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**"Lily Pad" Bases and New Cold Wars:
Ansbach's Place in the Global Transformation of US Military Bases**

Guten morgen. Thank you very much for coming today. I am sorry not to be able to speak with you in German. Although my grandparents taught me what *besserwisser* means, as well as a few other words that I can't repeat in public, I guess they didn't teach me to be much of a *besserwisser* when it comes to the whole of the German language.

My limited German aside, I feel lucky to be here just a few days after I visited the US military base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. I had the chance to conduct research at Guantánamo for a book I'm now finishing about US military bases outside the United States, which is what first brought me to Ansbach two summers ago. There are many strange and sad things about Gitmo that I could share, but one strange fact is that it was actually easier to visit the base there than any of the kasernes in Ansbach or in many other parts of the world.

While I haven't had any luck visiting the bases in Ansbach, I do feel very lucky to have a chance to return to the city. Even though my first visit was short, I felt an immediate connection with the wonderful, dedicated, passionate people I met here. And so, I very much want to thank all the conference organizers, and especially Boris André Meyer, for the honor of speaking here

today. Thank you also to all the lovely people who made me feel so welcome in Ansbach during my first visit. I truly feel lucky to have the opportunity to return to your beautiful town.

Before I begin, let me just say that I have already learned so much from the conference, and I look forward to learning more throughout the rest of the day. You are the real experts on the military bases in Ansbach and the US military presence here, so I'm very excited to hear your reactions to what I will present. I look forward to your questions, your comments, and your corrections of my work—and I'm sure there will be corrections to be made. Please come talk with me after the end of this session or anytime today or feel free to email me. Your feedback and thoughts and experiences will be very helpful for my research and for what I will write in my book about Ansbach. Now, let me turn to some of what I learned from my first visit:

“I feel surrounded by military bases here,” said a man from Obereichenbach when I visited Ansbach in the summer of 2010. He described living less than 500 meters from the fence surrounding the Katterbach Kaserne and awaking at night with the sound of helicopters in his ears. “You can't sleep,” he said. And it's not just the noise. The vibration of the helicopters' blades makes his kitchen plates rattle. Whoomp, whoomp, whoomp, whoomp. “[It] sounds like a truck in the garden,” he continued. “The problems are so heavy that many people [in Obereichenbach] have thought of selling their homes.... Outside the fences,” he said, “is sometimes like inside the base.”

Since World War II, US military bases have been such a powerful presence in and around Ansbach that the distinction between inside the base and outside the base has often been unclear. Another man, who was born six kilometers from Katterbach, remembers growing up and seeing the shining light of the control tower at the Katterbach airfield. The light was so bright, he told me, it was “like the sun or moon.” It was just “part of life,” he said. “Like the sun or moon.”

US military bases have become a normal and taken-for-granted part of life for people living near them, not just in Ansbach, but across Germany and in many parts of the world. Just like the sun or moon.

In Germany and around the world, however, US military bases are undergoing historic changes. Hundreds of major bases, like those in Würzburg and Bamberg, that have been an accepted part of life for decades, have already closed or will soon close for return to the German government. Thousands of GIs and their family members have already returned to the United States or will soon leave Germany. While changes like these have been going on since the end of the Cold War, the transformation taking place since 2004 represents a profound shift in the life of US overseas military bases and how the United States engages with the world. As a recent announcement by President Barack Obama's administration indicated, the United States is in the middle of shifting many of its bases and troops eastward, out of Western Europe and into Eastern Europe and East Asia.

And yet, despite these changes, US bases in Ansbach are growing. As I'm sure almost everyone here is aware, the US military has named Ansbach as one of eight "enduring installations" or "enduring communities" that will remain in Europe after the current reductions. The US presence in Ansbach, as in all of Germany, has endured for almost seventy years. It appears that US military leaders are planning on the US presence enduring for decades to come.

I will start by briefly explaining how the United States came to have so many bases outside its own territory—more than 1,000 in total. Next, I will discuss the history of US bases in Germany and in Ansbach. I will then describe how the US military has been transforming its global collection of bases since the end of the Cold War. While there has been great attention to the reduction in bases and troops in Germany, the United States has quietly expanded the scope

and size of its collection of bases around the world in recent years. Next, I will identify some of the forces shaping this new US military strategy and some of its dangers. I will conclude by showing how people in Ansbach are part of a system of war that stretches from my hometown, Washington, DC, to the battlefields of Afghanistan and far beyond.

The History of the US Global Base Network

Well over half a century since the end of World War II, the United States still has almost 200 military installations in Germany, according to US military statistics. Globally, the United States now maintains more than 1,000 military installations¹ outside the 50 US states and Washington, DC. They include everything from massive, decades-old bases in Ramstein and Okinawa, Japan, to new city-sized bases in Afghanistan (and, until recently, Iraq), small radar installations in Peru and drone bases in Ethiopia and the Seychelles. In Afghanistan, the United States has more than 400 bases.² In Iraq, the US military once had a total of 505. The collection of US bases overseas even includes resorts in places like Garmisch, Seoul, and Tokyo, and more than 200 golf courses worldwide. In total, the US military has some form of troop presence in approximately 150 foreign countries, not to mention its collection of aircraft carriers—which are a kind of floating base—and a significant, and growing, military presence in space. The United States currently spends \$250 billion every year maintaining military bases and troops overseas, according to one estimate.³ By most accounts, the United States possesses more bases than any nation, empire, or people in world history.⁴

While the history of many US bases abroad, like the ones in Ansbach, dates to World War II, the United States has been building military bases outside its own territory since its independence from Britain in the late 18th century. Extraterritorial bases have long been a tool of

empires from the Roman and Chinese empires to Spain, Holland, Britain, and France. Across the 19th century, the United States used bases and forts outside its own territory to conquer lands across North America, displacing, dispossessing, and killing millions of Native American Indians in the process. During the classic period of imperialism at the end of the 19th century, as Germany and other empires competed in a race for colonies in Africa, the United States began acquiring small colonies and bases outside North America. Around the time of the US victory in the Spanish-American war of 1898, the United States began building bases in places like the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and in Guantánamo Bay.

The vast majority of US overseas bases were built or occupied during World War II, first in British colonies like Jamaica, Trinidad, and the Bahamas, and later on every continent except Antarctica, in places like Mexico and Brazil, Burma and India, Portugal, Iceland, Greenland, and on a string of small islands in the Pacific Ocean that were critical to the war against Japan. By the end of World War II, the US military was building base facilities at an average rate of 112 a month.⁵ In only five years, the United States developed history's first truly global network of bases, vastly outstretching the British empire upon which the sun never set.

After the war, although the United States returned about half of its foreign bases, the country maintained what became a "permanent institution" of bases in peacetime.^{6 7} In Germany, Italy, Japan, and France, US forces retained occupation rights as a victor nation, while maintaining its facilities in colonies and territories belonging to Britain, France, Portugal, and Denmark. By the end of the 1950s, with the Cold War nearing its hottest moments, around one million US troops and their families lived on or near bases abroad.

Of all the countries occupied by US bases during the Cold War, West Germany hosted the vast majority. Most were located in small cities like Ansbach or in even smaller towns like

Grafenwöhr, Hohenfels, and Vilseck, where the number of GIs and their families easily exceeded the size of the local population.⁸ Of 374 major US installations located outside the United States in the 1980s, sixty percent were in the Federal Republic. Out of around 300,000 US troops stationed in Europe toward the Cold War's end, about 85 percent were in West Germany.⁹ On average during the Cold War, the country was home to around half a million GIs, family members, and civilian employees of the US military.¹⁰ In total, since 1945, around 6.5 million US military personnel have occupied Germany; with family members, the number exceeds 12 million.¹¹ Combined with the occupying troops of five other nations in West Germany alone, according to historian Daniel Nelson, "no other country in the world has been subject to such a prodigious foreign military presence over such a protracted period of time."¹²

A Garrison Town

As many of you probably know, most of the barracks, bases, and airfields occupied around Ansbach were constructed by Hitler's military in the mid-1930s. The history of the Hindenburg Kaserne, now occupied by the Ansbach University of Applied Sciences since the United States returned it, dates to 1722.¹³ After the end of the war, many of the barracks were initially used to house homeless Jews and other refugees awaiting repatriation. US forces began occupying the Ansbach's kasernes on a permanent basis around 1949, the same year as the establishment of NATO.¹⁴

Given the frequent relocation, renaming, and reorganization of units in the US Army, Ansbach and its surrounding communities have lived with an array of US military forces including artillery units, infantry, communications groups, missile deployments, and more. The first permanently deployed helicopter units arrived at Katterbach in the late 1960s. The US 1st

Armored Division, or the “Big Red One,” arrived in Ansbach in 1971 and departed shortly after the end of the Cold War.¹⁵ In 1975, the US Army built Shipton Kaserne, outside of Ansbach, for a surface-to-air missile defense unit. By 1978, there were at least 15 separate kasernes, barracks, training areas, communications installations, and other facilities considered part of the Ansbach “military community.”¹⁶ By the end of the Cold War, Ansbach was a mid-sized US deployment in Germany, with just over 4,000 acres of land occupied across 14 different sites, hosting more than 5,500 GIs and civilian personnel.¹⁷

Today, according to the Ansbach garrison public affairs office, there are about 3,100 GIs on five kasernes: Barton, Storck, Katterbach, Shipton, and Bismark. With family members, retirees, civilian employees, and others, there are a total of about 10,000 people connected to the bases, including about 400 German employees.¹⁸ This means that people connected to the bases represent around one-tenth of the local population.¹⁹

Ansbach’s primary military occupant is the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, which arrived in 2006 and 2007 after the Army’s announcement that Ansbach would remain an enduring installation.²⁰ As many of you can hear, see, and feel in the skies above you, the brigade flies Apache attack helicopters from Storck Barracks in Illesheim and Black Hawk utility helicopters and the larger dual-rotor Chinook transport helicopters from Katterbach. The brigade is currently the largest in the US Army and has fought during multiple deployments in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Post-Cold War Reductions

The US military presence in West Germany and elsewhere in Europe changed dramatically with the end of the Cold War, but it certainly did not disappear like the Soviet troops that once

occupied the East. In the first half of the 1990s, the US government returned or closed around 60 percent of its foreign bases and brought almost 300,000 troops back to the United States, with the largest number of returnees coming from the Army in Germany.²¹ According to the Bonn International Center for Conversion, between 1991 and 1995, the US military returned around 40,500 hectares (100,000 acres) of land to the German government, which is about the same size as the state of Bremen and twice as big as the US capital, Washington, DC.²² Over the same period, at least 34,500 Germans lost civilian jobs working for the US military. While the closures and reductions had, in the words of the Bonn Center, no “significant effect on Germany’s economy as a whole,” these job losses indicate how many of the regions and communities where most US forces were located were “seriously impacted” by the drawdown.²³

With most of the base and troops reductions completed by 1995, a significant foreign military presence still remained in Germany, including more than 60,000 US military personnel alone. While discussions continued through the end of the century about further reductions and about changes to the entire US global base structure, the George W. Bush administration initiated the next dramatic change. A 2001 military review suggested the need to transform, in its words, “a global system of overseas military bases [developed] primarily to contain aggression by the Soviet Union.”²⁴ The US military began an examination of the overseas base infrastructure and in 2003 and 2004, President George W. Bush announced his intention to initiate a major global realignment of bases and troops. The plan was to close more than a third of the nation’s Cold War-era bases in Europe, South Korea, and Japan. Troops were to be shifted east and south, to be closer to current and predicted conflict zones mostly in the Global South, from the Middle East and the Black Sea to Asia, Africa, and South America.

In place of big Cold War bases, like many of those in Germany, the US military said, it would focus on creating smaller and more flexible bases. The military would call these smaller installations “forward operating bases.” They would also build even smaller installations, called “cooperative security locations” or, using a flowery metaphor, “lily pad” bases. According to the plan, the military would concentrate its forces at a reduced number of major bases, now called “main operating bases” (MOBs), many of which would be expanded. These main operating bases included Ramstein and Ansbach, Guam in the Pacific Ocean and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.²⁵

The plan proceeded in 2006, when the Bush administration announced new base closures and troop reductions for Europe, primarily in Germany. Around 300 base sites of varying sizes would close, and the Army said it would consolidate most of its forces at six enduring communities in Germany—Ansbach, Baumholder, Grafenwehr/Vilseck/Hohenfels, Kaiserslautern, Wiesbaden, and Stuttgart, as well as one in Vicenza, Italy, and another set of installations in the Benelux countries. As many as 70,000 troops would return to the United States from bases abroad. Most recently, the Obama administration announced plans to remove two more army brigades from Germany and reduce the overall size of the US Army by another 70,000 troops.

Expansion

From the perspective of Ansbach, all the talk of troop and base reductions may sound strange. After being named an enduring community—and that is an interesting euphemism for a concentration of deadly weapons and people trained to kill—major new construction projects have been the norm. “We’re moving forward with renovations, building new facilities and

making plans for a new townhome neighborhood with an adjoining shopping center,” the US Army Garrison Ansbach announced. The construction has included \$41 million in family housing renovations, \$2 million for a fitness center, and plans for new shopping centers, recreational facilities, and a \$25 million fitness center in the Katterbach Kaserne.²⁶ Similarly, while the US military has been vacating numerous facilities in Germany, US Army Europe is leaving its headquarters in Heidelberg only to build new headquarters in Wiesbaden

The construction boom in Ansbach and elsewhere in Germany is an indication that the changes underway are not as simple or unidirectional as they look. While there have been reductions in the size of the overseas base network, especially in Germany, the base network has expanded in both scope and size under the Bush and Obama administrations.²⁷ To support the U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States has created or expanded bases in at least Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Georgia, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Kuwait. In Afghanistan, there are more than 400 installations (likely 800 counting the bases of NATO allies and the Afghan military). Construction continues at many of these installations despite US commitments to withdraw troops by the end of 2013.²⁸ In Iraq, there were once more than 500 bases. The Bush administration had hoped to maintain many of these bases, much as with the German and Japanese models since World War II; however, the Iraqi parliament forced a near complete withdrawal of US troops.

In Africa, as part of the development of the new African Command and combined with an already significant presence in Djibouti, the military has created bases in at least the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal, the Seychelles, South Sudan, and Uganda, and investigated the creation of installations in at least Algeria, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

In the Western Hemisphere, the United States maintains a sizable collection of bases throughout South America and the Caribbean, with the military creating new bases in Colombia, Honduras, El Salvador, Aruba and Curaçao (and perhaps in Paraguay and Peru) in response to its eviction from Panama in 1999 and Ecuador in 2009.

In Europe, we have seen the progressive eastward expansion of US bases into former Eastern Bloc states that have joined or hope to join NATO. The US military has created or is developing installations in Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, and Lithuania. With bases closing in on Russia's western borders, as they have in central Asia to Russia's south, US bases have contributed significantly to rising tensions with Russia.

Lily Pads

In many ways, the symbol of the shift in US basing policy lies in the military's plans to build "lily pad" bases while maintaining a smaller number of large bases. These lily pad bases are designed to be isolated from large population centers, where anti-base opposition, like that seen in Vicenza or Okinawa, Japan, most often arises. They are designed to have small troop deployments or rely mostly on private military contractors. They should offer limited amenities, in contrast to the shopping malls and recreation centers so prominent on large bases in Germany and around the world. Instead, they are to stock prepositioned weaponry, materiel, and supplies for use in future conflicts. To preempt accusations about building new "US bases" and arousing opposition, the US military often locates these small bases within an existing host nation base and religiously refers to the lily pads as being under the control of host nations.

As scholar and former Air Force officer Mark Gillem explains, "avoidance" is the new aim. "To project its power," he says, the United States wants "secluded and self-contained

outposts strategically located” around the world.²⁹ In the words of some of the strategy’s strongest proponents, the goal should be “to create a worldwide network of frontier forts” with the US military serving as “the ‘global cavalry’ of the twenty-first century.”³⁰

Some of the motivation for shifting from large bases to small is clearly their lower costs and the insecure economic environment facing the United States and its military. The difficulty of protecting large bases from possible terrorist attack after 11 September 2001 also encouraged military planners to consolidate major troop deployments around a smaller number of large bases. At the same time, one of the main benefits of this lily pad plan, in the minds of military planners, is the promise of building new bases in as many nations as possible. With a bigger collection of small bases joining a smaller number of main operating bases, planners hope always to be able to turn from one country to another if the United States is ever prevented from using a base in wartime—as it was, for example, by the Turkish government prior to the invasion of Iraq.³¹

Political scientist Alexander Cooley explains, “many of the large forward-deployed facilities of the cold war era” are being replaced by “an extensive global network of smaller installations scattered across regions in which the United States has previously not maintained a military presence.”³²

A Global Military Strategy for the 21st Century

How should we understand this expansion of the US overseas basing network at a time when most of the attention is on base closures and troop reductions? With the end of the Cold War, one might have expected the US overseas base network to have closed or shrunk dramatically. This was not the case. While the United States closed some bases and cut its troop deployments in

Europe, since the Soviet Union's demise, the United States has actually expanded the breadth and reach of its overseas base network. This expansion is especially visible in the regional networks of bases created during and after two wars in the Persian Gulf, US-led NATO intervention in the Balkans, and the ongoing war in Afghanistan. Each war led to the development of scores of new bases in what is a strategic locus between Europe and Asia that also happens to sit atop a significant proportion of the world's oil and natural gas reserves.

While US officials typically justify the creation of these new bases as important to "mutual security," fighting terrorism, and waging the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the expansion of US bases in Eurasia has significantly advanced U.S. efforts³³ to control increasingly scarce oil and natural gas supplies in central Asia and the Middle East as part of a growing worldwide resource competition with Russia and China. As several scholars have argued, the 19th century "Great Game" competition for Central Asia is underway again, and this time it has gone global, spreading to oil and resource-rich lands in Africa and South America in particular.³⁴

During the post-Cold War period, despite being the world's only surviving superpower, US global economic supremacy has been challenged for the first time since World War II. Beginning in the 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, Japan, Germany, and the European Union threatened US economic dominance. In the twenty-first century, China, and, on a regional basis, Russia, India, and Brazil, have begun to challenge the United States in an increasingly intense global competition for economic and geopolitical supremacy.

China has generally pursued this competition with its economic might, by making strategic investments, offering loans, building infrastructure, and creating a variety of new economic relationships across Africa, Asia, and Latin America to position itself to compete for

strategic resources, markets, and emerging investment opportunities. By contrast, the United States has largely engaged in this global competition with its military might—one of its few remaining areas of economic dominance. In addition to increasing military spending after 11 September 2001 to levels not seen since the highs of the Cold War, the US government has tried to maintain its economic and geopolitical supremacy by dotting the world with lily pad bases and other new forms of US military presence.

While lily pad bases have some military utility, they are just as much political and economic instruments used to build and maintain alliances and provide privileged access to overseas markets, resources, and investment opportunities. In short, the US government is using the creation of lily pad bases and other military tools to bind countries in eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America as closely as possible to the US military and, through it, to continued US political-economic hegemony. Lily pads are thus part of a new 21st century global military strategy for the United States, which features everything from extensive joint military exercises with foreign militaries to killer drones. US officials are using lily pads and other military tools to deepen the influence of the United States globally, hoping that military might will keep as many countries as possible within the US orbit when a growing number of countries are asserting their independence or gravitating to China, Russia, and other rising powers.

The Dangers of Bases

While the reliance on what are generally, but are not always, smaller bases may sound preferable to the huge bases that have caused so much harm and anger in places like Okinawa and South Korea, the construction of new bases in an increasingly long list of nations —presents several serious dangers that threaten US, European, and global security.

First, the language of “lily pad” bases can be misleading: By design or otherwise, installations characterized as lily pads can quickly grow into massive behemoths.

Second, in the midst of a global economic crisis, historic levels of US national debt, and pressing financial needs elsewhere, the United States simply cannot afford to maintain so many military bases overseas, no matter their size. Like Britain, the Soviet Union, and other empires before it, the United States will eventually have no choice but to rein in its military spending and its overseas presence.

Third, bases abroad have damaged the United States’s reputation, engendered angry grievances, and generally created antagonistic rather than cooperative relationships with other nations. Although lily pad bases promise insulation from local opposition, over time, bases large and small have often led to protest and anger.

Fourth, while some foreign governments and localities covet U.S. bases for their perceived economic and security benefits, there are serious questions about how widely economic benefits are shared and whether bases increase host country safety. Despite frequently invoking rhetoric about spreading democracy, building US bases abroad have often meant collaborating with despotic, corrupt, and murderous governments, including those in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, South Korea, Turkey, the Philippines, Spain, Portugal, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.³⁵ Many bases have only come into existence because the US military or compliant local governments have displaced local peoples from their lands in places from Okinawa to Diego Garcia.³⁶ There is also a well-documented pattern of damage caused by military facilities abroad in local communities, from noise and other environmental and health damage to crime, accidents, and support for sex trafficking. In too many cases, soldiers have raped, assaulted, or killed locals.

Finally, while proponents of maintaining the overseas base status quo argue that foreign bases are critical to maintaining national and global security, a closer examination shows that the expansion of the US overseas base network represents the growing militarization (and likely destabilization) of large swaths of the globe. Indeed, foreign bases have often heightened military tensions and discouraged diplomatic solutions to international conflicts. Rather than stabilizing dangerous regions, overseas bases, small and large, have often increased regional militarization. Foreign bases enlarge security threats for other nations, like Russia, China, and Iran, who generally respond by boosting military spending in an escalating spiral. How would the United States respond if China, Russia, or Iran were to build even a self-described lily pad base in Mexico or the Caribbean?

For China and Russia, in particular, the creation of more and more US (and NATO) bases threatens to set off what may be brewing cold wars in the struggle for future political, economic, and military supremacy. Most troublingly, I fear, the creation of bases to protect against an alleged future Chinese military threat may become a self-fulfilling prophecy: New bases are likely to create the threat against which they're supposedly designed to protect, making a catastrophic war with China more likely, not less.

“We are all part of the fight”

When I was last in Ansbach, many people talked to me about the helicopters that are such a presence in their community. Many described the noise and vibration of the helicopters shaking their windows, rattling their dishes, keeping them awake at night, waking babies from their sleep, making conversation temporarily impossible. Whoomp, whoomp, whoomp, whoomp. Many

described the glaring spotlight of some helicopters following people, “hunting” them, harassing them, as they walk or drive in the countryside.

I feel like I know at least something of what this feels like from living in Washington, DC, where marine helicopters are a frequent presence in the city’s skies. On a near daily basis, and often several times a day, helicopters transporting members of the Obama administration fly directly over my home and near my university. I know the distraction of vibrating windows and wooden floors, of conversation and concentration interrupted, of quiet disturbed, of spilling coffee on myself when I looked at the noise in the sky one day at school.

Research shows that noise can be a serious public health hazard. It can damage people’s physical and psychological health. In Japan, for example, jet noise from US bases has been linked to stress, low educational performance, and poor health outcomes for infants. Although some are likely to dismiss the effect of persistent exposure to helicopter or jet engine noise as “just noise,” it can literally terrorize those exposed.

For at least several people I spoke with in Ansbach, the noise of the helicopters caused another dimension of harm as well. Several described how in addition to the noise and the physical presence of the helicopters, some of their discomfort came from what the noise represents. For some, the noise of the helicopters symbolized the wars that the same helicopters have helped wage. For some, the noise symbolizes how at least some in the Ansbach community feel complicit in the wars as host to what the commander of Ansbach’s 12th Combat Aviation Brigade calls “a lethal and self-sustaining combat multiplier on today’s battlefield.”³⁷

Indeed, the noise of the helicopters that roam your skies in Ansbach and my skies in Washington indicates how, as the Ansbach garrison’s motto says, “We are all part of the fight.” Although whoever authored the motto had something different in mind, “We are all part of the

fight” is unintentionally accurate in suggesting that the battlefield isn’t a discrete place “over there,” far removed from our lives here at home. Living in Ansbach and in Washington, you and I and many others are all part of the fight. You are part of the fight in that you too experience the effects of war from the noise of Ansbach’s helicopters to the environmental damage caused by the kasernes. We are also part of the fight in that our German and US tax dollars pay for the helicopters of war, for their gas, their crews, and their maintenance. We are part of the fight in that our cities host and support helicopter operations and training or, in my case, the command and control of the entire US war machine. Although most of our experiences do not compare to those of war’s direct victims, our lives are also impoverished by the hundreds of billions of Euros that go into war spending every year, by the societal energy that goes into waging and preparing for war, and by the opportunities we miss by investing so much in war while neglecting investments in education, health, housing, and more.

Germany has long been deeply integrated into the US military system, and it remains deeply integrated. Germany has been a “long-term safe haven of U.S. military power in Europe” and US military planners have designed it to stay that way.³⁸ There are still around 60,000 US military personnel in Germany, with a similar number of family members and US civilians and contractors. Indeed, there are still more troops in Germany than in any other country except for Afghanistan.³⁹ About eighty percent of the US troops, weapons, and supplies sent from the United States to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have transited through Germany, much of it through Ramstein Air Base.⁴⁰ This at a time when, as one analyst from Johns Hopkins University says, “no security threats loom in Europe. Indeed, such threats have not been present since the Cold War’s end more than twenty years ago.”⁴¹

Despite the absence of any current military threats and despite commitments not to launch wars from German territory after World War II, Germany and people in cities like Ansbach are part of an infrastructure of war that extends and links people from offices in Washington and training areas in Germany to barracks in Japan and lily pads in Africa to warzones in Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and beyond. We really are all part of the fight.

The Need for Change

I want to end on a positive note by reporting that for probably the first time in the post-war era, overseas bases are now getting serious and widespread scrutiny across the political spectrum in the United States. On the left, for example, *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof has argued that investing in disease research, education, and diplomacy would do more to protect US citizens than bases in Germany. “Do we fear,” he asked, “that if we pull our bases from Germany, Russia might invade?” On the right, a growing number of other members of the US Congress have criticized the creation of new overseas bases as wasteful and harmful to national security. One has called for a new “Build in America” policy. And Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul made the closure of overseas bases a major platform of his campaign.

As many are increasingly recognizing, the United States simply cannot afford to maintain more than 1,000 bases outside the United States. Great Britain was forced to close most of its remaining foreign bases in the midst of an economic crisis in the late 1960s and 1970s, and all signs indicate that the United States is headed in that direction. Likewise, many are realizing that the United States must recommit to cooperative forms of diplomatic, economic, and cultural engagement around the world rather than relying on the military approaches that have proved so disastrous and deadly in Iraq and Afghanistan. Having fewer US overseas bases could free

billions of dollars for critical human needs domestically and globally and would help rebuild the US military into a true defensive force committed to defending the territory of the United States from attack.

Especially in such dangerous economic times, the Obama administration and the US Congress should halt funding for all new overseas bases and initiate a major reassessment of the more than 1,000 bases worldwide. The United States and the planet cannot afford the more than 1,000 bases that are pushing the United States deeper into debt and making it and humanity less secure. With so many threats and needs facing the world, from climate change and environmental degradation, to poverty and inequality, to disease and hunger, it is unconscionable to have more than 1,000 overseas bases diverting precious resources from these human security needs and endangering the globe. It's time to listen to base opponents in places like Ansbach, Vicenza, and Okinawa, and begin closing overseas bases and finding more productive forms of peaceful international cooperation and critically needed economic activity to replace them.

We need to fill the air with sounds other than the sounds of war.

¹ What constitutes a "base" is a complicated question. Definitions and terminology (base, post, station, fort, installation, etc.) vary considerably. The Pentagon's annual "Base Structure Report," which provides an annual accounting of its facilities and from which I derive the total of more than 1,000 bases overseas, refers to "base sites." See Department of Defense, "Base Structure Report Fiscal Year 2011 Baseline (A Summary of DoD's Real Property Inventory)," report, Washington, DC, 2010.

² Turse, Nick. "Digging in for the Long Haul in Afghanistan: How Permanent Are America's Afghan Bases?" *Tom Dispatch* October 21, 2010. Available at http://www.tomdispatch.com/blog/175310/tomgram%3A_nick_turse%2C_base_desires_in_afghanistan.

³ Anita Dancs, "The Cost of the Global U.S. Military Presence," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, report, July 3, 2009.

⁴ Tom Engelhardt, "Baseless Considerations," *Tom Dispatch.com*, November 5, 2007, available at <http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/174858>.

⁵ James R. Blaker, *United States Overseas Basing: An Anatomy of the Dilemma* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 23, 9.

⁶ Blaker, 32.

⁷ George Stambuk, *American Military Forces Abroad: Their Impact on the Western State System* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963), 9.

⁸ Daniel J. Nelson, *Defenders or Intruders? The Dilemmas of US Forces in Germany* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 8.

⁹ Nelson, 10.

¹⁰ Amy K. Holmes, “Contentious Allies: Social Unrest and the American Military Presence in Turkey and Germany 1945-2005” (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2009), 32; Simon Due, *United States Military Forces and Installations in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 56; Nelson, 15.

¹¹ Robert Gerald Livingston, “Consequential Cuts: American Troops in Germany,” report, American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Washington, DC, March 13, 2012, 2; Thomas Leuerer, “United States Army Military Communities in Germany,” unpublished ms, 2010, 2.

¹² Nelson, 7.

¹³ U.S. Army in Germany, “U.S. Army Installations - Ansbach,” n.d., available at http://www.usarmygermany.com/Sont.htm?http&&www.usarmygermany.com/USAREUR_City_Ansbach.htm.

¹⁴ U.S. Army in Germany.

¹⁵ US Army Garrison Ansbach, “Ansbach City History,” n.d., available at <http://www.ansbach.army.mil/sites/about/AnsbachCityhistory.asp>.

¹⁶ U.S. Army in Germany.

¹⁷ Keith B. Cunningham and Andreas Klemmer, “Restructuring the US Military Bases in Germany: Scope, Impacts, and Opportunities,” Bonn International Center for Conversion report 4, Bonn, Germany, June 1995, 13.

¹⁸ Cornelia Summers, email to author, November 23, 2011.

¹⁹ GlobalSecurity.org, “Ansbach, Germany,” May 7, 2011, available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/ansbach.htm>.

²⁰ US Army Garrison Ansbach, “USAG Ansbach History,” n.d., available at <http://www.ansbach.army.mil/sites/about/USAGhistory.asp>.

²¹ Department of Defense, “Strengthening U.S. Global Defense Posture, Report to Congress,” Washington, DC, September 17, 2004, 5.

²² Cunningham and Klemmer, 13, 20. There is a discrepancy in this report, which cites more than 92,000 acres (37,260 hectares) returned by the United States in total and more than 100,000 (40,500 hectares) returned by the US Army alone.

²³ Cunningham and Klemmer, 22, 6-7

²⁴ US Department of Defense, “Quadrennial Defense Review 2001,” report, Washington, DC, 2001, 25.

²⁵ In many cases, expansion had been planned since before 11 September 2001 and the global base review.

²⁶ US Army Garrison Ansbach, “Your Army Home, Community Guide,” Ansbach, Germany, n.d., 1.

²⁷ The plan quickly faced resistance and criticism, most prominently from the Congressional Budget Office and a congressional commission on overseas bases, both of which questioned the costs associated with closing bases and moving troops. In Germany, the military still maintains hundreds of installations, including massive bases at Ramstein and Spangdahlem. In Japan, the planned move of 8,000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam will likely be delayed beyond a 2014 target date, as the two governments debate the presence of the Futenma base in Okinawa. The only notable shift has been in South Korea, where U.S. troops left the demilitarized zone and moved from Seoul to expanded bases south of the capital, aided by the South Korean government’s violent seizure of land from villagers in Daechuri.

²⁸ Turse.

²⁹ Gillem, *American Town: Building the Outposts of Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 263, 272, 17.

³⁰ Donnelly, Thomas, and Vance Serchuk. “Toward a Global Cavalry: Overseas Rebased and Defense Transformation.” Report, Washington, DC, American Enterprise Institute, July 1, 2003. Available at <http://www.aei.org/article/foreign-and-defense-policy/toward-a-global-cavalry/>.

³¹ Two principles that have guided the acquisition and maintenance of large numbers of overseas bases since World War II still appear to be at work today: They are “redundancy”—the more bases, the safer the nation—and “strategic denial”—preventing supposed enemies from using a territory by denying them access—both of which hold that even if the military has little interest in using a base or a territory, it should acquire as many as possible for every possible contingency and almost never cede its acquisitions.

³² Here is a partial list of countries in which these relatively small US bases have been built or planned since the close of the 20th century. They include Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania; Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan; Oman, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia; Algeria, the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, the Seychelles, South Sudan, and Uganda; Australia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand; Aruba, Belize, Colombia, Curaçao, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, and Peru. That’s quite a collection of lilies. See e.g., Cooley, Alexander. *Base Politics: Democratic Change and the U.S. Military Overseas*. Ithaca, NY:

Cornell University Press, 2008; Johnson, Chalmers. *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004.

³³ An expanded NATO presence in Eurasia has advanced the same aims for both the United States and other NATO members. US and NATO/EU nations are not always so unified, of course, and are in many ways also in competition.

³⁴ Michael T. Klare, "The Permanent Energy Crisis," *TomDispatch.com*, February 9, 2006, available at <http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/58126/>.

³⁵ Catherine Lutz, "Introduction: Bases, Empire, and Global Response," in *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts*, ed. Catherine Lutz, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 28.

³⁶ David Vine, *Island of Shame: The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base on Diego Garcia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

³⁷ Colonel Van J. Voorhees, Jr., letter to arriving soldiers, June 27, 2011, available at <http://www.12cab.army.mil/Col.%20Voorhees/2011-06-27-COL-Voorhees.pdf>.

³⁸ Rassbach, Elsa. "Protesting U.S. Military Bases in Germany," *Peace Review* 22, no. 2 (2010): 123.

³⁹ Rassbach, 122.

⁴⁰ Rassbach, 123.

⁴¹ Livingston, 1.