runway lighting system to enable 24-hour operations" at the outpost. Graboski states that the Air Force's 435th MCF "has been called upon many times by Special Operations Command Africa to send small teams to perform work in austere locations." This trend looks as if it will continue. According to a briefing prepared earlier this year by Hugh Denny of the Army Corps of Engineers, plans have been drawn up for Special Operations Command Africa "operations support" facilities to be situated in "multiple locations."

AFRICOM spokesman Benjamin Benson refused to answer questions about SOCAFRICA facilities, and would not comment on the locations of missions by an elite, quick-response force known as [Naval Special Warfare Unit 10](#) (NSWU 10). But according to Captain Robert Smith, the commander of Naval Special Warfare Group Two, NSWU 10 has been engaged "with strategic countries such as Uganda, Somalia, [and] Nigeria."

Captain J. Dane Thorleifson, NSWU 10's outgoing commander, recently mentioned deployments in six "austere locations" in Africa and "every other month contingency operations—Libya, Tunisia, [and] POTUS," evidently a reference to President Obama's [three-nation trip](#) to Africa in July. Thorleifson, who led the unit from July 2011 to July 2013, also said NSWU 10 had been involved in training "proxy" forces, specifically "building critical host nation security capacity; enabling, advising, and assisting our African CT [counterterrorism] partner forces so they can swiftly counter and destroy al-Shabab, AQIM [Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb], and Boko Haram."

Nzara in South Sudan is one of a string of shadowy forward operating posts on the continent where US Special Operations Forces have been [stationed](#) in recent years. Other sites [include](#) Obo and Djema in the Central Africa Republic and Dungu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. [According](#) to Lieutenant Colonel Guillaume Beurpere, the commander of the 3rd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, "advisory assistance at forward outposts was directly responsible for the establishment of combined operations fusion centers where military commanders, local security officials, and a host of international and non-governmental organizations could share information about regional insurgent activity and coordinate military activities with civil authorities."

Drone bases are also expanding. In February, the US announced the establishment of a new drone facility in Niger. Later in the spring, AFRICOM spokesman Benjamin Benson confirmed to *TomDispatch* that US air operations conducted from Base Aeriene 101 at Diiori Hamani International Airport in Niamey, Niger's capital, were providing "support for intelligence collection with French forces conducting operations in Mali and with other partners in the region." More recently, the *New York Times* noted that what began as the deployment of one Predator drone to Niger had [expanded](#) to encompass daily flights by one of two larger, more advanced Reaper remotely piloted aircraft, supported by 120 Air Force personnel. Additionally, the US has [flown](#) drones out of the Seychelles Islands and Ethiopia's Arba Minch Airport.

When it comes to expanding US outposts in Africa, the Navy has also been active. It maintains a forward operating location—[manned](#) mostly by Seabees, Civil Affairs personnel, and force-protection troops—known as Camp Gilbert in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia. Since 2004, US troops have been stationed at a Kenyan naval base known as Camp Simba at Manda Bay. AFRICOM's Benson portrayed operations there as relatively minor, typified by "short-term training and engagement activities." The 60 or so "core" troops stationed there, he said, are also primarily Civil Affairs, Seabees, and security personnel who take part in "military-to-military engagements with Kenyan forces and humanitarian initiatives."

An AFRICOM briefing earlier this year suggested, however, that the base is destined to be more than a backwater post. It called attention to improvements in water and power infrastructure and

an extension of the runway at the airfield, as well as greater "surge capacity" for bringing in forces in the future. A second briefing, prepared by the Navy and obtained by *TomDispatch*, details nine key infrastructure upgrades that are on the drawing board, underway, or completed.

In addition to extending and improving that runway, they include providing more potable water storage, latrines, and lodgings to accommodate a future "surge" of troops, doubling the capacity of washer and dryer units, upgrading dining facilities, improving roadways and boat ramps, providing fuel storage, and installing a new generator to handle additional demands for power.

In a March article in the *National Journal*, James Kitfield, who visited the base, shed additional light on expansion there. "Navy Seabee engineers," he [wrote](#), "...have been working round-the-clock shifts for months to finish a runway extension before the rainy season arrives. Once completed, it will allow larger aircraft like C-130s to land and supply Americans or African Union troops."

AFRICOM's Benson tells *TomDispatch* that the US military also makes use of six buildings located on Kenyan military bases at the airport and seaport of Mombasa. In addition, he verified that it has used Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport in Senegal for refueling stops as well as the "transportation of teams participating in security cooperation activities" such as training missions. He confirmed a similar deal for the use of Addis Ababa Bole International Airport in Ethiopia.

While Benson refused additional comment, official documents indicate that the US has similar agreements for the use of Nsimalen Airport and Douala International Airport in Cameroon, Amílcar Cabral International Airport and Praia International Airport in Cape Verde, N'Djamena International Airport in Chad, Cairo International Airport in Egypt, Jomo Kenyatta International Airport and Moi International Airport in Kenya, Kotoka International Airport in Ghana, Marrakech-Menara Airport in Morocco, Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Nigeria, Seychelles International Airport in the Seychelles, Sir Seretse Khama International Airport in Botswana, Bamako-Senou International Airport in Mali, and Tunis-Carthage International Airport in Tunisia. All told, according to Sam Cooks, a liaison officer with the Defense Logistics Agency, the US military now has 29 agreements to use international airports in Africa as refueling centers.

In addition, US Africa Command has built a sophisticated logistics system, officially known as the AFRICOM Surface Distribution Network, but colloquially referred to as the "new spice route." It connects posts in Manda Bay, Garissa, and Mombasa in Kenya, Kampala and Entebbe in Uganda, Dire Dawa in Ethiopia, as well as crucial port facilities used by the Navy's CTF-53 ("Commander, Task Force, Five Three") in Djibouti, which are collectively referred to as "the port of Djibouti" by the military. Other key ports on the continent, according to Lieutenant Colonel Wade Lawrence of US Transportation Command, include Ghana's Tema and Senegal's Dakar.

The US [maintains](#) 10 marine gas and oil bunker locations in eight African nations, according to the Defense Logistics Agency. AFRICOM's Benjamin Benson refuses to name the countries, but recent military contracting documents list key fuel bunker locations in Douala, Cameroon; Mindelo, Cape Verde; Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire; Port Gentil, Gabon; Sekondi, Ghana; Mombasa,

Kenya; Port Luis, Mauritius; Walvis Bay, Namibia; Lagos, Nigeria; Port Victoria, Seychelles; Durban, South Africa; and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

The US also continues to [maintain](#) a long-time Naval Medical Research Unit, known as NAMRU-3, in Cairo, Egypt. Another little-noticed medical investigation component, the US Army Research Unit-Kenya, operates from facilities in Kisumu and Kericho.

Key logistics support hubs for AFRICOM are [located](#) in Rota, Spain; Aruba in the Lesser Antilles; and Souda Bay, Greece, as well as at Ramstein. The command also [maintains](#) a forward operating site on Britain's Ascension Island, located about 1,000 miles off the coast of Africa in the South Atlantic, but refused requests for further information about its role in operations.

Another important logistics facility is located in Sigonella on the island of Sicily. Italy, it turns out, is an especially crucial component of US operations in Africa. Special-Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Africa, which provides teams of Marines and sailors for "small-footprint theater security cooperation engagements" across the continent, is based at Naval Air Station Sigonella. It has, according to AFRICOM's Benjamin Benson, recently deployed personnel to Botswana, Liberia, Djibouti, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Tunisia, and Senegal.

In the future, US Army Africa will be based at Caserma Del Din in northern Italy, adjacent to the recently [completed](#) home of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team. A 2012 US Army Africa briefing indicates that construction projects at the Caserma Del Din base will continue through 2018. The reported price-tag for the entire complex: \$310 million.

A Big Base Gets Bigger

While that sum is sizeable, it's surpassed by spending on the lone official US base on the African continent, Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. That former French Foreign Legion post has been on a decade-long growth spurt.

In 2002, the US dispatched personnel to Africa as part of Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). The next year, CJTF-HOA took up residence at Camp Lemonnier, where it resides to this day. In 2005, the US struck a five-year land-use agreement with the Djiboutian government and exercised the first of two five-year renewal options in late 2010. In 2006, the US signed a separate agreement to expand the camp's boundaries to 500 acres.

According to AFRICOM's Benson, between 2009 and 2012, \$390 million was spent on construction at Camp Lemonnier. In recent years, the outpost was transformed by the addition of an electric power plant, enhanced water storage and treatment facilities, a dining hall, more facilities for Special Operations Command, and the expansion of aircraft taxiways and parking aprons.

A briefing prepared earlier this year by the Naval Facilities Engineering Command lists a plethora of projects currently underway or poised to begin, including an aircraft maintenance hangar, a telecommunications facility, a fire station, additional security fencing, an ammunition

supply facility, interior paved roads, a general purpose warehouse, maintenance shelters for aircraft, an aircraft logistics apron, taxiway enhancements, expeditionary lodging, a combat aircraft loading apron, and a taxiway extension on the east side of the airfield.

Navy documents detail the price tag of this year's proposed projects, including \$7.5 million to be spent on containerized living units and workspaces, \$22 million for cold storage and the expansion of dining facilities, \$27 million for a fitness center, \$43 million for a joint headquarters facility, and a whopping \$220 million for a Special Operations Compound, also referred to as "Task Force Compound."

According to a 2012 briefing by Lieutenant Colonel David Knellinger, the Special Operations Compound will eventually include at least 18 new facilities, including a two-story joint operations center, a two-story tactical operations center, two five-story barracks, a large motor pool facility, a supply warehouse, and an aircraft hangar with an adjacent air operations center.

A document produced earlier this year by Lieutenant Troy Gilbert, an infrastructure planner with AFRICOM's engineer division, lists almost \$400 million in "emergency" military construction at Camp Lemonnier, including work on the special operations compound and more than \$150 million for a new combat aircraft loading area. Navy documents, for their part, estimate that construction at Camp Lemonnier will continue at \$70 million to \$100 million annually, with future projects to include a \$20 million wastewater treatment plant, a \$40 million medical and dental center, and more than \$150 million in troop housing.

Rules of Engagement

In addition, the US military has been supporting construction all over Africa for its allies. A report by Hugh Denny of the Army Corps of Engineers issued earlier this year references 79 such projects in 33 countries between 2011 and 2013, including Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Cote D'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tunisia, The Gambia, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia. The reported price tag: \$48 million.

Senegal has, for example, received a \$1.2 million "peacekeeping operations training center" under the auspices of the US Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program. ACOTA has also supported training center projects in Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda.

The US is planning to finance the construction of barracks and other facilities for Ghana's armed forces. AFRICOM's Benson also confirmed to *TomDispatch* that the Army Corps of Engineers has plans to "equip and refurbish five military border security posts in Djibouti along the Somalia/Somaliland border." In Kenya, US Special Operations Forces have "played a crucial role in infrastructure investments for the Kenyan Special Operations Regiment and especially in

the establishment of the Kenyan Ranger school," [according](#) to Lieutenant Colonel Guillaume Beurpere of the 3rd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group.

AFRICOM's "humanitarian assistance" program is also expansive. A 2013 Navy briefing lists \$7.1 million in humanitarian construction projects—like schools, orphanages, and medical facilities—in 19 countries from Comoros and Guinea-Bissau to Rwanda. Hugh Denny's report also lists nine Army Corps of Engineers "security assistance" efforts, valued at more than \$12 million, carried out during 2012 and 2013, as well as 15 additional "security cooperation" projects worth more than \$22 million in countries across Africa.

A Deluge of Deployments

In addition to creating or maintaining bases and engaging in military construction across the continent, the US is involved in near constant training and advisory missions. According to AFRICOM's Colonel Tom Davis, the command is [slated](#) to carry out 14 major bilateral and multilateral exercises by the end of this year. These include Saharan Express 2013, which brought together forces from Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Senegal, and Sierra Leone, among other nations, for maritime security [training](#); Obangame Express 2013, a counter-piracy exercise [involving](#) the armed forces of many nations, including Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Togo; and Africa Endeavor 2013, in which the militaries of Djibouti, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Zambia, and 34 other [African nations](#) took part.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. As Davis told *TomDispatch*, "We also conduct some type of military training or military-to-military engagement or activity with nearly every country on the African continent." A cursory look at just some of US missions this spring drives home the true extent of the growing US engagement in Africa.

In January, for instance, the US Air Force began [transporting](#) French troops to Mali to counter Islamist forces there. At a facility in Nairobi, Kenya, AFRICOM provided military intelligence training to junior officers from Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and South Sudan. In January and February, Special Operations Forces personnel [conducted](#) a joint exercise code-named Silent Warrior with Cameroonian soldiers. February saw South African troops travel all the way to Chiang Mai, Thailand, to take part in Cobra Gold 2013, a multinational training exercise cosponsored by the US military.

In March, Navy personnel [worked](#) with members of Cape Verde's armed forces, while Kentucky National Guard troops spent a week [advising](#) soldiers from the Comoros Islands. That same month, members of Special-Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Africa [deployed](#) to the Singo Peace Support Training Center in Uganda to work with Ugandan soldiers prior to their assignment to the African Union Mission in Somalia. Over the course of the spring, members of the task force would also mentor local troops in Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, Burkina Faso, the Seychelles, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Liberia.

In April, members of the task force also began [training](#) Senegalese commandos at Bel-Air military base in Dakar, while Navy personnel deployed to Mozambique to [school](#) civilians in demining techniques. Meanwhile, Marines traveled to Morocco to conduct a training exercise code-named African Lion 13 with that country's military. In May, Army troops were sent to Lomé, Togo, to work with members of the Togolese Defense Force, as well as to Senga Bay, Malawi, to instruct soldiers there.

That same month, Navy personnel conducted a joint exercise in the Mediterranean Sea with their Egyptian counterparts. In June, personnel from the Kentucky National Guard deployed to Djibouti to advise members of that country's military on border security methods, while Seabees teamed up with the Tanzanian People's Defense Force to build maritime security infrastructure. That same month, the Air Force airlifted Liberian troops to Bamako, Mali, to conduct a six-month peacekeeping operation.

Limited or Limitless?

Counting countries in which it has bases or outposts or has done construction, and those with which it has conducted military exercises, advisory assignments, security cooperation, or training missions, the US military, according to *TomDispatch's* analysis, is involved with more than 90% of Africa's 54 nations. While AFRICOM commander David Rodriguez maintains that the US has only a "small footprint" on the continent, following those small footprints across the continent can be a breathtaking task.

It's not hard to imagine why the US military wants to maintain that "small footprint" fiction. On occasion, military commanders couldn't have been clearer on the subject. "A direct and overt presence of US forces on the African continent can cause consternation... with our own partners who take great pride in their post-colonial abilities to independently secure themselves," wrote Lieutenant Colonel Guillaume Beaurpere earlier this year in the military trade publication *Special Warfare*. Special Operations Forces, he added, "must train to operate discreetly within these constraints and the cultural norms of the host nation."

On a visit to the Pentagon earlier this summer, AFRICOM's Rodriguez echoed the same point in candid comments to Voice of America: "The history of the African nations, the colonialism, all those things are what point to the reasons why we should... just use a small footprint."

And yet, however useful that imagery may be to the Pentagon, the US military no longer has a small footprint in Africa. Even the repeated claims that US troops conduct only short-term, intermittent missions there has been officially contradicted. This July, at a change of command ceremony for Naval Special Warfare Unit 10, a spokesman noted the creation and implementation of "a five-year engagement strategy that encompassed the transition from episodic training events to regionally-focused and persistent engagements in five Special Operations Command Africa priority countries."

In a question-and-answer piece in *Special Warfare* earlier this year, Colonel John Deedrick, the commander of the 10th Special Forces Group, sounded off about his unit's area of

responsibility. "We are widely employed throughout the continent," he said. "These are not episodic activities. We are there 365-days-a-year to share the burden, assist in shaping the environment, and exploit opportunities."

Exploitation and "persistent engagement" are exactly what critics of US military involvement in Africa have long feared, while blowback and the unforeseen consequences of US military action on the continent have already contributed to catastrophic destabilization.

Despite some candid admissions by officers involved in shadowy operations, however, AFRICOM continues to insist that troop deployments are highly circumscribed. The command will not, however, allow independent observers to make their own assessments. Benson said AFRICOM does not "have a media visit program to regularly host journalists there."

My own requests to report on US operations on the continent were, in fact, rejected in short order. "We will not make an exception in this case," Benson wrote in a recent email and followed up by emphasizing that US forces are deployed in Africa only "on a limited and temporary basis." *TomDispatch's* own analysis—and a mere glance at the map of recent missions—indicates that there are, in fact, very few limits on where the US military operates in Africa.

While Washington talks openly about [rebalancing](#) its military assets to Asia, a pivot to Africa is quietly and unmistakably underway. With the ever-present possibility of [blowback](#) from shadowy operations on the continent, the odds are that the results of that pivot will become increasingly evident, whether or not Americans recognize them as such. Behind closed doors, the military says: "Africa is the battlefield of tomorrow, today." It remains to be seen just when they'll say the same to the American people.

The world has lost respect for the US

Jeff Jacoby, Boston Globe, 15 September 2013

Democrats jeered when John McCain told a New Hampshire audience during the 2008 presidential campaign that he would be glad to see US troops remain in Iraq for decades, even a century, once the war was over. "We've been in Japan for 60 years [and] in South Korea for 50 years," he said. A similar long-term stay in a postwar Iraq, buttressing allies and providing stability in a volatile region, would "be fine with me as long as Americans are not being injured or harmed or wounded or killed."

McCain's political foes had a field day with that. Though he had plainly been speaking of a friendly peacetime presence, Democrats hammered him as an insatiable warmonger. Then-Senator Barack Obama claimed the Arizona Republican was "willing to send our troops into another 100 years of war in Iraq." Howard Dean, the Democratic Party chairman, declared: "McCain's strategy is a war without end." In a TV ad aired by MoveOn.org, a new mother, playing with her baby boy, told McCain that if he was counting on using her little Alex as cannon fodder in Iraq, "you can't have him."

Yet McCain was right. Having won a difficult war in Iraq, the United States should have settled in for the long haul, just as we did in Japan, Germany, Italy, and South Korea, where tens of

thousands of American troops remain to this day. Instead President Obama pulled the troops out, as he had always made clear he would. Iraq's fragile constitutional democracy, so hard-won, was left to fend for itself. Al Qaeda in Iraq, all but wiped out, gained a new lease on life. Now a new generation of Americans, including young Alex, is learning that the loss of US influence makes the world a more menacing place.

We are nearly five years into a presidency whose foreign policy is driven by the conviction that America's profile in the world, above all the Muslim world, must be lowered. "One of the things I intend to do as president is restore America's standing in the world," Obama vowed as he pursued the presidency in 2008. Abandoning Iraq wasn't the way to do it. America's standing in the world has reached a new low. So low that even Bashar Assad can thumb his nose at an explicit presidential "red line" -- then laugh as Vladimir Putin effortlessly suckers Washington into doing nothing about it.

George W. Bush made plenty of mistakes, but he understood the difference between leading and "leading from behind." When he went to Congress for authorization to remove Saddam Hussein from power, he got it. When he told Saddam to leave Iraq or be forcibly overthrown, he made good his threat. When he explained the need for military action, he didn't need to reassure Americans that their commander-in-chief "doesn't do pinpricks."

All American presidents engender resentment and opposition on the world stage. It goes with the job of leading the world's superpower. From his earliest days as a presidential candidate, Obama argued that Bush had eroded America's international status by going to war in Iraq and not showing enough respect for diplomatic engagement. He was sure that by reversing course he could make things better. "The world will have confidence that I am listening to them, and that our future and our security is tied up with our ability to work with other countries."

But what the world has mostly learned from listening to Obama is that he confuses moral preening with effective leadership. That he is deeply uncomfortable with America's military preeminence. That it's not hard to call the bluff of this president who says he doesn't bluff.

And that he still doesn't realize how much harm was set in motion by the wholesale withdrawal from Iraq. As the US military walked away, internal Iraqi politics grew more authoritarian. Sunni terrorism revived. Al Qaeda in Iraq started sending offshoots into Syria. Iraqi Shiites, meanwhile, lost their American buffer against Iran. "If American air power were still in Baghdad," writes Reuel Marc Gerecht of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, "Tehran could not resupply Syria and Lebanese Hezbollah by air, and the Assad regime would lose the two resources most critical to its survival."

Power, too, abhors a vacuum. A long-term US military presence in Iraq could have strengthened Iraq's democrats and moderates, giving peace and prosperity the same chance they had in Germany, Japan, and Korea. Instead we walked away, and the region's worst brutes made the

MotherJones.com

From the Left, here is the intro to a substantial article on the growth of the American military presence overseas.

The Pentagon's New Generation of Secret Military Bases

How the Pentagon is quietly transforming its overseas base empire and creating a dangerous new way of war.

.....They reflect the increased use of relatively small bases like Camp Lemonnier, which military planners see as a [model](#) for future US bases "scattered," as one academic [explains](#), "across regions in which the United States has previously not maintained a military presence."

Disappearing are the days when Ramstein was the signature US base, an American-town-sized behemoth filled with thousands or tens of thousands of Americans, PXs, Pizza Huts, and other amenities of home. But don't for a second think that the Pentagon is packing up, downsizing its global mission, and heading home. In fact, based on developments in recent years, the opposite may be true. While the collection of Cold War-era giant bases around the world is shrinking, the global infrastructure of bases overseas has exploded in size and scope.

Unknown to most Americans, Washington's garrisoning of the planet is on the rise, thanks to a new generation of bases the military calls "[lily pads](#)" (as in a frog jumping across a pond toward its prey). These are small, secretive, inaccessible facilities with limited numbers of troops, spartan amenities, and prepositioned weaponry and supplies.

Around the world, from Djibouti to the jungles of Honduras, the deserts of Mauritania to Australia's tiny Cocos Islands, the Pentagon has been pursuing as many lily pads as it can, in as many countries as it can, as fast as it can. Although statistics are hard to assemble, given the often-secretive nature of such bases, the Pentagon has probably built upwards of 50 lily pads and other small bases since around 2000, while exploring the construction of dozens more.

As Mark Gillem, author of [America Town: Building the Outposts of Empire](#), [explains](#), "avoidance" of local populations, publicity, and potential opposition is the new aim. "To project its power," he says, the United States wants "secluded and self-contained outposts strategically located" around the world. According to some of the strategy's [strongest proponents](#) at the American Enterprise Institute, the goal should be "to create a worldwide network of frontier forts," with the US military "the 'global cavalry' of the twenty-first century."

Such lily-pad bases have become a critical part of an evolving Washington military strategy aimed at maintaining US global dominance by doing far more with less in an increasingly competitive, ever more multi-polar world. Central as it's becoming to the long-term US stance, this global-basing reset policy has, remarkably enough, received almost no public attention, nor significant Congressional oversight. Meanwhile, as the arrival of the first casualties from Africa

shows, the US military is getting involved in new areas of the world and new conflicts, with potentially disastrous consequences.

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<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2012/07/keeping-america-safe-why-us-bases-in-europe-remain-vital>

And from the Right, this is a summary of a long and very thorough argument why each and every base in Europe is necessary.

The Heritage Foundation

Keeping America Safe: Why U.S. Bases in Europe Remain Vital

By [Luke Coffey](#)

Executive Summary

As part of a policy that is shrinking America's military presence in the world, the Obama Administration's recent defense cuts heavily impact the U.S. military footprint in Europe. These cuts are sending the wrong signal on America's commitment to transatlantic security and will embolden U.S. adversaries in the Euro-Atlantic region. Most importantly, the cuts will reduce the ability and flexibility of the U.S. to react to the unexpected in Eurasia and the Middle East.

A Shrinking Force Posture. On January 26, 2012 the Pentagon announced reductions of U.S. military forces in Europe as part of the latest round of defense cuts:

- Inactivation of one A-10 squadron at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, in 2013.
- Inactivation of the 603rd Air Control Squadron at Aviano Air Base, Italy, in 2013.
- Reduction of V Corps headquarters structure after deployment to Afghanistan later this year. It will not return to Europe.
- Inactivation of the 170th Brigade Combat Team (BCT) in 2013 and the 172nd BCT in 2014—a reduction of more than 8,000 soldiers.
- An additional reduction of approximately 2,500 soldiers in enabling units of the U.S. Army in Europe over the next five years.

U.S. Forces in Europe. Today, the U.S. has approximately 80,000 military personnel in 28 main operating bases in Europe, primarily in Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Spain. These forces include four BCTs, which form the backbone of U.S. ground capability in Europe.

Some believe that basing U.S. troops in Europe is a Cold War anachronism, but forward basing U.S. troops in Europe is just as important today as it was during the Cold War, albeit for different reasons. The U.S. military presence in Europe helps to achieve American policy aims in the broader Eurasia and Middle East regions. From the Arctic to the Levant, from the Maghreb to the Caucasus, Europe is at one of the most important crossroads of the world. U.S. military bases in Europe provide American leaders with increased flexibility, resilience, and options in a dangerous world. The garrisons of American service personnel in Europe are no longer the fortresses of the Cold War, but the forward operating bases of the 21st century.

America's Interests. A safe and secure Europe is in America's financial interest. Regional security means economic viability. The economies of the 27 member states of the European Union, along with the U.S. economy, account for approximately half of the global economy.

A relevant and strong NATO is also in America's interest. U.S. forces play a major role in the capacity building of key European allies. This has huge benefits for the United States. In 2010, the U.S. carried out 33 major multinational training exercises involving 50,000 troops from 40 countries in Europe. U.S. forces also help European allies to prepare for missions such as the one in Afghanistan. For example, a Georgian infantry battalion is fighting alongside U.S. Marines in Helmand Province, one of the most dangerous parts of Afghanistan. The more America trains its allies to carry out challenging missions, the more they can share the burden.

Cost-Driven Reductions. Perceived financial savings, not an empirical or strategic review of U.S. force requirements, appear to have driven the decision to reduce the U.S. military footprint in Europe. On April 8, 2011, the Obama Administration announced that it was modifying a 2004 decision to remove two of the four BCTs from Europe and would bring only one BCT back to the United States. In January 2012, the Administration reversed itself, stating that two BCTs would return from Europe. However, the Administration did not explain what had changed in the geostrategic picture of Europe or in the advice from U.S. allies since last April to prompt this reversal. This indicates that defense cuts, not strategy, are driving the decision.

The Red Herring of Perceived Financial Savings. Proponents cite savings as the main reason to reduce U.S. bases in Europe. This is clearly the rationale behind the Obama Administration's recent decision. This is dangerous, shortsighted, and based on the false assumption that the U.S. can project the same degree of power with rotational forces as it currently does with troops permanently based in Europe. Under current plans, more than 10,000 soldiers will leave Europe and be replaced by a maximum of one battalion rotating through Europe for training. Furthermore, most savings estimates exclude the cost of building new infrastructure in the U.S. for any returning units, the up-front cost of closing down facilities in Europe, the cost of rotating units between the U.S. and Europe, and the strain this would exert on the smaller army that the Obama Administration is proposing.

Time for U.S. Leadership. Instead, the White House should:

- **Put America's national security interests ahead of defense cuts.** Important decisions, such as the number of bases and the troop strength, should follow from a strategic review of U.S. interests in Europe, not the desire to slash the defense budget to find savings.

- **Show U.S. commitment to NATO and Euro–Atlantic security.** The U.S. troop presence in Europe is the most visible sign of U.S. support to NATO. As NATO transforms for the 21st century, it needs American leadership and commitment.
- **Be honest and open with European allies.** The Obama Administration needs to consult with key European allies and with the broader NATO alliance before making decisions on U.S. troop reductions in Europe.
- **Reward key U.S. allies with closer defense cooperation.** Instead of reducing the numbers of U.S. military bases in Europe, the U.S. should consider establishing new bases in Europe, especially on the periphery and with allies who have demonstrated a strong commitment to Euro–Atlantic security, such as Georgia.

Conclusion. The U.S. military presence in Europe deters American adversaries, strengthens allies, and protects U.S. interests. Whether preparing U.S. and allied troops for Afghanistan or responding to a humanitarian crisis in the region, the U.S. can project power and react to the unexpected because of its forward-based military capabilities in Europe. Reducing these capabilities will only weaken America on the world stage.

Why Does Camp Bondsteel Still Exist?

Camp Bondsteel was constructed to house American peacekeeping forces soon after Kosovo achieved independence from Serbia in 1999. It can hold up to 7000 soldiers, which makes it the largest US base in the Balkans, and employs hundreds of locals. The post exchange is the largest military shopping complex in southeastern Europe with everything found at Wal-Mart, and the U.S. military spends millions of dollars each year to ship all items from the USA. The base also has the best hospital in Kosovo, a movie theater, three gyms, two recreation buildings that have phones, computers with internet, pool tables, and video games. It has a chapel with various religious services, a huge dining facility, a library, a fire station, a military police station, an education center where college classes are offered, two cappuccino bars, a Burger King, a Taco Bell, an Anthony's Pizzeria, a barber shop, a laundry facility, a sewing shop, and a Thai massage parlor.

The Kosovo mission was successful, and there is no longer violence, except for occasional squabbles in the North that are easily handled by other NATO forces. Only 1400 American soldiers remain at Bondsteel, who are National Guardsmen rotated there for a one-year tour. [\[According to Star and Stripes,](#)

the military newspaper, there were 773 American troops there in March of this year.] Since it costs hundreds of millions of dollars a year to operate Camp Bondsteel, why does it still exist? It has little value as a regional base since it lacks an airstrip with aircraft hangars; it just has several helicopter pads. It has no port or rail facilities nor ammunition storage igloos or warehouses. It is only 955 acres with no training areas or firing ranges. It's best described as a luxurious prison camp, where American soldiers are sentenced to one-year of service, and kill time by driving around the area armed with pistols.

The USA has no vital national interests in Kosovo. The U.S. military recently established an expeditionary [base](#) in nearby Romania with a ports and support facilities in case something flares up in the region. Some have speculated that Bondsteel remains to guard a natural gas pipeline to Europe, but guard it from what? If this were a problem, soldiers from the European Union can fill that role. American leaders have expressed disappointment at limited NATO participation in American adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan. If a peacekeeping force is truly needed at Camp Bondsteel for decades, that is an ideal role for neighboring NATO nations, who can fly in reinforcements within hours. American soldiers remain there because the base generates millions of dollars in profits for American contractors, and Army Generals never close a base unless political leaders demand it. The U.S. Army should leave Camp Bondsteel immediately. If a NATO ally does not want to move in, it can be mothballed for future NATO use. American National Guardsmen are needed for peacekeeping missions within the USA. [\[Stars and Stripes notes that regular Army troops are being sent from the US so the Guardsmen can come home.\]](#)

Key US base in central Asia faces closure after Kyrgyz MPs' vote

American diplomats stay hopeful that more money for Bishkek government will keep Manas facility open

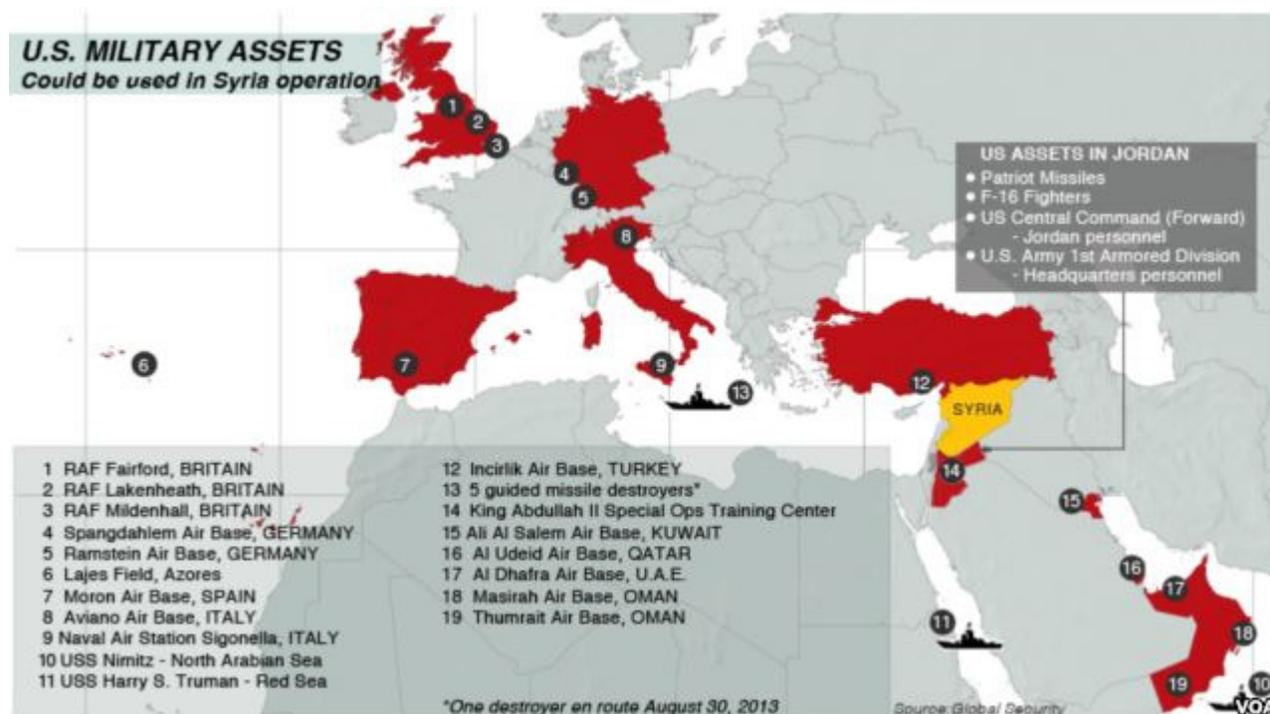
A vote in the Kyrgyz parliament last month seems to have finally sealed the fate of the American base at Manas, [Kyrgyzstan](#), with closure within the next 12 months. The transit centre, part of the international airport outside the capital Bishkek, is a key US facility in central Asia. It opened in 2011, as a staging post for flying personnel and equipment in and out of [Afghanistan](#). About 1,500 soldiers are located there at present.

Closure of the base has been a recurrent issue in Kyrgyzstan, and it has been massively exploited for financial and political ends. On several occasions former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev

threatened to end the lease, thus extracting more than triple the annual rent, from \$17.5m in 2009 to \$60m subsequently. But during the negotiations Bakiyev banked \$300m, as an advance on aid promised by Moscow in exchange for closing the base.

So for more than 10 years Bishkek has been wheeling and dealing between the US and the Russian Federation, rivals in central Asia but partners in Afghanistan.

US diplomats are still hopeful that, if Washington ups the odds again, it may yet keep Manas. The experts are in two minds. The vote by MPs makes little sense because the lease will run out on 11 July 2014 anyway. "My deep conviction is that there is no place for a military base at a civilian airport," President Almazbek Atambayev told reporters in May. Elected in 2011, Atambayev would like to convert the facility for business use.



The USAFE Band plays the Air Force Song

Michael Abrams/Stars and Stripes

LASK AIR BASE, Poland — As a frigid wind whipped the U.S. and Polish flags above the flight line at this sprawling base, two allies marked the activation Friday of the first U.S. military unit to be continuously stationed on Polish soil. Though numbering only 10 airmen, Detachment 1, 52nd Operations Group has a historic role to fill.

It signifies the United States' commitment to furthering its partnership with Poland, a former Warsaw Pact member, and promoting regional security in Europe, said senior military and government leaders from both countries who spoke at a ceremony to stand up the detachment.

“It marks the arrival of a new kind of U.S. ‘boots on the ground,’ ” said Derek Chollet, the U.S. assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs.

Calling the U.S. airmen “very welcome guests in Poland and in Lask,” Poland’s Defense Minister Tomasz Siemoniak said the unit’s creation represents “a very important and symbolic moment” between the two countries, a “cooperation that is not just about rhetoric, but about very specific, concrete steps.”

Plans are for the unit, beginning early next year, to support four annual U.S. aircraft rotations into Poland, two each of F-16 fighter jets and C-130 Hercules planes. About 250 U.S. military personnel will participate in the training exercises, which are expected to last about two weeks, military officials said.

United States adds bases in South America

by: [W. T. Whitney Jr.](#)

April 26 2012

Until recently, the United States has operated 22 U.S. military bases in Latin America, 800 worldwide. Now there are two more, one in Chile and another in Argentina, the first in either country. The purported justification is humanitarian.

U.S. diplomats and Chilean military chiefs gathered April 5 at the Fort Aguayo naval base in Concón, 90 miles northwest of Santiago, Chile's capital, to inaugurate a recently completed eight-building complex intended as a training prop for mock urban battles. The U.S. military's Southern Command provided \$460,000 for construction. Training will be consistent with U.S. military doctrine known as Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT).

Opening ceremonies took place even as U. S. and Chilean military personnel were teaching 300 junior level military and police personnel from 17 countries. The course there covers police training, convoy movements, crowd control, and helicopter tactics. Students are being prepared ostensibly to deal with natural disasters or national emergencies, specifically for United Nations "Peacekeeping Operations." Joint Chilean and U.S. military experience in post-earthquake Haiti in 2010 is cited as a model.

Chilean defense officials and U.S. Southern Command head Douglas Frazier prepared the way with an agreement signed on September 10, 2011. The accord allows U.S. troops to deploy in Chile whenever "the Chilean Army finds itself overwhelmed by some emergency situation [like] a natural disasters," or when international aid with "military components" is required, or when "national emergency scenarios [prompt] a state of exception and suspension of constitutional guarantees." .

Critics recall participation by U.S. military and intelligence services in the violent overthrow of President Salvador Allende's government in 1973, and U.S. collaboration afterwards with the Chilean military.

11 Sep 13

Work on US Base in Romania to Start Soon

Work will shortly start on installing a US missile defence system in Romania, the Defence Minister announced after a visit to the site. Romania's Defence Minister, Mircea Dusa, said work on installing US missile interceptors at the Deveselu military base in the south of the country will start next month.

Dusa said the Romanian side will be involved in enclosing the area around the base with a NATO-type fence and building a new road round the base for patrols. Romania is also to construct a sewage treatment plant and the drinking water supply.

Under a bilateral agreement signed in 2011, the US missile interceptors are to be placed at Deveselu by 2015 as the US contribution to a NATO missile defense architecture.

The work at Deveselu involves an estimated investment of \$400 million in the base. Some 200 troops will be based at the site, which can host a maximum of 500. The base will remain under the overall command of the Romanian Air Force.