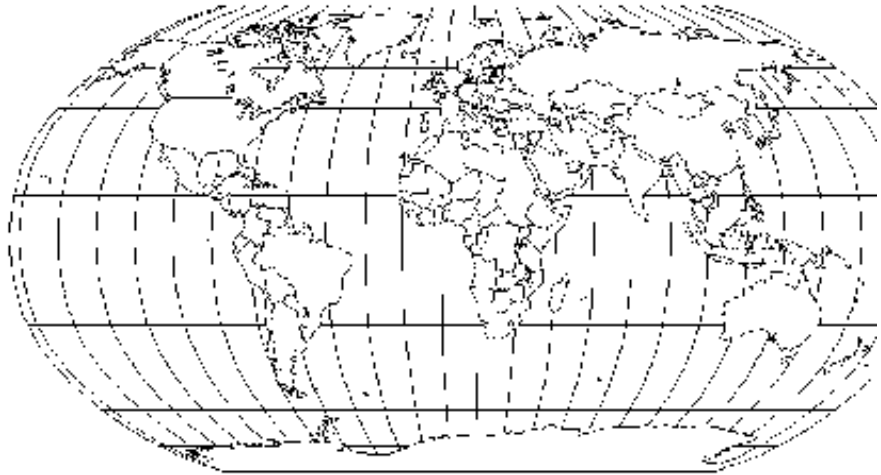


# Introduction

At the height of the Cold War, the military of United States operated some 370 major and over one thousand minor bases overseas. In many cases these facilities have housed major industrial operations involving weapons, ordnance and equipment manufacture and maintenance, live fire practice and equipment training. The



result of this range of activities over time has been the toxic and hazardous contamination of air, soil and water, which can threaten human health and the environment both on the base property and in the surrounding communities. Carcinogenic chemicals, mutagenic metals and unexploded bombs now pepper the landscape of these facilities around the world.

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has closed or slated for closure nearly 300 of these major and minor U.S. bases worldwide. For host countries and local communities, which for years ceded their land to U.S. military security goals, base closures represent a potential return of national assets for a variety of projects, including industrial parks, airfields, housing, schools, tourism, shopping centers, and recreational parks. But reuse comes with risks for it brings civilians, including children, into direct exposure to military toxic hazards and, in some instances, live ordnance. At Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, for example, the list of known contaminants in the well water now being used by local residents includes twice the Filipino government's standard for a maximum safe level of mercury and nitrate. Both chemicals are known to impair childhood development, and can be fatal.

Even in locations where the U.S. plans to maintain its overseas bases, host communities are voicing increasing concern about the effects of base-related environmental contamination and noise pollution on their lives and their quality of life. Unfortunately, until now the U.S. has refused to accept, either in its original treaties or in its terms of base closure agreements, any responsibility for base contamination and cleanup. In addition, the U.S. has been generally uncooperative with host government and NGO efforts to investigate the pollution caused by U.S. activities on these overseas bases. In recent negotiations with nations like the Philippines and Okinawa/ Japan, the United States refused to accept any level of post-base closure environmental responsibility. As a result, host governments and affected communities are frequently left in the dark about the scope of the problems and hazards, as well as financial burdens they face.

Defense Department officials acknowledge that there is widespread contamination of overseas bases. But some overseas bases have received more favored treatment than others. The pattern of apportioned funding for cleanup suggests bias in favor of the developed over the developing world. The largest share of the \$165 million spent in 1999 on environmental compliance and

cleanup overseas, for example, went to Germany. In 1996 Canada negotiated a special deal with the Pentagon providing \$100 million worth of cleanup money (in exchange for an equivalent sum that Canada will spend to buy U.S. weapons.) Meanwhile the U.S. has provided no cleanup funds

for the two major bases closed in the Philippines during the 1990s. Recommendations from the U.S. Navy's environmental officers to deal with ongoing contamination during the Navy's occupation of the properties with funding for a sewage treatment plant and other remedies were ignored. Now that the transfer is complete, the U.S. promises neither further cleanup, nor even an inventory of the contamination that remains.

The most glaring discrepancy, however, exists between the spending on cleanup overseas and at U.S. domestic bases. While funding for domestic cleanup is far from adequate, and is dwindling, the pressure of domestic constituencies has ensured that far greater amounts are being spent at home, and a process for allocating them is in place. Domestically the U.S. plans to spend \$1.72 billion in 2000; all overseas bases will share \$165 million.

The failure of the U.S. to take responsibility for the environmental contamination caused by its military bases overseas represents a serious hazard to the health and safety of the citizens of other nations, and places significant and unfair economic burdens on those nations hosting American bases.

To promote U.S. responsibility for base cleanup, in November 1996 the People's Task Force for Bases Cleanup, then a project of the Nuclear Free Philippines Coalition, hosted an International Forum on Military Base Cleanup in Manila. Representatives of grassroots Non-Governmental Organizations from the Philippines, Okinawa, Japan, Korea, Panama, Puerto Rico and the United States met for the first time to discuss the environmental and national sovereignty issues associated with hosting American military bases. Among the decisions made at the Forum was to convene a follow-up meeting in Washington, DC, where the heart of the problem resides.

This intent was realized the week of October 25-29, 1999. The event, entitled the International Grassroots Summit on Military Base Cleanup, expanded international participation to include a 83 representatives from a dozen countries and territories from four continents. This time the effort to press the United States to accept responsibility for cleaning up toxic contamination on its overseas bases took the following forms:

- **Networking:**  
NGO representatives from the Philippines, Japan, Okinawa, Panama, Cuba, Germany, the United Kingdom, Puerto Rico, Korea, Iceland, Peru, and the United States met and reported to each other about the state of the problem in their own regions.
- **Education:**  
Participants heard presentations from experts, and engaged in dialogue, on the current state of U.S. policy and its inequities and other flaws; the technicalities of environmental contamination and cleanup techniques and technologies; the ways and means of redeveloping bases for productive economic use; and the legal frameworks contained in treaty agreements that govern the U.S. role and the possibilities for amending and changing them.
- **Strategizing and coalition building:**  
In closed sessions the participants worked on a strategy for pushing the issue in concert.

Among the results were the creation of a steering committee and the crafting of a Host Country Bill of Rights which outlined the underlying principles and the basic tenets of a common set of standards that should govern the U.S. responsibility for cleanup at all of its international bases.

**Advocacy:**

This Bill of Rights was presented during the latter part of the week at: a briefing in Congress for Members and staff; meetings with officials with jurisdiction over international bases at the Departments of State and Defense; individual meetings with U.S. Senators and Representatives; at a meeting between NGO participants and representatives from their respective embassies, and at a meeting with the Disarmament and Indigenous Peoples Committees of the United Nations.

The following document is our summary of the event proceedings and the results of the Grassroots Summit. We hope it will prove useful for public education and further network building. We have put the Summit documents in notebook form with the intent that NGOs and activists will reproduce particular sections for organizing and public education efforts. This document, and additional information as it becomes available, will be released in electronic form at <http://www.foreignpolicy-infocus.org/basecleanup>. Those involved in the issue will be able to download the portions of most use to them and tailor them to the audiences and purposes directly related to their work.

Participants spent considerable time developing strategy for future collaboration. At the conclusion of the Summit, participants formed a **Steering Committee**(see box below) to guide this work. **Kyle Kajihiro from Hawaii has agreed to convene the Steering Committee** and will be in touch shortly via e-mail. If any of our are *not* on the Steering Committee and want to be, you can join by contacting Kyle. The Committee has copies of documents developed in strategy sessions during the Summit. Those interested in them should consult any member of the Committee.

At its core, the conference focused on the simple principle, enshrined in U.S. environmental law, that the polluter pays. The U.S. has an obligation to adequately and thoroughly clean up its closed, closing and still functioning military bases, both at home and abroad. The U.S. military must insure that land and the capital resources on its former bases can be returned to the productive, peaceful use of the people who live there. We believe that the Summit was an advance in that direction. It falls to all of us to keep it going.

**Steering Committee**

Myrla Baldnado: basecln@skynet.net	Rainer Knoll: rainer.knoll@rzmail.uni-erlangen.de
Saul Bloom: arc@igc.org	John Lindsay-Poland: forlatam@igc.org
Luis Corral: lcorralf@yahoo.com	Lirio Marquez: inabon@prtc.net
Wanda Colon Cortez: wandac@coqui.net	Gisele McCray Brito: gbrito28@yahoo.com
Gloria Castillo Ester: asoprof@sinfo.net	Miriam Pemberton: ncecd@igc.org
Kyle Kajihiro: keboi@aol.com	Nher Sagum: arc@igc.org