

## The US military base network and contemporary colonialism: Power projection, resistance and the quest for operational unilateralism

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### A B S T R A C T

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This article explores the contemporary global network of US military bases. This paper examines how the geography of this network is shaped not only by military objectives but also by resistance from allied governments and communities adjacent to bases. Using examples from Guam, Puerto Rico, Okinawa and other locales this paper examines how local resistances to US bases have caused the Department of Defense to increasingly rely on non-sovereign islands as sites for bases. These sites, military strategists believe, will enable the military to train without hindrance and to operate without the need for consultation with allies. These colonies, however, are also sites where military activities are actively resisted. The resulting base network is thus shaped not only by global military priorities, but also by an increasingly globalized network of local social movements resisting militarization.

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The contemporary global geography of the United States' military base network is shaped by actors operating at a variety of scales both within, and in opposition to, the US Department of Defense. While US strategic planners strive to develop and maintain a military network with the ability to project force anywhere in the globe, local protest movements and national governments have been effective at altering this imagined global geography of military action. In response, the American military has come to rely more heavily on colonial overseas territories for projecting military power. This move to colonial spaces has occurred not only to escape escalating pressures against military operations and training, but also to enhance the military's ability to operate unilaterally without the consent of allied governments. In this paper I examine how military objectives and in-place resistances to militarization counteract each other to produce the shape of the contemporary American military network which, of course, has profound implications for global geopolitics.

As theorists studying militarism have pointed out, a global military apparatus only functions when a whole host of things fall into place at particular local sites (Enloe, 1990; Lutz, 2006; Shigematsu & Camacho, 2010; Woodward, 2005). An effective military is more than just soldiers and guns it is also the command and control centers, the overseas bases, the clerical offices, the strategic think-tanks and the armament production facilities (Woodward, 2004). The spaces of its operation are therefore not

limited to battlefields, but are spread across the world and across societies. Because of this, a military only functions globally when it can effectively function at a variety of other scales.

In this paper I analyze the shifting global strategies of American political and military planners, but I also examine how other states and local social movements alter this geography through resistance. To structure my analysis I utilize a theoretical framework that draws upon, and aims to contribute to, three themes: geopolitics, studies of militarization, and activist strategies. There is no shortage of contemporary critical analyses of American militarism by authors such as the late Johnson (2004, 2007), Bacevich (2003), Glassman (2005), Harvey (2003), and Hentz (2004), but scholars working in the realm of feminist geopolitics have crucially added a call for not only a critical, but also a situated account of geopolitics (Bernazolli & Flint, 2010; Brown & Staeheli, 2003; Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Enloe, 1990, 2007; Hyndman, 2004; Lutz, 2006, 2009; Marston, 2000; O'Tuathail, 1996; Seager, 1993; Shigematsu & Camacho, 2010; Vine, 2004). Following these theorists I argue that it is not possible to understand the global geography of the US military without looking more closely at the local sites where the global apparatus touches the ground. Furthermore, to understand the shape of the military network scholars must listen not only to the voices of government strategists, but also to the voices of people outside the military institutions that shape military operations through enabling or resisting its functioning in particular places.

In this paper I examine not just the shape of the global military network, but how it is shaped through actions and effects that cross scales. As researchers studying economic, political and environmental

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processes have pointed out, it is imperative for scholars examining a process at a particular scale to understand causes emanating from other scales (Flint, 2003; Glassman, 2001; Herod & Wright, 2002; Lutz, 2009; McCarthy, 2005; Marston, 2000; Shigematsu & Camacho, 2010). I take this position in my analysis by examining the way the global military network both affects, and is affected by, activities at other scales.

In the first section of the paper I describe how global-scale imaginings of security threats result in a particular abstract global architecture for the base network. The actual operations of these bases, however, have consequences for the bodies, communities and environments adjacent to them which lead to local opposition that jeopardizes their operation. In the following part of the paper I address how these impacts produce community and national resistances that have successfully limited the military's ability to operate in place. Next I turn to how the military has employed spatial strategies to overcome this resistance by moving their operations to other sites where they expect to enjoy a greater freedom to operate such as colonized American overseas territories. These moves, however, do not end this spatial competition between the military and oppositional social movements. Instead, anti-militarization groups have begun organizing globally to counter them.

In my analysis I focus much of my attention on militarized islands with colonial histories (and presents) such as Puerto Rico, Guam, Okinawa, and Hawaii. While these islands share some common processes of colonialism there are also some differences. Of these islands only Guam is still recognized by the United Nations as a true colony, while Puerto Rico has a quasi-colonial commonwealth status with the US. Hawaii and Okinawa, on the other hand, are formerly independent nations that were colonized and absorbed into larger imperial states (Japan and United States). There are two reasons for focusing on these colonized islands. First, these islands are increasingly important nodes in the military network where operations are being moved. Secondly, the role of these sites has been understudied and underappreciated in analyses of American geopolitics.

As a hegemonic power, America's influence has often been portrayed as stemming from funneling wealth from "independent" states through indirect means of coercion and exploitive trade practices more than from direct colonial control (Burman, 2007; Harvey, 2003). While this is accurate, the focus on these deterritorialized methods overlooks the fact that contemporary imperialism is very dependent on a long history of colonial expansion across the North American continent and strategically placed external military colonies whose political statuses look a lot like the colonies of older forms of domination. Of course the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq do show that direct colonialism is very much alive and well and should be spoken of in the present tense (Gregory, 2004). This focus on contemporary colonialism, however, needs to be expanded beyond just the "new" American colonialisms of Iraq and Afghanistan to include some rarely analyzed, old, continual, banal colonialisms that have maintained the framework of American power (Bevacqua, 2010; Herman, 2008). It should be emphasized that the colonialisms on these islands hosting military facilities are very enduring and consistent. Changes in American political administrations, including to the current Obama administration, have had very little effect on either military planning or questions of political status. Despite these continuities, I will show in the later sections of this paper how these colonized nodes of American military power are not only sites for the reproduction of military practices, but also sites where they are resisted and changed.

### The global geography of US military bases

The world-wide stretch of American military power arises from particular places and is deployed unevenly across space (Enloe,

2007). It has become taken as a given in studies of economics, geography and cultural studies to point out that processes commonly referred to as "globalization" operate in this manner (Harvey, 1990; Massey, 1994). Military power functions in much the same way. The global network of American military power is controlled from key locales (White House, Pentagon, regional command centers, bases) and affects different places around the world in different ways. Military bases and training areas are only two key nodes in this network, but they are excellent sites to examine the places where the apparatus of military power touches the ground (Woodward, 2005).

Although there are some excellent analyses of global military operations (see for instance Gerson & Birchard, 1991; Johnson, 2004, 2007; Lutz, 2009; Sandars, 2000) the base network is an ever-shifting mosaic that is difficult to pin down precisely. For instance, a seemingly simple question like "How many foreign US military bases are there in 2011?" has answers ranging from 34 to 737, to 850, to well over a thousand depending on a host of factors. These factors include how one defines "military", how one defines a "base", how one defines "foreign", and how one defines whether a base is a "US" base (Critchlow, 2005; Johnson, 2004, 2007). For example, some communications and spy bases are not directly under the Department of Defense (DOD) and are not technically "military". Some "bases" do not permanently house many US troops, but are essentially empty until needed. Some US bases are hard to define as "foreign" because they have been placed in parts of the world with current or recent colonial statuses like Guam, Hawaii, the Marshall Islands, the British Indian Ocean Territory, and Puerto Rico. Lastly, some foreign bases used by US military personnel are not officially "US" bases because they are technically under the jurisdiction of the host nation or are run by private security contractors that support US military objectives.

Because of these multiple difficulties of definition it is hard to show a detailed list or map of the US base network. Despite this it is possible to trace its general shifting geography. Intellectual frameworks such as the Project for a New American Century's 2000 *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces, and Resources For A New Century* and government documents such as the Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy in 2004, the 2005 US Global Defense Posture Review and the Quadrennial Defense Reviews (the latest in DOD, 2010), give some detailed strategies for the ways in which the network of US bases should be organized.

Without glossing over the important regional differences in the kind of attention the American government directs at different parts of the world – such as the "containment" of China, providing access to petroleum in Central Asia, and maintaining the surveillance of areas with large Muslim populations – it suffices to say that there are very few places left on the globe (or in its orbit) that are deemed to be outside the interest and vision of American power. Consequently, the network of bases is global as well. Increasingly it is designed to be a permanent infrastructure that allows military power to be shifted with post-Fordist efficiency from some sites in the network to other places "just-in-time" and according to perceived crises that challenge US hegemony. For instance in 2004 both former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Deputy Undersecretary Ryan Henry discussed the new base network side-by-side with a refusal to pinpoint geographically where they thought threats to the United States might be located. Henry only commented that the US "strove to base forces in locations that supported flexibility and speed of response to *anywhere* in an unpredictable environment" (Critchlow, 2005, 8 emphasis added).

The DOD's geographical imagination is one where presumably the whole world is an "unpredictable environment" and the US military must be able to act everywhere. Bases outside the

continental United States are no longer for defending the regions or territory of the ally where the base is located. Instead, bases are now conceptualized as jumping off points for offensive operations or counterattacks. The 2004 Global Defense Posture Review was quite explicit about this fundamental shift. The report states, “*The United States can no longer expect our forward forces to fight in place; rather, for most forward-stationed U.S. forces, their purpose is to undertake operations on short notice by deploying rapidly into near or distant theaters*” (p. 6, emphasis in original). Based on this view of the world the DOD envisions constructing a flexible network of existing bases that can swell or contract based on shifting threats. Ideally, the nodes of the network (bases) would not be created or decommissioned through time. Instead the network would be stable and the amount of personnel and material at any given base would respond to the geography of the threat.

The general tripartite architecture of this emerging network consists of Main Operating Bases (MOBs), Forward Operating Sites (FOSs), and Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs). Main Operating Bases, as the name implies, would permanently have large numbers of personnel, solid infrastructure, and training areas. These bases are scattered around the globe to give ample general coverage of the major regions of the world.

For other operations, however, the US must have access to bases closer to the sites of conflict. Forward Operating Sites (FOSs) have small rotating staffs and pre-positioned materials that are ready to increase in size if necessary. Sometimes these are referred to as “light-switch operations” because large numbers of troops can arrive and all they have to do it “turn on the lights” to start operating (Garamone, 2005). Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo, which hosts thousands of American military personnel, is an example of an expanded FOS.

Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs) are facilities with very small numbers of personnel (or none) that can be made usable on short notice. Also, these are often not technically “American” facilities which gives them political cover in localities and countries where there may be resistance to an American presence. Commentator Robert Kaplan described CSLs this way:

Often the key role in managing a CSL is played by a private contractor. In Asia, for example, the private contractor is usually a retired American noncom, either Navy or Air Force, quite likely a maintenance expert, who is living in, say, Thailand or the Philippines, speaks the language fluently, perhaps has married locally after a divorce back home, and is generally much liked by the locals. He rents his facilities at the base from the host-country military, and then charges a fee to the U.S. Air Force pilots transiting the base. Officially he is in business for himself, which the host country likes because it can then claim it is not really working with the American military. Of course no one, including the local media, believes this. But the very fact that a relationship with the U.S. armed forces is indirect rather than direct eases tensions. (Kaplan, 2005)

This is not only Kaplan’s view of CSLs. Former Undersecretary of Defense Henry (2006) also approvingly quotes the passage of Kaplan at length in his analysis of the contemporary global base network.

Within this three-level structure of bases the decision of which bases are to be enlarged and which are shrunk depends, ideally, on the whim of the Pentagon and White House according to American grand political-economic strategies and their geopolitical vision de jure. There is, however, another important factor that shapes the US base network: resistance. This resistance comes in the form of popular protests against these bases as well as in the form of political restrictions the US military feels it may be subjected to in foreign territory. These locales hosting US bases are places that the global projection of military power

“touches the ground” and are therefore critical sites for both enabling it and resisting it.

### The geographies of resistance to bases

“They try to trick us saying, ‘this is for your security.’ But experience has shown clearly enough that the U.S. military presence, far from protecting the people, only violates people’s sovereignty, destroys local people’s cultural and economic life, brings on violence against women and children, and disaster to the environment.”

–The Asia-Pacific Consultation of Movements against U.S. Military Bases, Tokyo (November 25–28, 2006)

The planning of a globe-spanning three-tiered network of American military facilities does run into some problems when it goes from being imagined to being implemented. In this section I look at resistance to the unfettered global operation of the US military from two of angles. First, using the examples of Vieques, Puerto Rico and Okinawa, Japan I demonstrate how local social movements have successfully blocked or shifted military operations at US forward bases. Second, I cover some of the constraints the US military has been put under by host governments.

To understand opposition to US bases it is important to see bases not only just as sites for the projection of military force but also the zones of encounter between the US military and the people and environments that host them. They are the sites of a number of local, everyday violences (Enloe, 1990; Lutz, 2002). Military bases have a number of effects on the communities that host them. These can differ based on the type of base, the size of the base, how active the operations at the base have been, and the level of integration of the base and its personnel into the surrounding community (Gillem, 2007). Despite these variations there are a number of commonalities that can be seen in the expanding literature of the effects of militarization on host communities (Davis, Hayes-Conroy, & Jones, 2007; Enloe, 1990; Havlick, 2007; Inoue 2004; Krupar, 2007; Lutz, 2001, 2009; McCaffrey, 2002; Santana, 2006; Seager, 1993; Warf, 1997; Woodward, 2004). Some of these could be seen as positive or negative depending on one’s position in the host community while some are viewed almost universally as negative impacts. They range from economic and cultural changes within a community to environmental contamination, and higher levels of sexual harassment and assault.

While the various groups and movements resisting the inequities and violence around US bases may have diverse foci such as targeting issues of environmental contamination, sexual violence, or access to resources and land, they share a common concern for the everyday effects of the militarization of their places. In contrast to some organizations in the broader peace movement (Herb, 2005) these groups are different in that they are born out of resistance to in-place violences to the bodies of activists, their families and their communities. People living near bases may oppose a variety of types of military operations, but one recurring theme across the globe has been local opposition to military training.

Maintaining large numbers of deployed military personnel means having the associated combat training areas. It is often these military training activities, and the large land-holdings required for them, that lead to sustained resistance movements against the presence of US bases in these “forward” places such as Japan, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and elsewhere. While training overseas has been a continual thorny issue for the military, strategic policy documents and proclamations by active duty commanders consistently declare that training areas, and the activities that go on in them, are absolutely essential parts of any large base (DOD, 2004;

Gillem, 2007; Matthews, 2010). The military's insistence for conducting live-fire training has led to lawsuits and some of the largest outpourings of anti-base activism. Training at areas such as Makua Valley in Hawaii and Farallon de Medinilla in the Northern Marianas has been blocked by environmental lawsuits while other sites around the world have been lightning rods for protest.

The case of Vieques, Puerto Rico is illustrative of the kinds of protest military training can cause (see Fig. 1). Vieques was the site of major military bombing exercises and maneuvers from the 1940s to 2003. The US used the island to train for many of the military engagements it has conducted since World War Two including the wars in Korea, Vietnam, Panama, and Iraq. The US military took over two-thirds of the island in the 1940s and forced the island's population of 10,000 people to languish sandwiched between an extensively used military bombing range on the east end and a large ammunition storage facility on the west.

Vieques is a celebrated example in activist circles not only because of a well organized non-violent struggle against militarization, but also because they were successful. In Vieques, local groups fused together to demand an end to the military use of the island after the death of a local man from an off-target bomb (McCaffrey, 2002; Santana, 2006). The movement involved large-scale civil disobedience where people occupied the bombing range to stop its use as well as the staging of public protests on issues of health, environmental contamination and the return of land expropriated by the military. Eventually the activists were able to get broad support from people and groups both inside and outside Puerto Rico that transcended partisan political divides. A wide coalition of church groups, women's groups and health advocates participated in the protests and civil disobedience that were firmly committed to the demilitarization of the island, but not necessarily against the US military as an institution. While explicitly anti-imperialist *independentistas* were active in the struggle on Vieques others who could hardly be called "anti-military" or "anti-US" such as the Puerto Rican pro-commonwealth party (PPD) and Republican New York governor George Pataki also called for the departure of the Navy from Vieques (McCaffrey, 2002).

Due to the protests the US military closed the bombing range and ammunition storage facility in 2003. This victory, however, was somewhat incomplete as the land was given to the US Fish and Wildlife Service and it is very doubtful the US military will significantly clean up the contamination that has resulted from close to 60 years of bombardment (Baver, 2006; Davis et al., 2007; Santana, 2006). Still, the activists on Vieques have shown that a protest campaign focusing on stopping military activities can force the US military to leave a place they wanted to stay. As a result of the closure of the testing range on Vieques the nearby Roosevelt Roads

military base on the main island of Puerto Rico subsequently closed as well.

Other forward bases have also been sites of protest against not only training exercises, but also other everyday operations of the military. Okinawa is a particularly salient example because it is a site, like Vieques, that demonstrates that the geography of the global network is produced not only according to the desires of Pentagon planners, but also through resistance grounded in particular localities. Okinawa is a site of multiple US bases and suffers from a political status referred to as "double-colonization" (Akibayashi & Takazato, 2009). The formerly independent Ryukyu Kingdom, of which Okinawa was a part, was taken over by the Japanese government in 1879. Then at the close of World War Two Okinawa was invaded by the Americans in a ferociously bloody battle and was then administered by the US until 1972. Since 1972 the island has been not only under the jurisdiction of the Japanese government but also hosts 21,000 US military personnel and numerous bases. There have been consistent calls from Okinawan citizens to close the bases, particularly the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) which is located in the heart of the densely populated Ginowan City (Johnson, 2007; Ueunten, 2010). Like members of other "host" communities, Okinawans have had to deal with the increased noise, pollution and crime near the bases. Of particular concern have been repeated high profile instances of sexual violence. The group Okinawan Women Act Against Military Violence reports that there were 4784 serious crimes committed by US service personnel *that were reported* in Okinawa between 1972 and 1995. To further exacerbate problems around many overseas bases these crimes go unpunished due to "Visiting Forces Agreements" shielding US service members from being tried in local courts (Johnson, 2007). Like in Vieques, these protests intensified when the US military presence led to tragic violent consequences in the mid-1990s (Yamazaki, 2004). In Okinawa these came in 1994 when a military helicopter crashed into a university campus and in 1995 when three American servicemen abducted and gang raped a 12-year-old girl (and evaded local prosecution due to the Status of Forces Agreement).

In Okinawa the protest movements have only been partially successful. None of the major bases have closed, but the Japanese and American governments began to negotiate a deal in 1996 (which was signed in 2006) to close Futenma Air Station and to move 8000 Marines and 9000 of their dependents to Guam (see Fig. 2). This deal, however, required that the Japanese government pay for more than half of the move to Guam and also required them to build a replacement air base in Nago, a rural part of Okinawa. This new base, which was to be built partially over coral reefs and Dugong habitat, led to new protests including civil disobedience actions where activists locked themselves down to scaffolding being erected in the ocean.

In 2009 the saga of the US bases in Okinawa intensified. For the first time since 1955 the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan lost hold of national power to a coalition led by the Democratic Party of Japan and Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama. During the campaign Hatoyama made promises that the base at Futenma should not be relocated in Nago, but rather relocated off the island of Okinawa altogether. This brought a swift reaction from the Obama administration where US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and President Obama himself pressed the new leadership in Tokyo to stick by the agreement signed in 2006 and keep the base on Okinawa. Hatoyama objected that he represented the opposition party and that he was under no obligation to respect and agreement between his predecessor and the American government. In May of 2010, however, Hatoyama publicly capitulated and put forward a plan that allowed the US to build a base in Nago, Okinawa (with a modified runway architecture). This

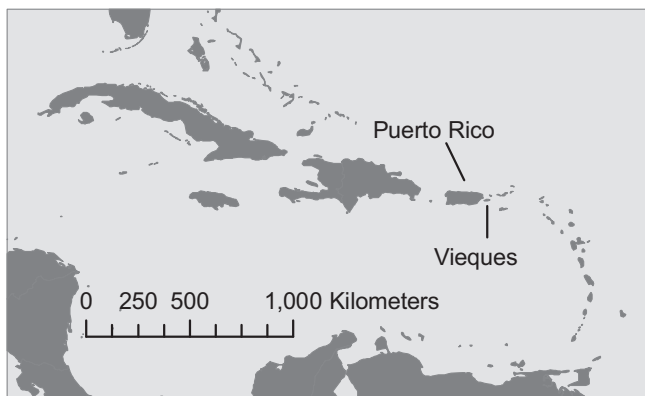


Fig. 1. Map of Caribbean.

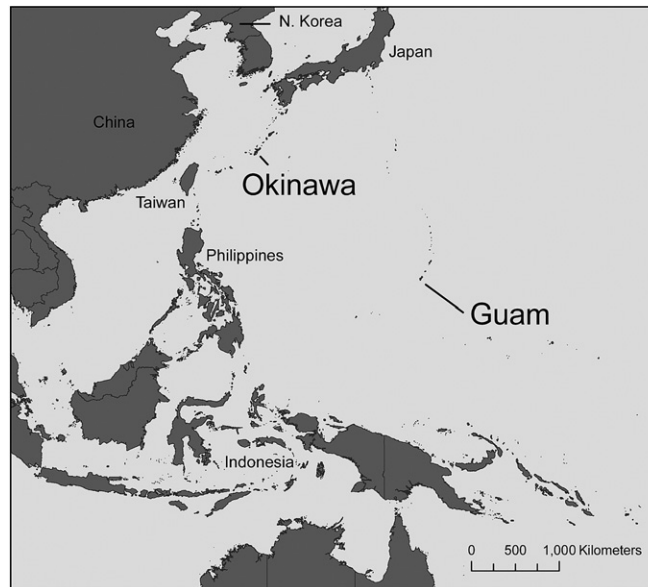


Fig. 2. Location of Guam and Okinawa.

occurred despite his earlier promises, the steadfast opposition to the plan of other parties in his government's coalition, the opposition of the governor of Okinawa and the mayor of Nago (who was elected in large part due to his opposition to the new US base). After his capitulation Hatoyama was forced to resign as prime minister. Despite this setback for local opposition groups, 8000 US Marines are still slated to be removed from the island due to popular pressure.

Both the Vieques and Okinawa cases demonstrate that popular and political resistance has an impact on US forward basing. While these are both examples of social movement activism arising from localities and scaling-up to limit military operations, sovereign nation-states have also handcuffed American freedom of military action. This has occurred in almost every region of the world. Since the Marcos regime was dethroned in the Philippines, American bases are constitutionally banned from being placed on their soil (though they currently host large contingents of American military personnel that officially "rotate" through). In 2009 Ecuador closed the US base on their coast at Manta after Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa playfully, but illustratively, postured that the US could keep its base if they let Ecuador have one in Miami. After the first Gulf War US bases were withdrawn from Saudi Arabia due to political pressure, and in the second Gulf War US military planners had to contend with Turkey's refusal to allow the US access to Northern Iraq through its territory.

This resistance not only comes from the states hosting US bases but also from neighboring countries and competing military powers. The recent threats of base closures in Central Asia demonstrate that not only do host governments have the ability to alter the US base posture in a country, but also Russia, China, Iran and other regional powers have the ability to pressure a host government to refuse the US access as well. All of these forms of resistance to the US military's global freedom of operation have affected the network, but the Department of Defense is not only cognizant of the problem, but also they are taking measures to address it.

#### Military reactions: the quest for operational unilateralism

The Department of Defense is keenly aware that the structure of their base network can be affected by opposition in the locales and

countries in which they want to operate. There have been particular concerns around this issue in the Asia-Pacific Region. Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld once commented that, "the presence and activities of our forces grate on local populations and have become an irritant for host governments". He claimed that, "prudent U.S. relocations could reduce frictions with local populations, especially in Okinawa and South Korea" (Critchlow, 2005, 10). When deciding how to restructure the network of US bases the 2004 Defense Posture Review stated:

[W]e gave consideration to the irritants that our overseas military facilities can cause, particularly where such facilities are near host-nation population centers and valued land holdings. Wherever possible we looked to make posture changes that lessen the real and perceived burdens of such situations. Ultimately, these changes should help us to strengthen our alliances and improve our ability to interact with the host nation. P. 7

In terms of frictions caused by military training, however, the military's reaction was not focused on how to minimize the environmental and social impacts of training, but rather to figure out how to best keep dissent from further interfering with their desired training activities. The military's view after losing the ability to train in Vieques is exemplified on the Navy's website:

Supporters of the military immediately criticized the Bush Administration's new plan [to end training on Vieques] on the grounds that it could lead to reduced readiness of U.S. naval forces and complicate the U.S. ability to maintain access to overseas training ranges in places such as Okinawa and South Korea. How might the Bush Administration's new plan affect the U.S. ability to maintain access to overseas training ranges where there is local opposition to U.S. operations, such as Okinawa or South Korea? Does the plan set a bad precedent for managing disputes over ranges, and will it encourage other local populations to step up their opposition to U.S. training activities? <http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/vieques.htm>

After the loss of Vieques, and training stoppages at Makua Valley and Farallon de Medinilla, the military began doing systematic studies aimed at keeping training areas open. In 2003 the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 required the DOD to

make regular reports to keep training ranges functional. The two most salient terms that come up in these reports are “sustainability” and “encroachment”. In military training parlance the “sustainability” of bombing and firing ranges refers to the military’s ability to sustain training activities in the face of opposition. Meanwhile “encroachment” is defined this way:

The Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Installations and Environment) stated that encroachment is any pressure, both internal and external to test and training ranges, that affects the ability to carry out live testing and training. Encroachment caused by external factors is an increasing threat to military readiness. DoD recognized that encroachment issues were important after local community concerns threatened to interrupt, interrupted, and/or terminated the testing and training activities at ranges on the island of Vieques in Puerto Rico, at Massachusetts Military Reservation, at Makua Valley Military Reservation in Hawaii, and at Farallon de Medinilla in the Pacific Ocean (DOD, 2002, p.1).

“Encroachment” therefore is anything – physical, legislative, activist – that stands in the way of “sustaining” live-fire training. The military hired a consulting firm, SRS Technologies, to develop a “Sustainable Ranges Outreach Plan”. A key finding of the study is that the military should change the name of their communication strategy. The report states,

DoD uses the word “outreach” when dealing with local communities and writing draft policy; however, local communities and stakeholders consider outreach as one-directional communication. Using the term “community involvement” would convey to the public a positive willingness by DoD to have two-way communication. (DOD, 2002, p.11).

Despite DOD attempts at “community involvement”, people next to bases continue to oppose training activities that take place in their surroundings. The military’s insistence that training *must* be carried out in proximity to forward bases has continued to exacerbate activist and political resistance. This, in turn, continues to restrict the Pentagon’s ability to build new bases and even maintain the ones they currently operate.

Of course there are also other issues around forward bases besides just ones dealing with training. While the military seems to have taken a somewhat oblivious position in regards to dealing with opposition to its training activities, there has been recognition from within the DOD that the overall impact of their bases in foreign countries is threatening the effective operation (and in some cases the very existence) of the bases. There is therefore a desire by the DOD to locate US troops and bases, as Donald Rumsfeld put it in 2005, “Where they are wanted, welcomed, and needed” (Critchlow, 2005, 10). This attitude is echoed in more recent publications put out during the Obama administration as well as such as the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review.

Where, though, are these places? As mentioned in the previous section, many US bases and training areas have been removed from strategic locations from the Philippines to Puerto Rico while protests, political upheaval and foreign court rulings currently threatened the status of bases in locations from Kyrgyzstan to Diego Garcia. Furthermore, the US military is concerned that even in places where its bases are fairly secure their freedom to operate could be hampered by restrictions on training and host nation sensitivities to the types of deployments made from, or through, their territories. Lincoln Bloomfield, former US Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs, put it this way:

Senior DoD officials emphasized the “usability” of American forces stationed abroad, referring to political constraints that

host countries might place on them in a crisis. ...Governments take an appropriate interest in how their territory is used and accord special political significance to any scenario in which another country’s forces launch combat operations directly from their territory. There is an implied complicity on the part of the host nation in the military objectives of the forces’ mission. Host governments—democracies above all—can be expected to require prior consent...Host countries that would impose nettlesome constraints on the out-of-country deployability of U.S. forces should not expect to be significant hubs in the new American defense posture (2006, p. 56, 61).

In short, the military is reacting to constraints put on their operations by searching for base sites that not only give global coverage, but also give the ability for *operational unilateralism*. In contrast to political unilateralism, a doctrine under the George W. Bush administration of waging war without the political agreement of the UN or significant allies, operational unilateralism is the ability of the military to strike quickly without any need for consultation with anyone – even the government of the territory from which they are launching the strike. The 2004 Global Posture Review explained this concept this way:

An important facet of our global posture is our system of legal arrangements with allies and partners. With some countries we will need new legal arrangements, and with others we may need to update existing arrangements. While mindful of sovereignty and country-specific concerns, legal arrangements that enable our global posture should maximize our ability to: Conduct training in host nations; deploy U.S. forces wherever and whenever they are needed; and support deployed forces around the world. (p.15, emphasis added).

This position is a logical consequence of the way US planners have seen the world in the last decade. Threats are not just everywhere, but happen at any time. Forward military units must not only be globally deployable, but also able to be used rapidly. It is argued that in the contemporary security environment of rapid terrorist attacks and “ticking bombs” consultation with allies (not to mention the US congress) is a *passé* time-consuming nicety that does not fit in with the speed at which lethal military force needs to be deployed (Hannah, 2006).

While this quest for operational unilateralism arose concurrently with the Bush Doctrine of political unilateralism, it is still very much in operation today. While the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review done under the Obama administration has extensive rhetoric that clearly tries to distance the current administration from Bush era policies surrounding the Iraq invasion, it also does not mince words about maintaining the military’s ability to act unilaterally. The report states, “America’s Armed Forces will retain the ability to act unilaterally and decisively when appropriate, maintaining joint, all-domain military capabilities that can prevail across a wide range of contingencies” (p. 10). While this continued quest for operational unilateralism has serious ramifications for both US constitutional law as well as international law (see for instance Johnson, 2007), it also affects the geography of the base network. As the above quotes suggest, the military is looking for base sites with pre-arranged permissions to train and deploy without negotiation. The problem is that other governments are becoming more reluctant to do this. Why would an allied government want to host a forward base that, by the Pentagon’s own admission, is no longer about defending the country in which it is placed, but is instead a site for training exercises (that raise the ire of people living adjacent to it) and a site for the projection of force (that the allied government is not going to be consulted about)? For

instance, as popular protest forced the US to agree to reductions in their military presence in Okinawa the US approached Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines and Australia to host new bases and all four declined (Weaver, 2010).

### Contemporary colonies as platforms for operational unilateralism: the case of Guam

So where do you put bases that enable global reach and enable operational unilateralism? In short: colonies. Carnes Lords, editor of the Naval War College Press, put it this way,

Very recent experience—notably, the Turkish denial of access to U.S. ground forces in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the closing of the American air base at Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan in 2005 after the United States criticized its government's repressive behavior—shows clearly enough that there will always be uncertainties in the conditions attaching to the use of American forces stationed or operating on allied or friendly territory. It is therefore essential to consider other alternatives. There are three such alternatives: basing in the continental United States (CONUS), in sovereign U.S. territories overseas, and at sea. An alternative that has not been discussed as much as it deserves is the use for military purposes of sovereign U.S. territory overseas. There are two prime candidates here, Hawaii and Guam. (In essentially the same category is the small British-owned island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean) (Lords, 2006, p.5).

The US military, it seems, has found a panacea for many of the problems it is facing with building a global network of bases unfettered by the constraints of allied governments and people: the overseas sites of Hawaii, Diego Garcia and Guam. The military's intensification of their use of US overseas territories, however, comes with its own set of problems. First, as mentioned, there have been plenty of effective popular protests that have impacted military activities in overseas territories such as Puerto Rico (Vieques), Hawaii (Kaho'olawe, Makua Valley), as well as Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands (Farallon de Medinilla). Furthermore, the imposition of bases on these islands comes with a painfully obvious political irony. The US is using territories denied basic rights of freedom and self-determination to use military force that, ostensibly, is being used to promote these same values. Though these places are not very well known by the American public, militarized islands like Guam have some of the most restrictive colonial statuses on the planet (Aldrich & Connell, 1998). Increasingly, these islands are becoming fallbacks where the US is moving bases (and their associated bombing and training areas) which are not tolerated elsewhere in the world.

In this section I focus on Guam because it is currently slated to experience a massive increase in militarization over the coming decade (see Fig. 2). Guam, an island of 209 square miles and an estimated 160,000 people, has been a colony for close to 500 years. Visited by Magellan, the island was under Spanish rule from the 1500s until it was acquired, along with Puerto Rico and the Philippines, by the United States after the Spanish-American War (Rogers, 1994). During World War Two the island was taken over by the Japanese until a successful American reinvasion in July of 1944. After the war, 55% of the island's land was taken over by the US military and a third of the island is still currently under military control today (Herman, 2008). The taking of land was not the only setback to the Chamorro people. Population transfer into the American colony since the end of World War Two, and the departure of Chamorro youths leaving behind the island's bleak economic opportunities (many, not coincidentally, join the US military) has been responsible for making the Chamorro a minority

in their own homeland (Bevacqua, 2010). The indigenous Chamorro people made up over 90% of the population of Guam until after World War Two, but as of the year 2000 less than half of the population was listed as native (Herman, 2008).

In Guam and the surrounding areas of Micronesia there has long been a mutually reinforcing relationship between military use and lack of sovereignty (Herman, 2008). The Micronesian islands in the western Pacific were won as prizes by the United States in wars: Guam from Spain and most of the rest of Micronesia from Japan after World War Two (this includes the quasi-colonies of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, The Marshall Islands, The Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau). There are some differences between the political arrangements each area of Micronesia has with the US, but they share the fact that residents of these islands can travel to the US and can be in the US armed forces, but they have no voting representatives in the United States government. While economic colonialism has been less intensive in these islands than in some other parts of the globe, Guam has turned into a major US military hub and the rest of Micronesia has become a region plagued by the legacy of nuclear weapons testing and is currently an area of "strategic denial" where other militaries are denied access and the US maintains an official monopoly on military force. The main reason why these areas have been denied full independence is their strategic value and the fact that they contain US bases (Petersen, 1998). In turn, these islands have been the sites of intensive military activities that would be hard to conduct in the continental US and increasingly difficult in other countries with political sovereignty.

This denial of rights to people in Micronesia, the erasure of their social histories, and the portrayal of their islands by military planners as "anchored aircraft carriers" lacking any social worth beyond locations for power projection and weapons testing, has been remarkably consistent from World War Two to the present. Henry Kissinger famously remarked about the region in the wake of American nuclear weapons testing in the 1950s, "There are only 90,000 people out there. Who gives a damn?" (Johnson, 1980). Today, politicians and military commanders continue to discuss the region as if the region's inhabitants did not exist, or at least lack the full agency of other people. Guam's political status as a UN recognized colony is rarely questioned (and of course, neither is the military's complicity in creating and maintaining that colonial status). Dick Cheney's former Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs, Stephan Yates, summed up the position best when he said of the military's ability to use Guam, "When God gives you a gift, it's good to use it" (Weaver, 2010). Of course, Guam did not become a military colony because God gave it to them, but rather through a long process of concerted colonization of which many branches of the US government participated over the past century (Bevacqua, 2010; Herman, 2008; Lutz, 2010; Rogers, 1994).

Still, US military planners speak of Guam as a site of freedom: freedom to train and operate unilaterally in the Asia-Pacific region. Its status as an American colony is appreciated even though the language used to describe it is carefully worded to avoid the word "colony". It is usually just referred to it as "sovereign US territory" with no discussion of the problematic nature of how that has come to be, or the way that status is maintained. As US Navy Lieutenant Commander David Zielinski noted, "When asked in an interview about the advantages of Guam as a base, former Commanding Officer of Naval Base Guam, Captain Robert A. McNaught reiterated the argument that the island's primary advantage lied in its political status. By being sovereign US territory, Captain McNaught indicated that US forces could operate unconstrained from the political requirements of host countries, either in training or during actual conflicts" (2009, p.3). Other commentators also praise Guam as a site for docile cooperation with military objectives:

America needs a secure airfield from which it cannot be denied access; political area denial could allow China to push American forces out of the region before or during a crisis. Guam has the advantage of being American territory, reducing the political difficulty of building and operating assets there. Furthermore, Guam, with its pro-military population and 7.7 percent unemployment, is unlikely to offer local opposition to increased military infrastructure. (Erickson & Mikolay, 2006, p. 22)

When asked why the 8000 Marines from Okinawa were going to be moved to Guam US Marine Lt. General John Goodman said “Why Guam? The answer is because I can’t go to the Philippines. If our alliance with the Philippines would allow us to go there, I would move 8,000 Marines right now to Manila Bay” (quoted in Cole, 2007). In this comment is the “present absence” of what Guam is capable of deciding. The Philippines can say “no”, but colonized Guam has no such option.

As of 2011, the planned increase in military operations in Guam is extensive. Guam is not only slated to receive the 8000 Marines from Okinawa as well as 9000 of their dependants, but also a new wharf to host an aircraft carrier, a center for a new Global Hawk UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) program, a missile defense site, and numerous training areas (some requiring the acquisition of more land). The military also plans to use other islands in the nearby Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas for bombing and training. Assistant Secretary of the Navy, B.J. Penn, called the increased militarization of Guam the “largest project that the Department of Defense has ever attempted” (Natividad & Kirk, 2010). The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) conducted by the military predicts the island of Guam, which has a population of close to 160,000, will have over 79,000 additional residents by 2014 as a result of the build-up. The predicted consequences range from increased pollution and crime, to overburdened local utilities and schools, to the intentional destruction of almost 80 acres of live coral reef in Apra Harbor. Even though the US EPA gave the military’s EIS its lowest possible rating and said that the plans “should not proceed as proposed” the military is still planning to go ahead with most of its plans, but with a longer time-table for completion.

Despite the military’s intention to move the build-up of Guam along at the fastest possible speed, and military planners’ descriptions of Guam as an ideal location for operational unilateralism, there is resistance on Guam – particularly from the native Chamorro population (Aguon 2005, 2006). Many claim that the loss of access to

traditional land, sexual harassment, assault, noise, and environmental contamination that they have been experiencing on their militarized island are things likely to worsen with military expansion (see Fig. 3). When early plans for the Guam build-up were being discussed in 2006 there was not a lot of vocal opposition from residents of Guam, but a protest movement against the build-up surged into prominence during the environmental impact statement process in 2009.

Like other military sites, a particularly contentious issue has been training. On Guam the military has insisted that it needs to increase its already substantial footprint to conduct live-fire training on the island for Marines. The military EIS calls for the taking of land in an area called Pagat on the northeast coast of Guam. The land contains many Chamorro historical sites and there has been resistance from community groups, the Guam legislature and the local historic preservation office. Despite the fact that this desire for new land takings has galvanized opposition to the entire build-up, the military maintains it is absolutely necessary. The Pacific Division Director for the Marine Corps Bryan H. Wood is quoted as saying, “The most important thing for the Marine Corps is we do have to have individual firing ranges somewhere here on Guam in order to train the Marines. We simply can’t do it anywhere else – it would ruin our operations here”. (Matthews, 2010) The idea of training elsewhere, or changing the way training is done to have less impact, is not seriously discussed. Rather than view local opposition as having some legitimacy, the local resistance ends up being treated as “encroachment”.

#### The mobile military and activist solidarity networks

Residents on Guam, who see that activist successes on Okinawa, Vieques, Hawaiï and elsewhere have shifted the problems of militarization onto their island, are not only trying to block the plans of the DOD through the building of broad local coalitions, but also they are looking for solidarity from groups in other places. They are indeed getting that support through visits by Okinawan activists and others. While activists see this one-to-one form of solidarity as important for sharing tactics, strategies, and support, there has been a realization among activist groups in many parts of the world that victories in a particular locale against a US base have merely resulted in the geographic shifting of the network to other places. This ability of the Pentagon to reorganize their network regionally and globally in response to local and national resistances has caused anti-militarization groups to reformulate the scales that they operate on.



Fig. 3. Protest on Guam.



At the 2004 World Social Forum in Mumbai activists from militarized places around the world formed a new organization called simply “No Bases” that is dedicated to the abolishment of all foreign military bases in the world. This network put together its own global conference in March of 2007 in Quito, Ecuador where hundreds of activists gathered to formalize the organization. The stated goal of the No Bases network is summed up in their declaration, “Realizing that Empire wants to rule globally, we have come together to pool our strength on a global scale to protect people’s lives and wellbeing against the U.S. military system” (posted on <http://www.no-bases.net/>). The group started an email listserv to connect activist groups from around the world and to share news of military projects and operations as well as share stories of resistance. Like other contemporary activist organizations striving to link spatially scattered struggles and to raise awareness of those struggles to a larger audience, the organization also started a website (Fluri, 2006). The website has been used to connect groups and present their struggles to a wider audience. Also, it has been a way of discursively framing their local struggles as similar to each other, and as in need of world-wide solidarity.

While this global organization has been of some direct utility to activists on Guam it, like the US military’s concentration of forces on Guam, is also significant as a harbinger of the endgame of the multi-scale contest between the US military and anti-militarization social movements. After a string of restrictions and setbacks for the US military’s ability to maintain its envisioned global network (and its operational unilateralism) in the Asia-Pacific region, the US has fallen back to its last viable option: colonial Guam. As history shows, however, the US military can have its operations limited anywhere. Just because there have not yet been massive protests on Guam, there is no particular reason to say that they cannot happen. There was a time when it was difficult to imagine that protest movements in Vieques, Hawaii and Okinawa would become effective at altering military operations. Guam is not categorically different from these other places in this respect. If activists on Guam do reach a critical mass and are able to block (or reverse) military expansion on Guam where else in the region is the military to go? In the absence of a substantial shift in the politics and public opinion in the region the answer is: nowhere.

Despite this, the way the build-up on Guam is being rhetorically framed, and materially manifested, demonstrates that the military appears to be committed to repeating the mistakes they have made in Okinawa, South Korea, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and other sites. This is not only bad news for the environment and society on Guam, but also for the US military. Pronouncements about Guam being “sovereign US territory” with a “pro-military population” that is a “gift from god” reveal not only a bankrupt geographic imaginary and a lazy ignorance of Guam’s colonial history, but also a shocking blindness to what has made the move to Guam necessary in the first place. The DODs imperial attitude toward the land and people of Guam has made conditions ripe for effective civil opposition to its operations. If history is any indicator all it will take to threaten the DODs increased footprint in Guam is one tragic incident caused by training, operations, or an off-base Marine.

On the other side of the (barbwire-topped) fence, anti-militarization activists see quite clearly that the DOD’s move to Guam represents the military being backed into corner. The victory in Vieques and the pressure that has been brought to bear in Okinawa and South Korea have given people in the anti-bases social movements confidence and given them perspective on the multi-scale contest they are engaged in with the Department of Defense. They have seen the way that local victories cause a shift in the military network that moves the burden to other communities and so they have then changed their tactics to include more global scale organizing and solidarity networks.

## Conclusions

“National security policy cannot be made in towns and villages”  
- Lt. Gen. Keith J. Stalder, commander of Marine forces in the Pacific, on election of anti-military base mayor in Nago, Okinawa. Washington Post January 25, 2010

The analysis of these struggles over military bases demonstrates the interdependence of global and local scale processes. As scholars of feminist geopolitics have pointed out, researchers cannot analyze global geopolitics without analyzing what is occurring at other scales. Not only do the global designs of a male-dominated, masculine and patriarchal institution like the military have impacts on the spaces of everyday life but also they are *enabled* by the practices in those spaces (Enloe, 1990). Given this, these spaces are also sites of resistance to those practices. Activists in communities adjacent to bases have long challenged the idea that the security of their bodies, homes and communities should be sacrificed for the cause of “national security”. In so doing they have not only questioned the scale at which security ought to be considered but also how security might best be promoted. The activists’ insistence that the security of their bodies, homes, communities, nations, and world should occur through demilitarization undermines the military/masculinist notion that security rests on the projection of violence toward others.

This emphasis on the effects of local processes contradicts Marine Lt. General Keith Stadler comment that “National security policy cannot be made in towns and villages”. The history and geography of the American base network shows this quote to be dead wrong. Stadler’s quote demonstrates wishful thinking rather than an assessment of any geopolitical reality. The military’s dependence on local factors for effective global dominance means that national security policy is, at least in part, made in towns and villages from Okinawa to Guam – whether the Department of Defense likes it or not. The DOD’s aspiration for a globe-spanning network of forward bases from which they can enjoy operational unilateralism is impossible to attain without amiable towns and villages. The noxiousness of many of the military’s activities at these bases, however, means that the best they can do is look for acquiescent places. As the activities around these bases go on, however, they rarely stay acquiescent.

In this analysis of the shifting US military base network I have endeavored to examine the impacts and resistances going on in these “towns and villages” so as to better understand the US military’s global network. As geographers have long been aware, acting at the global or local scale is not an either/or choice: acting in the world at any scale has ramifications at a variety of scales. Increasingly, local anti-militarization groups have recognized this and have started to more formally engage in activism at a variety of other scales including the global. At the global conference against military bases in 2007 activists put forward the view that the global imperial present is held together by violences committed in (colonized) place. That violence may be wielded globally, but it is produced at local sites. Furthermore, its operation relies on particular sites being legitimately seen as landscapes of emptiness or sacrifice. So when people resist these interpretations of place and claim them as places of life it not only makes everyday life more tolerable but also has repercussions at other scales. The military has currently been able to use its ability to spatially shift its activities to maintain its domination. Activists, however, are attempting to incorporate a global vision into their movements so that local victories do not become someone else’s loss; rather they become the beginning of the empire’s unraveling.

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