

[NO BASES]

Report on the Strategy Meetings of the International Network Against Foreign Military Bases

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2005, Brazil, 27 and 31 Januari 2005

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This report was prepared by Bal Pinguel, Herbert Docena and Wilbert van der Zeijden

Highlights

- The meetings held in Porto Alegre are a continuation of the process of building an international campaign against foreign military bases.
- Dozens of participants gathered from 18 countries, including community-based campaigners, internationally oriented organisations, and representatives from other movements and campaigns.
- Four sessions covered updates on political analyses, lessons drawn from different campaigns, strategies for the Network and specific organisational decision making processes, including a decision on the Network name, Network structure and an agreement on a process to organise a major Global Conference on military bases.
- General and local analyses showed US and other foreign military presence has grown over the past year.
- The Network prioritises in 2005 on mapping of all campaigns world wide struggling against foreign military bases
- The Network prioritises on disseminating information in several languages via the web site www.nobases.net, as well as developing further the Global Map showing all foreign bases and other foreign military presence.
- Participants expressed the wish for more coordination within the Network
- Participants agreed to joint fundraising for the planned Conference, coordination tasks and Network activities.
- The Network supports the Global Day of Action against war, occupation and militarisation on March 19/20

Background

The US has been expanding its military grip on the World over the past year. Relocation of military bases did not diminish US military presence outside its own territory in any way, nor did it relieve the burden of the people struggling against the intrusive consequences of bases they have to live with every day. If anything, the new strategy of the US to expand its network of military bases globally, showed that the US is more urgently trying to accomplish its written and stated policy of Full Spectrum Dominance, and overwhelming military force that can be deployed anywhere and at any time.

It is with a similar feeling of urgency that more than 75 campaigners against foreign military bases from all over the world joined to share analyses of political developments concerning military strategy of the US and its allies, to share experiences in campaigning against local bases, and to strategise and plan on joint campaigns, research and work within the structure of an international Network Against Foreign Military Bases.

The cycle of four sessions held in Porto Alegre must be regarded as a continuation of the process to internationalise the local struggles against specific bases that started in the Jakarta Peace Consensus, and developed into an international Network at the WSF 2004 in Mumbai, India, where a number of internationally orientated organisations and campaigns joined the local campaigns to build an extensive Network.

To read the report on the Mumbai International Anti-US Bases Conference:
<http://www.tni.org/acts/wsf4usbases.htm>

Session 1: Lessons Learned

Thursday January 27th, 12.00 – 15.00, Tent F207

The big picture

At his presentation during the World Social Forum, Roger Burbach, author of the book "Imperial Overstretch," addressed the trajectory of US foreign policy, namely that of empire-building. The drive for empire building is clearly manifest in the more than 890 military bases that the US maintains across the world. The militarisation of the US Empire has sharply intensified since September 11, 2001. The latest incident to illustrate this trend is the militarisation of humanitarian aid in the tsunami-stricken countries of Asia, particularly Indonesia.

Just as the main reason for US Empire building in 1898 was to keep the market open, the impetus for the current expansion remains economic. Specifically, empire building is used to support a US economy beset with huge trade and budget deficits and to address the fast decline of the US dollar vis-à-vis other major currencies such as the Euro. Opposition to this imperial thrust presents itself in the economic uprisings of subjugated populations. Burbach ended his presentation by urging everyone to expose and to oppose the total militarisation of the US Empire.

A more detailed picture and lessons learned

Anti-bases activists from Colombia, Cuba, Greece, Italy, Japan, Korea, Okinawa, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom and the United States shared their particular situations and lessons learned from the anti-bases struggles in their respective countries. These sharing provided the details of Burbach's big picture.

Japan

Two very important trends were noticeable, namely (a) the concentration of key US military headquarters and (b) the reinforcement of the striker ability of US bases in Japan. A key lesson from the Japanese anti-bases struggle is the need to localise anti-bases opposition, i.e., bring it to the city level.

Okinawa

A video presentation of the struggle in Henoko illustrated the success of 'people power' resistance. For over two hundred days, anti-bases activists used small canoes to prevent the boring of holes for foundation piles that will damage the area's sensitive coral reefs. The Okinawan activists are requesting international support, as they are not sure how much longer they can prevent the boring.

Cuba

The 103 years of US occupation of the military base at Guantanamo, Cuba remains a key issue in the continuing struggle for Cuban sovereignty. The issue of Guantanamo is compounded by the fact that the base has been used as a detention centre by US military for Afghans, Iraqis and other nationalities captured in the so-called 'widening war on terror.' Detainees at Guantanamo have been subjected to torture and inhuman treatment, in flagrant violation of the provisions of the Geneva Convention.

Puerto Rico

While the anti-bases movement in Vieques has succeeded in stopping the bombing in the island, the struggle against US military bases is far from over. The over sixty years of bombing that the island was subjected to has resulted in the accumulation of many toxic substances, including depleted uranium, which have proven to be extremely hazardous to the health of the community.

Viequenses are suffering from a much higher incidence of cancer and other sickness than their counterparts across Puerto Rico. This can only be attributed to the bombing practices that continually took place in the island.

The US military should clean up the land and then return it to the people from whom it was taken, not to the federal government. The Viequenses are also concerned about the swarm of private land speculators coming from the US and other places to 'buy' Vieques now that the Navy bombings have ended. Organisers also discussed the continuing presence of US military bases in other parts of Puerto Rico and the struggle for their removal.

Philippines

Just over ten years after its bases were dismantled in 1992, the US military is back on Philippine soil in violation of the Philippine Constitution. The return of the US military has been made possible through agreements like the Visiting Forces Agreement and the Logistical Support Agreement. Joint military exercises by US and Philippine troops are regularly taking place. In Mindanao, US troops conduct joint military patrols with their Philippine counterparts to hunt down 'terrorists.' Just as in the case of Vieques, the presence of toxic wastes in former military bases continue to exact a human toll as increased numbers of Filipinos die from cancer and other diseases.

Some lessons from the successful Philippine anti-bases campaign: (a) the need to plan inclusive campaigns and insure the participation of the broadest possible range of people in the struggle, and (b) the importance of having personnel who can dedicate a substantial amount of time to the organising work.

UK

While the UK does not have a high concentration of US military bases, the few that it hosts play a very significant role, particularly in relation to the National Missile Defence Plan. The mutual defence pact between the US and the UK that covers the existence of these bases has been renewed again this year.

A significant lesson from the UK experience is the need to project strong public concern for safety. This was evident during the campaign against the cruise missiles in the 1980s. There is now a growing public awareness against the role of UK bases in the National Missile Defence of the US and, as was evident in the huge turnout at antiwar mobilisations on February 15, 2003, the role of the UK bases in the war on Iraq.

Korea

There is a growing concern over the redeployment of the US military in Korea near the armistice line.

Italy

Local struggles against US military bases in Italy are becoming increasingly visible at the national level. Concerns were also expressed about the expansion of NATO bases in the country and the existence of nuclear installations at US bases in Italy.

Colombia

The US has given \$3 billion in military aid to Colombia and supports the presence of hundreds of military advisers in the country. The US military base at Manta, Ecuador is significant not only for the military campaign in Colombia, but also for the entire region.

The United States

The antiwar struggle within the US has been growing, as was evident in the large mobilisation on February 15, 2003. There are also specific US campaigns demanding for the closure of the School of the Americas and against the torture of detainees held in the US military base in Guantanamo, Cuba.

South America

Positive development across the continent includes: (a) the decision by the Ecuadorian Congress in 2004 to reject the construction of a US military base in the Galapagos; (b) the decision by the Venezuelan government not to send soldiers for training at the School of the Americas; (c) the election of a progressive government in Uruguay that is expected to follow Venezuela's example of withdrawing participation in the School of the Americas. At the same time, the development of a network of military bases on the South American continent continues. More contact with South American groups working on foreign military bases is needed.

Militarisation of Space

The deployment of weapons in space should be included in the campaign against US military bases.

Session 2: Network Strategy Session

Thursday January 27th, 15.30 – 18.30, Tent F207

In an intensive three hour session broken by Cora's famous 'fruit shake' physical exercises to keep everyone alert, participants discussed the objectives, methods, linkages, and structure of the Network.

Presentations

Proliferation of US military activity – Ana Esther Cecena

Ana Esther Cecena gave an overview of the proliferation of military activity of the US in Latin America to give a context for the discussion. As she pointed out, the presence of US military involvement is increasingly visible in Latin America. And the militarism is not limited to military bases, but includes police, military 'advisors', strongholds and US trained military personnel (School of the Americas). Plan Colombia, in its aims and strategies has effectively been expanded to cover Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela and even parts of Brazil.

The militarisation of Latin America reaches all levels, and includes posting of military personnel even in small villages, especially close to national borders. Sometimes regional military bases facilitate these local military functionaries, but in other occasions they operate autonomously. People are afraid and an atmosphere of distrust has been developed in which it becomes acceptable to answer to the call by the military to turn your neighbour in for a financial reward.

The conjuncture between military and neo-liberal economic interference by the US has fuelled socio-economic struggles throughout the continent.

The emerging military-civilian government model of the US – Walden Bello

Walden Bello gave an inspiring account of how the Bush government envisions economic prosperity through military domination. Where the Clinton administration favoured corporate driven globalisation, in order to effectively control international relations through economic power backed if necessary by military means, the Bush government works from a more direct empire-style strategy of military domination to ensure compliance to US power both military and economic.

Both inside the US and in states in which US presence is effectuated, this results in civil bureaucracy being taken over by military bureaucracy. In the Asia-Pacific region for example, the Pentagon took over many of the diplomatic functions of the US. A de facto civilian-military government by now governs the US.

The Network, in the view of Walden, should broaden its focus to cover military bases, but also fly-over agreements, access-arrangement, and other forms of military cooperation or cooptation. One of the priorities of the Network should then be to gather more information and intelligence and strengthen efforts to do research on those issues.

Organisational models for the Network – Lisa Hoyos; Kate Hudson and Petros Constantinou

Lisa Hoyos of the Our World Is Not For Sale (OWINFS) Campaign shared the experiences of her network to show difficulties and possibilities of different organisational structures. Kate Hudson and Petros Constantinou elaborated on the need and function of interlinking our Network with the Network of the anti-war movements and the Networks of anti-corporate globalisation.

After Cora's famous 'fruit-shake' break, the participants discussed a common vision for the Network, answering questions such as: What is the name of the Network, what is the desired organisational structure (Campaign or Network), what are the main objectives of the Group, and how can global cooperation on the issue strengthen local campaigns.

Organisational structure.

There was some discussion on how we should go forward as an organisation. Are we a network or a campaign was the central issue. The discussion ended in consensus that at this point 'we' are Network and that it continues to be the preferred concept to work with.

Name of the Network

Consensus was reached on the name *International Network Against Foreign Military Bases*. Since this is a rather long name, I was agreed that a working-name would be NO-BASES Network.

The wide variety of names that came up during the session reflects the sense that our struggle against foreign military bases cannot be set apart from the various connected struggles of fellow activists, organisations, networks and campaigns. Should we include domestic bases? Should we take a stance against nuclear arms? Shouldn't we also include landing rights, visiting army agreements, military advisors, training of military personnel? And what about the weaponisation of space? There was a positive attitude towards inclusion of all these point. Still, it was discussed that we should settle on the limiting name since this is the common starting point from where we all work. Foreign military bases are the common denominator in the work of the groups in the network and the groups we hope to add to our joint struggle.

To better reflect the diverse subjects the Network deals with, a list of subtitles was suggested:

- Against all domestic militarisation
- Against weapons in Space
- Against all foreign military presence
- Against Empire

Session 3: Coordination Session: “Towards an Inaugural Conference”

Thursday January 27th, 20.00 – 22.00, Praia de Belas Residence Hotel

Since the WSF Mumbai, January 2004, the plan to organise an international Conference specifically on foreign military bases has been on the agenda of the Network. Local groups proposed several dates and venues over the months. This session intended to strategise on how to move the process of selection of a suitable date and venue forward, and on the planning and logistics of organising a major international conference.

Basis for discussions was the guideline paper “*Towards an Inaugural Conference*” prepared by Herbert Docena, (see annex).

New IOC members

Wilbert van der Zeijden of the Transnational Institute

Petros Constantinou of the Campaign Genoa 2001 (Greece)

Boris Castillo of the Movimiento Cubano por la Paz y La Soberania de los Pueblos

More participants offered to become members of the IOC, but the paper on which their names were written got ‘misplaced’. Please, inform Herbert Docena or Wilbert van der Zeijden if you miss yourself or anybody else on this list.

At this stage, additional membership in the IOC will have to be discussed by the IOC as a body.

Organisational membership in the IOC

It was agreed that membership in the IOC should be organisational but with each organisation allowed more than one representative in IOC discussions. All current members of the IOC are requested to signify whether they can officially represent their organisations.

Guideline Paper: “Towards an Inaugural Conference” finalised

The guideline paper and the invitation letter to prospective local conference organisers, which have been circulated and discussed by e-mail over the past few months, were adopted and finalised with minor revisions. The guideline paper will be the central text for guiding the process and form the basis for funding applications for the inaugural conference.

Process for decision on venue and date finalised

Several proposals to host the Conference were presented and debated in this meeting. Since not all proposals were evenly developed, and since we were not certain that no other proposals could be expected to come from groups in the Network, it was decided that a final decision on date and venue for the Inaugural Conference could not yet be made. Instead, the group established an agreement on a process to come to a decision about the date and venue.

The criteria for choosing the venue and the date for the inaugural conference, as discussed in the proposal paper, were affirmed. These criteria will be the basis for deciding which among those who will express interest in being local organisers of the conference will be chosen as hosts.

The following are the next steps in the process:

- A By February: We will send out a last call to those interested in hosting the conference and who want to receive a formal letter of invitation from the IOC.

So far the following contact people have indicated their intention to bring the proposal to local/national groups for consideration:

Ecuador: c/o Andres Conteris; Alexis Ponce

Greece: c/o Petros Constantinou

Japan: c/o Tadaaki Kawata, Toshi Ogura, and Suzuyo Takasato

The list of all these groups should be centralised by the IOC before the invitations are sent.

- B All the invitations will be sent by the ad hoc interim coordinators through the contact people for each country.¹

Respecting the differing political dynamics within a country, the IOC encourages local organisations to form a broad National Organising Committee (NOC). For this reason, each of the invitation letters will include a list of all the groups that have been sent a letter in that country.

- C After discussions within the country, organisations that decide to offer to host the inaugural conference are requested to send a Letter of Interest to the IOC. Deadline is March 10, 2005. The letter of interest should include a developed organisational plan, including time, venue, logistical planning, contact details, and possibly a rough estimate of budget and financing.

- D Considering all the options, the IOC will convene (in conference calls and e-mail discussions) to decide the final venue and date of the inaugural conference following the criteria listed in the "Towards an Inaugural Conference" paper.

IOC Preparatory Meeting in Cuba

Cuban groups are organising an international conference on military bases in Havana tentatively set for November 7 to 10 and they're inviting members of the network to participate and to disseminate the invitation. They also offered to work with the network in shaping the program and to set aside time for an IOC meeting during the conference.

Given the need for more time and more focused discussions on preparations for the conference, it was agreed that there should be an IOC preparatory meeting during the Havana conference. The IOC and the Cuban groups, through Boris Castillo who is also member of the IOC, will be in close contact for planning this meeting.

Agenda for this preparatory meeting could include the following

- the mapping and outreach project to ensure participation of broad array of anti-bases groups, especially community-based ones
- the full program and schedule of the conference
- budget of conference, including policy on funding of participants
- other logistical preparations

¹ After consultation with the Japanese delegates, it was agreed to make an exception for the initiative in Okinawa, since it was felt by the Japanese that before receiving an Invitation Letter, more discussion and consultation among the Japanese groups is needed. They will inform the IOC if and when they wish to receive the Invitation Letter.

SESSION 4: Network Planning Session

Sunday January 31st, 16.30 – 18.30, Tent F207

In this final session, mainly but not exclusively IOC members came together to list all the outcomes of the sessions, to plan for the coming period, to come to a division of work, and to agree on priorities, deadlines and organisational processes.

The Web site

The web site - www.nobases.net is on line for a while now and the infrastructure is fully operational. The site as it is now offers us all the opportunity to add our own information to it. However, up till now, there is only limited information on our campaigns. The site is largely empty, except for information on Okinawa and information of the organisation For Mother Earth. We need volunteers to gather and organise information on bases and campaigns. Per region, volunteers have been appointed who will function as point person for all the information. The real job here should be with the local campaigns though. We all should take the opportunity to contribute to the site by delivering the necessary information on bases and campaigns in our country.

New volunteers are needed to help compiling and processing the information for the web site, especially regional volunteers.

We ask all involved in the network to prepare a report on your own country before the end of March. Any information is welcome: reports on bases, plans for actions; reports on detrimental impact of bases. If we have gathered enough information, we can think about adding topical sections to the web site, for example on environmental impact, cultural impact, dangers for women and prostitution caused by bases.

Also: We need more links!

The current committee for the web site is: Ben Moxham, Scott Ludlam, Herbert Docena, Cora Fabros and Andres Thomas Conteris, Ikaika Hussey (new)

The Map

A world map showing US bases and US military presence throughout the world, but also showing major natural resources and biodiversity was presented at the WSF. Thousands of posters and leaflets with the map on it were circulated during the conference and people eagerly took a free copy in the "Solidarity tent" during the first days.

The map was a great success in that sense, and also after discussing the map in the group, it was felt that the map is a great achievement. Still, there are some questions about it that need to be addressed in the 'map-committee'. Discussions range from the choice of content on the map to actual disagreements or doubt about certain bases or resources. This will not – however – take away anything of the beauty of the map itself and the effect it had during the WSF.

Three more versions of the map were proposed:

- 1 An updated and improved map like the one presented at the WSF
- 2 A map showing only bases, but all of them
- 3 A map showing the campaigns against bases

Suggestion: Look into Chalmer Johnson's claim that there are more than a thousand US bases. He lists bases that are normally not on official lists.

The current map-committee is: Kathy Ferguson, Gonzalo Berron, Ana Esther Cecena, Ben Moxham, Herbert Docena, Matthew Lawrence, Wilbert van der Zeijden (new)

Mapping and Outreach Project

A project to contact and reach out to local grassroots anti-bases activists around the world was discussed. More discussion on details of implementation is needed. This is to be one of the main agenda points in the planned preparatory meeting. (See attached proposal as of 3 February 2005).

Coordination

There was consensus on the need for several region based part-time coordinators or one full-time coordinator that will work on preparations for the conference, as well as other ongoing projects of the Network. This will be included in the funding proposal. A search process for this coordinator will be discussed and initiated once the resources for it are assured.

Fundraising

Wilbert and Herbert agreed to write a funding proposal template for the Conference and other projects prioritised by the network. There will be guidelines for fund-raising. All IOC members are expected to approach various agencies and foundations.

In order to avoid overlap, contradicting information etc, everyone is asked to report to the IOC group all fundraising plans and attempts.

Governments will not be approached for financial support of the Network, unless after approval of the Network.

Translation

Language is regarded to be the major obstacle to overcome in building our international movement. A lot of the potential information to be shared is available only in a very limited amount of languages. This hampered both communication as well as progress for the network over the past year.

Two ideas of how to deal with this formed during the discussions in Porto Alegre:

For the translation of emails and other day to day communication we will all have to try to join efforts per language to keep translation of relevant documents going. There seems to be an especially great need for translation to and from Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Italian.

For publications on behalf of the Network as a whole, or for special projects like material for the Conference, we will approach the Babels Interpretation Network to see if we can work something out with them. This will not be for free probably, so translation will have to appear as an item in the fundraising proposals forthcoming.

We ask all local groups to discuss a local solution for translation problems.

Wilbert van der Zeijden and Herbert Docena will approach the Babels Network

Day of action

In 2005, the Network will support the March 19/20 day of action against war, occupation and militarism. The Network meeting in Porto Alegre suggests that all groups try to find a way to link their struggle to the Global Day of action on March 19/20, and asks everyone to think about country specific actions against bases on that day.

Setting a final annual day of action for the network will be discussed in Cuba during the preparatory meeting there. An attempt will be made to present a proposal for an annual global

Day of Action against foreign bases after the Cuba Conference, so that we can – as a Network – come to a final decision at the Inaugural Conference.

Proposals and discussion on a Day of Action are of course still welcome on the listserv.

Bibliography

Kelly Dietz is compiling a list of suggested reading. Everybody is invited to send her (lists of) material. The final list will be shared via the web site.

Email address Kelly Dietz: kld18@cornell.edu

Upcoming Publication

Brown University, Catherine Lutz, is editing a book on issues around US bases. Chapters are due end of February. The authors will consult people from our network if more information is needed. It is unclear if people can still submit articles. More information: Andres Thomas Conteris: andres@desmilitarizacion.ne

ANEXXES

List of participants

Registered participants

Alfred Marder	US Peace Council	US
Alvaro Turahas	MNU	Brazil
Andres Thomas Conteris	Nonviolence International	US
Asako Kageyama	Japan AALA	Japan
Baibonn Sangid	ISC/ YMPN	Philippines
Bal Pinguel	AFSC/ United for Peace and Justice	US
Boris Castillo	MOVPAZ	Cuba
Camilo Perez Bustillo	AFSC/ Comite Andino de Servicios	Ecuador
Cecilia Allen		
Cheryl Brown	Social Equity Caucus of Bay Area	US
Cho Hi Yeon	KDAC	Korea
Corazon Fabros	Gathering for Peace	Philippines
Daniel Cazos	UNAM	Mexico
Deborah B. Santana	CPRDV	Puerto Rico
Dick Erstad	AFSC – Latin America and Carribean	US
Diego Azzi	Red Mov Socs	Brazil
Elza Duarte	CMP	Brazil
Fraixielle Mayer	CMP	Brazil
Futatsubashi Motonaga	Japan AALA	Japan
Gunji Hiroshi	Japan AALA	Japan
Hazuki Yasuhara	Peace Boat	Japan
Herbert Docena	Focus on the Global South	Philippines
Honorio Jimenez	Servicio Paz y Justicia del Ecuador	Ecuador
Ikaika Hussey	DMZ Hawaii/ Aloha Aina	Hawaii/US
Ismael Guadalupe	CPRDV	Puerto Rico
Ishimaru Kensaku	Peace Boat	Japan
Izzy Rhoads	Student Towards a New Democracy	US
Jhonny Jimenez	Servicio Paz y Justicia del Ecuador	Ecuador
Ji-Seon Koh	Green Korea United	Korea
Joel Suarez	CMLK	Cuba
Kate Hudson	CND/ Stop the War Coalition	UK
Lou Montgomery	Global Exchange	US
Luca Bianchini		Italy
Luis Alberto	CMP	Brazil
Marco Bianchi		Italy
Mari Kushibuchi	Peace Boat	Japan
Mikiko Ishihara	ATTAC Japan/ APA PPJ	Japan
Minoru Kitamura	Japan AALA	Japan
Mirko Moskat		Argentina
Motoo Hirayama	Grassroots movement to remove US bases from Japan and Okinawawa	Japan
Nakajima Hiroshi	Asia Pacific Peace Forum	Japan
Nicolas Mayr	FUBA	Argentina
Paola Manduca	World March of Women	Italy
Petrous Constantinou	Stop War Coalition	Greece
Pierro Bernocchi	Confederacione COBAS	Italy

Pol D'Huyvetter	For Mother Earth	Belgium
Ricardo Miranda	UNNALI	Brazil
Ronald Garcia Fogurtz	COMPACT	Nicaragua/ US
Rosani Mayer	Grassroots movement to remove US bases from Japan and Okinawawa	Brazil
Shinobu Kominatu	individual	Japan
Suzuki Kazue	Okinawa Women Act against Military Violence	Japan
Suzuyo Takazato	Japan Peace Committee	Japan
Tadaaki Kawata	Japan Peace Committee	Japan
Takehisa Hirayama	APA Japan	Japan
Toshi Ogura	Japan AALA	Japan
Toyoo Fujishiro	Transnational Institute	Japan
Wilbert van der Zeijden	Independent journalist	Netherlands
Wim Klerkx	CPAPD	Netherlands
You Ningge	Mouvement dela Paix France	China
Yves Jean Gallas		France

Pictures





“Towards an inaugural Conference” Guideline paper for the preparation of the Inaugural Conference

BACKGROUND

The United States maintains a military presence in 150 countries and territories around the world.² In some cases, such a presence could be joint military exercises, training, or combat involving a few hundred troops. In others, it could be permanent military bases housing thousands of US military personnel. According to the US Department of Defense, there are at least 725 US military bases and installations scattered around the world, with estimates including ‘unofficial’ bases, especially throughout the Middle East, putting the number closer to 1,000.³ In addition to this are the NATO military bases which house US, along with other European troops. Following the end of the Cold War and in the aftermath of 9-11, new bases have been built or planned in various countries, notably in Iraq as well as in Central Asia, in Africa, in Southeast Asia, and in Latin America among others. Other countries, such as Russia and France, also maintain a military presence outside their countries, although far smaller than the US.

This global network of military installations and facilities is a crucial means by which the United States, along with its allies, seeks to achieve its economic, political and geo-strategic objectives at the expense of the sovereignty and welfare of people around the world. The US military is the coercive arm of the corporate-led globalisation agenda being driven forward by the US. As Thomas Friedman famously pointed out, “McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the U.S. Air Force F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps...” The US bases where these F-15s can land and military forces are housed are therefore on the frontline of the globalisation process.

According to the Pentagon, the US' global military reach is necessary to “impose the will of the United States and its coalition partners on any adversaries”.⁴ US military forces in Central Asia, in the Gulf of Guinea, in Colombia, and all over the Persian Gulf, serve to protect US access to the oil resources of these regions. The US military bases in Japan and South Korea, are critical fronts for containing China and North Korea and for securing geo-strategic influence in the region. In the war on Iraq, the invading troops came from or stopped over a number of bases, including those in Diego Garcia, Kuwait, and Germany, among others. The United States has been documented to have engaged in over 200 military interventions abroad⁵ – many of them made easier by the proximity of US forces to potential flashpoints.

These military interventions in the form of open warfare, coup d'états, or other covert operations have exacted a tremendous toll on target populations. Thousands of innocent civilians paid the price in Indonesia, Chile, and Iraq; democracy was repressed dictatorship supported in Iran, Brazil, and the Philippines; and inequality and dependency has been entrenched throughout most of the global South. At the same time, the means by which these interventions are conducted – through the presence of the US military around the world – has come at a tremendous price for the countries and communities hosting US military facilities and troops.

From Japan to Kyrgyzstan, the presence of US bases has curtailed a country's democracy and sovereignty and imposed serious environmental, health, and social costs. Governments that have decided to host the US military effectively lock in their security and foreign policy with that of the United States, making their people hostage to the ramifications of decisions made in Washington. “Overseas bases,” pointed out a US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, “all but

² US Department of Defense Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, “Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths by Regional Area and by Country,” March 31 2004

³ David R. Francis, “US Bases in Iraq: Sticky Politics, Hard Math” Christian Science Monitor, September 30, 2004

⁴ Joint Vision 2020: US Joint Chiefs of Staff (May 2000)

⁵ According to the Congressional Research Service, as cited in Minxin Pei, “Lessons of the Past” *Foreign Policy* July-August 2003.

guarantee some involvement by the United States in the internal affairs of the host government.” With the US using access to its market or billions of dollars in foreign aid or military assistance as bargaining chips to secure basing rights, any government’s policies on trade or defence are constrained.

This way, large groups of people are indirectly affected as economic choices and opportunities are tied up with basing or access arrangements. More directly affected are those evicted from their lands to make way for the construction of US military installations or those living next to US bases who have to live with the noise, pollution, danger and strained social dynamics. More often than not, this military presence is rooted in racism and persistent colonial relationships, with indigenous and historically marginalised communities bearing the brunt of hosting military bases. All populations hosting bases continue to pay the price for these installations even after they are abandoned. Land and waters left with unexploded ordinance and contaminated by military operations, training and other activities are not only often inaccessible for local use – preventing the full exercise of sovereignty – but continue to poison and endanger nearby communities. If US foreign military bases are the most evident manifestations of imperialism today, as commentators have pointed out, then it is these people who are paying the direct price for its maintenance.

RATIONALE

Opposition to foreign military presence has a long and rich history. Wherever there’s a military base, there is usually a movement resisting its encroachment on sovereignty and democracy. Around the world, communities, social movements, women’s organisations, political parties, environmental groups, intellectuals and religious groups among others, have been campaigning in various ways through the years against foreign military presence, militarisation, and military interventions. In some cases, such efforts have taken the form of a specific single-issue campaign. In others, the campaign has been part of broader movements for independence and social justice.

For these campaigns, the issue of foreign military presence has served as a rallying and unifying cause that has driven grassroots organising, educational campaigns, and political mobilisation. In a number of places, notably in the Philippines or in Puerto Rico, popular movements against foreign bases succeeded in adding to the social pressure that led to the termination of basing agreements with the United States. Even then, here, campaigns to force the US to clean up the toxic legacy of their vacated military bases continue. In many other places, such as Korea or Japan, the campaigns have been going on for generations. In others, such as Ecuador or Bulgaria, the struggle has only just begun.

So far, however, most of these movements and campaigns have been mostly local or national in character – even if the reach of foreign military presence itself is global. While often very vibrant and dynamic, these movements have often been isolated and disparate. Given the similar tactics the US uses to guarantee its military presence, as well as the similar experiences of those hosting them, much can be gained from greater and deeper linkages among local and national campaigns and movements across the globe. Local groups around the world can learn and benefit from sharing information, experiences, and strategies with each other.

The realisation that one is not alone in the struggle against foreign bases is profoundly empowering and motivating. Globally coordinated actions and campaigns can also highlight the reach and scale of the resistance to foreign military presence around the world. With the rising militarisation and resort to the use of force around the world, there is now an urgent and compelling need to establish and strengthen an international network of campaigners, organisations, and movements working with a special and strategic focus on foreign military presence and ultimately, working towards a lasting and just peace..

TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST FOREIGN MILITARY PRESENCE

The “war against terror” and the invasion of Iraq have added urgency to forming an international network. In an international anti-war meeting in Jakarta in May 2003, just a few weeks after the start of the invasion of Iraq, a global campaign against military bases was proposed as a priority action of the global anti-war and justice and solidarity movements.

Since then, this campaign has been building. A mailing list (nousbases@lists.riseup.net) devoted to discussions on foreign bases has been created and is now the site of a vibrant exchange of information and coordination. The list-serve now has around 300 members from 48 countries, including a diverse group of campaigners, organisers and researchers,. A website is also being set up and is envisioned to be an organisational and communication tool for the network; a site for posting the latest basing plans and campaign news and announcements. A project to comprehensively map the locations and forms of foreign military installations around the world is currently underway.

Efforts to organise and expand the network are also underway, with workshops and seminars on foreign military bases now a regular presence in various Social Forums such as the European Social Forum in Paris in 2003 and in London in 2004 and the Americas Social Forum in Ecuador in August 2004. One of the biggest gatherings of anti-bases activists to date, however, has been the workshops on military bases held at the World Social Forum in India in January 2004. 125 participants, including many long-time and new anti-bases campaigners, from 34 countries, began mapping out a coordinated global campaign against US bases. Due to limited time, however, the participants were only able to identify the next steps in moving the campaign forward.

OBJECTIVES OF AN INAUGURAL CONFERENCE

Thus, the basic requirements for an effective network on foreign military bases are now present. What remains to be achieved is to:

strengthen and complete the network by reaching out to all organisations working against foreign military presence, but not yet within the network because of barriers of language, geography, etc; formally establishing the network by reaching a consensus on this network’s basis of unity and common objectives;

clarify and sharpen understanding of the network’s role in global and local struggles; including developing ways to draw on and strengthen relationships with existing international activist movements and networks (e.g. anti-war, anti-nukes and anti-corporate globalisation)

develop how the broader network can support local and national campaigns against military bases;

come up with priorities and a common plan of action for concrete campaigns and projects; and reach agreements on organisational arrangements for facilitating communication, coordination, and decision-making.

The best way to accomplish these necessary steps is to convene an international inaugural conference on foreign military presence.

Specifically, this conference would have as concrete outputs:

- a founding declaration or statement of unity
- a common plan of action
- a fund-raising proposal (?)
- an organisational arrangement for coordination

While working towards these outputs, conference participants would share information and ideas and develop stronger personal contacts with each other. Such networking is both a key output in itself and a requirement for strong and effective coordination.

PARTICIPANTS

The goal will be to have at least one representative from each country or territory hosting foreign military forces. The organisers will target individuals and organisations who are working locally on the issue and are part of a constituency. Most of those who are expected to attend are already members of the existing list-serve but special effort will be given to looking for bases campaigners who are not yet integrated into the social forum process or other international anti-war networks, particularly where barriers of language or geography have prevented organisations, particularly grassroots ones, from being involved. Around 75 to 100 participants are expected.

VENUE AND DATE

The organisers will conduct consultations to determine the most appropriate timing and venue for the conference. Some issues and options to be considered are:

the conference could be held in parallel to an international high-level and high-profile meeting discussing the issue of foreign military presence, militarisation, or military interventions. (e.g. a NATO meeting, G-8 meeting, a UN Summit, etc.)

the meeting could be held around a historic date (e.g. August 6 -- 60th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing, September 19 (?) – the day the Philippine Senate voted to kick out US bases in 1989, etc.)

the venue or the country where the conference would be held should be the site of long and active struggle against foreign military presence. In addition, or alternatively, the conference should boost local campaign efforts against military bases.

there should be a local host committee comprising a broad range of organisations who will welcome the holding of the conference in their country and who are committed to work together to co-organise the event.

if possible, the meeting should be held in conjunction with another event which the participants will also be attending, to minimise travel expenses.

for practical reasons, the venue should be held where costs are low and visa requirements are not a significant obstacle.

ORGANISATIONAL PLAN

An open call will be sent out for organisations who want to become part of an international organising committee (IOC) that will become the primary coordinating and decision-making body in organising the conference. This committee is expected to have 10-15 members. Geographical representation should be assured.

Once convened, the committee will finalise the project proposal, conduct consultations, and finalise the date and venue. The committee will then send a formal invitation to groups and organisations in the country where the conference will be held in order to form a national organising committee. This national organising committee will then be integrated into the IOC.

The IOC will then be responsible for

- designing the program of the conference
- fund-raising
- mobilising and reaching out to participants

- logistical arrangements
- publicity
- drafting of declaration and common plan of action

Sub-committees or groups may be constituted later depending on the need.

ORGANISING TIMELINE

Assuming the conference will be held in the first half of 2006

APRIL	convening the international working group
MAY	final decision on date and venue invitation to convene national organising committee
JUNE	IOC meeting during the WSF
JULY	start of fund-raising efforts preliminary invitations out
AUGUST	
SEPTEMBER	final invitations out; Send out invitations for working papers
OCTOBER	IOC meeting in venue (?)
NOVEMBER	
DECEMBER	finalising of draft declaration finalising of draft action plan discussion paper finalising of draft coordination discussion paper
2006	inaugural conference

DRAFT PROGRAM

Pre-conference day: IOC meeting; Registration

Day 1: Opening; Introductions; Educational Sessions

Possible topics:

- continuity and change in imperialism and militarisation
- the changing forms of military presence
- learning from Successes: How Local Movements Have Used International Solidarity;
- the history of anti-bases campaigning: lessons and reflections
- the anti-bases campaign in the context of the global peace and justice movement
- addressing Environmental and Social Impacts of Military Bases
- growing the Movement: Popular Education Strategies

Day 2: Morning – Discussion on declaration; Afternoon – Planning

Day 3: Morning – Planning; Afternoon – Organisational structure/ coordination; Closing

Post-conference day: Optional educational trip; IOC meeting

“Mapping and Outreach Project proposal” Project Proposal

Rationale:

A basic precondition for an effective international network against foreign military bases and militarisation is the involvement of the broadest possible range of anti-bases activists, organisations, and social movements around the world. These activists and organisations, especially the grassroots and community-based ones, should be the most active members of this international network – the driving force behind it. An international network should not just be another layer of international NGOs or organisations that are far removed from the needs and concerns of local and national organisations. Yet many grass roots organisation across the globe opposing the presence of US military bases are often divided from each other whether by language, access to resources and technology.

The first step to getting these organisations involved is to identify them. This mapping project will seek to compile a comprehensive database or directory of anti-bases individuals and organisations around the world. The process of gathering information and getting in touch with these activists and organisations will also be used to orientate them about efforts to form an international network against foreign military bases and getting them involved in the effort.

This project should be seen in itself as basic step in establishing the network. It is part of the preparations for a planned inaugural international conference of the network.

Process:

The International Organising Committee (IOC) that had been formed to organise the inaugural conference will constitute itself as the working group that will oversee and execute this mapping project.

The world will be divided into the following regions:

Latin America and the Caribbean

North America

Western Europe

Eastern Europe

Northeast Asia

Southeast Asia

South Asia

West and Central Asia (Middle East)

Australia and the Pacific

Africa

Regional working groups will be formed for each of these regions with the following responsibilities:

- identify all the anti-bases organisations in each of these regions
- contact and set up meetings with these organisations
- jointly conduct orientation meetings or consultations on the international network with local anti-bases activists
- invite the organisations to be part of the international network and to participate in the inaugural conference
- compile the required information about them
- produce a regional directory of anti-bases activists

The following are some of the information that will be sought.

- name of organisation/individual
- description of organisation
- membership
- contacts
- strategies: whether into researching, monitoring, education, campaigning, lobbying, electoral politics, etc.
- focus of anti-bases organising/campaigning: whether on environment, social issues, issues of sovereignty and democracy, etc.
- political demands

Stages:

- Finalising and refining the proposal
- Fundraising
- Formation of regional working groups, coordinating group
- Visit to communities and meeting with organisations
- Compilation of data
- Production of directory
- Sending of invitation for inaugural conference

Measurable Output:

- A directory of anti-bases activists, organisations, and networks around the world
- Participation of the broadest range of anti-bases activists in the inaugural conference of the international network against foreign military bases

For more information, questions, comments and suggestions, mail:

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