

Report on the First International Conference “Against US/NATO Military Bases” November 16-18, 2018 - Dublin, Ireland



A summary

The first International Conference against US/NATO Military Bases was held on November 16-18, at the Liberty Hall in Dublin, Ireland. The conference was attended by more than 300 participants from over thirty-five countries from around the world. Speakers representing countries from all continents, including Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, United States, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Poland, United Kingdom, Ireland, Czech Republic, Israel, Palestine, Kenya, D. R. Congo, Japan and Australia, made presentations at the conference.

This conference was the first organized effort by the newly formed “Global campaign against US/NATO Military Bases”, created by over 35 peace, justice and environmental organizations and endorsed by over 700 other organizations and activists from around the world.

The participants in the Conference heard from and shared with representatives of organizations and movements struggling for the abolition of foreign military bases from around the world about the aggressions, interventions, death, destruction, and the health and environmental damages that the military bases have been causing for the whole humanity along with the threats and violation to the sovereignty of the “host” countries.

The participants in the Conference call upon the organizations and movements to work closely with each other in a coordinated manner as a part of the Global Campaign to organize and mobilize the public around the world against US/NATO military bases.



NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is set on taking new steps in its aim to bring its military forces closer and closer to Russian territory.

- NATO has around 3,174,000 military personnel. This figure is much higher if we consider it also has civilian staff and reserve forces.
- Its means of combat – almost all U.S. made – are among the most sophisticated on the planet.
- NATO defense budget is over one billion dollars per year, or 57% of the world total.
- United States troops represent 41.2% of NATO’s military personnel.
- Of the 29 member countries of the Organization, seven have increased their military personnel numbers in the last three years.
- An increased presence of NATO troops has been seen in Eastern European countries, the closer to Russia the better.
- Poland, with the eighth biggest army of NATO, has increased its military personnel by 11,000, representing 11%.
- Other countries that have increased their number of troops are Estonia, from 5,400 to 5,700, representing a 5.5% increase; Latvia, from 4,800 to 5,700, or 18.75%; Lithuania, from 7,900 to 14,000, or 77.2%; Norway, from 19,000 to 20,000, or 5.26%; Romania, from 67,000 to 70,000, or 4.47%; and Canada, from 61,000 to 73,000, or 19.67%.

Environmental and health impact

The ongoing Global Campaign against US/NATO Military Bases pays a lot of attention to the devastating environmental and health impact of these bases. Military are the largest users of fossil fuel in the world, heavily contributing to environmental degradation and climate

change. Other poisonous and polluting substances that were used on the bases, remain a health risk for both staff and local population. Groundwater contamination, air pollution, high noise levels are a result of the military activities on and around the bases.

The depleted uranium weapons issue was briefly mentioned during the presentation on 'Environmental and Health Impact of Military Bases' by Senator Grace O'Sullivan, Green Party Ireland. After this presentation ICBUW representative Ria Verjauw could inform the audience about the UN First Committee resolution on the 'effects of the use of armament and ammunitions containing depleted uranium', that was adopted last November by 140 states. Special attention was asked (as mentioned in the resolution) for the affected states that face barriers, technically and financially, to implement post-conflict remedial measures, that meet international standards for radioactive waste management .

Seven continents

According to the U.S. Department of Defense website, the U.S. military operates in more than 160 countries, on all seven continents with approximately 4.800 defence sites. An estimated 800 to 1.000 of these bases are foreign bases, with approximately 450.000 soldiers stationed overseas according to Business Insider.

U.S. foreign military bases have acted as trip-wires by making it easier for the U.S. to become involved in numerous wars. Since 1980, U.S. bases have been used at least 23 times to launch wars of choice or military interventions in 14 countries in the greater Middle East. These bases have a long track record of damaging local environments as a result of toxic leaks, accidents, weapon testing, the dumping of hazardous materials and the base construction. These are only a few of the many reasons why the 'Overseas Base Realignment & Closing Coalition' wants the Overseas U.S. Bases be closed.

Rivers, creeks and other water areas in Okinawa have been contaminated by leaks of aircraft or diesel fuel from inside the bases. In returned areas toxic substances have been detected that exceed Japanese Environmental Standards.

Okinawa Says NO! No Bases - No War Movement expresses its deepest concern: 'Bases can only bring the menace and preparation for new wars. This is the lesson Okinawa learned seventy-two years ago. From the movement to stop construction of the base at Henoko – Okinawa can build on the principle of peace for future generations.'

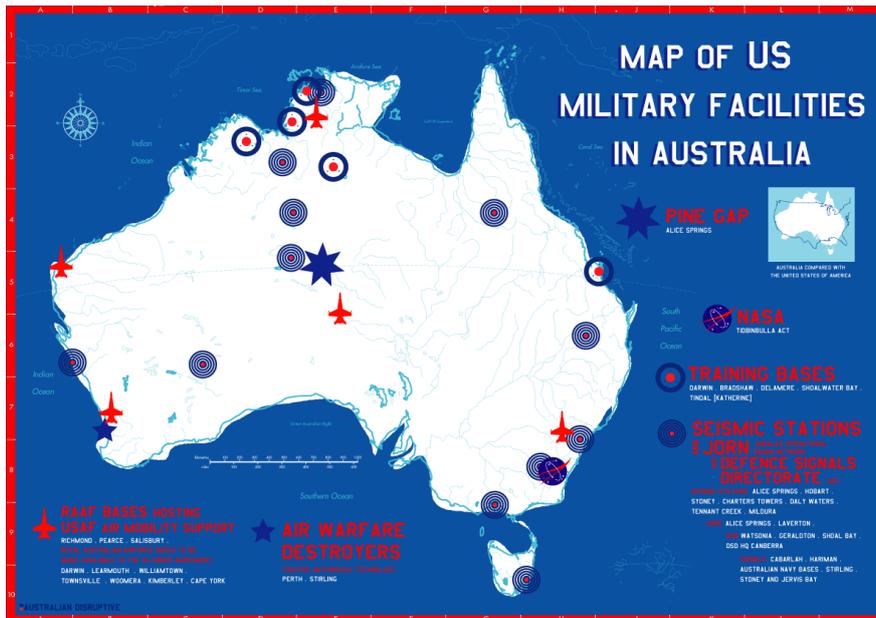


Gov. Takeshi Onaga - Okinawa's anti-U.S. base governor died of pancreatic cancer a few weeks ago..

On October 1, 2018 -The Black Alliance for Peace (BAP) has launched **U.S. Out of Africa!: Shut Down AFRICOM**, a campaign designed to end the U.S. invasion and occupation of Africa. With the U.S. and NATO attack on Libya that led to the destruction of that country, corrupt African leaders began to allow AFRICOM forces to operate in their countries and establish military-to-military relations with the U.S.. Today, those efforts have resulted in 46 various forms of U.S. bases as well as military-to-military relations between 53 out of the 54 African countries and the United States. U.S. Special Forces troops now operate in more than a dozen African nations. It costs \$267 million to fund AFRICOM in 2018, according to Vanessa Beck, BAP research team lead and Coordinating Committee member. BAP makes the following demands:

1. the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Africa,
2. the demilitarization of the African continent,
3. the closure of U.S. bases throughout the world
4. the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) must oppose AFRICOM and conduct hearings on AFRICOM's impact on the African continent.

After 50 years of the **Australian-US military alignment**, a base of the US military can be for year round occupation or for occupation of some weeks per year. The activities of the Australian military in collecting intelligence for the U.S. can make a base, which is wholly paid for and staffed by Australians, a de facto U.S. base.



There is a criss crossing of agreements about the use of Australian military facilities for U.S. purposes. The use of these bases may only be for short periods during the year but the ready provision of them for the use of the U.S. elevates them to U.S. bases.

All Australian military and some civilian airports and seaports are to be put at the disposal of the U.S. military should the need arise.

European Army

A lot of concern was expressed during the conference on the **Militarisation of Europe**. The development of a EU army is facilitated by the Lisbon Treaty, or EU Constitution which obliges Member States to support the EU's security policy 'actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity' (Art. 24.3 TEU). The Lisbon Treaty established the European Defence Agency (EDA), which identifies 'operational requirements, promoting measures to satisfy those required and ... shall participate in defining a European capabilities and armament policy...' (Art. 42.3 and 45 TEU). This body is now the focus of continual lobbying by Europe's arms manufacturers, who push cross-national integration and a common security and defence agenda. Many ask the question: is Europ a Peace Project or a War Project?

On the 29th of November a European Defence Agency (EDA) conference took place in Brussels. While in Geneva campaigners are trying to get states to stop the development of autonomous weapons during the yearly UN conference on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), 12 countries do NOT want a UN treaty on them. Unsurprisingly quite some European, thus EDA states. During the conference they looked at the potential and opportunities of "killer robots" . Until now, there is no common EU position on lethal autonomous weapons (LAWS,) which makes the EDA conference **a great lobby opportunity for the arms industry**. Given the fundamental ethical challenges the use of autonomous weapons poses, Europe should encourage a public discussion of the topic Yet, EDA aims to be closed to the public. Nevertheless The Belgian organisation 'Peace

Action' that radically advocates for a society in which conflicts are resolved without violence or threatening it, took action during the EDA conference in Brussels.

The Future

The participants of the conference agreed to recommend and to support **coordinated actions** and initiatives in the coming year 2019 which shall strengthen the global movement to expand the actions and cooperation while moving forward. As a step toward this goal, the conference supports the global mass mobilizations against NATO's 70th anniversary Summit in Washington DC, on April 4, 2019 and respective protests in the NATO member states and worldwide.

Sources:

<http://nousnatobases.org/press-communique-of-the-first-international-conference-against-us-nato-foreign-military-bases/>

Frank Keoghan, Sec. Peoples Movement Ireland presentation Dublin

Overseas Base Realignment & Closure Coalition www.OverseasBases.net

Mawo 72 newsletter www.mawovancouver.org

Okinawa Prefectural Government info www.pref.okinawa.jp

Black Alliance for Peace <https://blackallianceforpeace.com/>

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<https://www.facebook.com/pg/vredesactie/>

Global Unity Statement

We, the undersigned peace, justice and environmental organizations and individuals from around the world, endorse the following Statement of Unity and commit ourselves to working together in a broad-based international campaign to organize an International Conference Against all US/NATO Military Bases, with the goal of raising public awareness and organizing non-violent mass resistance throughout the world against all US, NATO and EU military bases, and their military missions around the world.

While we may have our differences on other issues, we all agree that US/NATO military bases are the principal instruments of imperial global domination and primary causes of devastating environmental and health impacts through wars of aggression and occupation, and that the closure of the US/NATO military bases is one of the first necessary steps toward

a just, peaceful and sustainable world. Our belief in the urgency of this necessary step is based on the following facts:

- While we are opposed to all foreign military bases, we do recognize that the United States maintains the highest number of military bases outside its territory, estimated at almost 1000 (95% of all foreign military bases in the world). Presently, there are US military bases in every Persian Gulf country except Iran.
- In addition, the United States alone has 19 Naval air carriers (and 15 more planned), each as part of a Carrier Strike Group, composed of roughly 7,500 personnel, and a carrier air wing of 65 to 70 aircraft — each of which can be considered a floating military base.
- These bases are centers of aggressive military actions, threats of political and economic expansion, sabotage and espionage, and crimes against local populations. In addition, these military bases are the largest users of fossil fuel in the world, heavily contributing to environmental degradation.
- The annual cost of these bases to US taxpayers alone is approximately \$156 billion. The cost of these military bases drains funds that can be used to fund human needs and enable our countries to provide necessary services for the people.
- NATO, as the armed wing of the United States and the European Union, is expanding further to the east to safeguard its control of energy resources and pipelines, spheres of influence and markets for the sake of big capital and the transnational corporations. The European Union, in particular, is advancing alone or/and with NATO to its further militarization with the Permanent Structural Cooperation (PESCO) and its powerful EU army.
- All governments of the member states of NATO bear direct individual responsibility for NATO's aggressive policies, and the increase of their military budgets to the 2% of the GDP while their people are suffering under severe austerity measures and the economic crisis caused by their militaristic policies.
- All of this has pushed the world toward ever-increasing increasing militarization, and to ever-deepening antagonism between the U.S. and its NATO allies, on the one hand, and the rest of the world, on the other. Stationed throughout the world, almost 1000 in number, US/NATO military bases are symbols of the ability of the United States to intrude in the lives of sovereign nations and peoples.
- Many individual national movements — for example, in Okinawa, Italy, Jeju Island Korea, Diego Garcia, Cyprus, Greece, Serbia, Spain, Ghana, Czech Republic and Germany — are demanding closure of the US/NATO bases on their territory. The base that the U.S. has illegally occupied the longest, for over a century, is Guantánamo Bay, whose existence constitutes a violation of International Law and the Cuban people's right to sovereignty. Since 1959 the government and people of Cuba have demanded that the government of the United States return the Guantánamo territory to Cuba.

The NATO states' military bases in other countries are NOT in defence of their national, or global security. They are the military expression of imperialist intrusion in the lives of sovereign countries on behalf of their dominant financial, political, and military interests of the ruling elite. Whether invited in or not by domestic interests that have agreed to be junior partners, no country, no peoples, no government, can claim to be able to make decisions totally in the interest of their people, with foreign troops on their soil representing interests antagonistic to those of their peoples.

We express our solidarity with the just causes of the peoples in their struggle against foreign military aggression, occupation and interference in their internal affairs, and their

devastating environmental and health impacts, and for a world of real peace and social and environmental justice.

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

*Adopted by the participants at the
First International Conference Against US/NATO Military Bases
November 18, 2018
Dublin, Ireland*

Ria Verjauw
