

TOXIC INSTIGATORS OF WAR: US MILITARY BASES AROUND THE WORLD

by Greta Zarro

Farmers in Washington State are concerned about the long-term viability of their land. Groundwater contamination and jet noise loud enough to cause hearing loss are just a few of the growing harms caused by the expansion of Navy training activities on Whidbey Island, Washington. Across the Pacific Ocean, the people of Okinawa, Japan never agreed to the development of foreign military bases on their land, yet it has been occupied by the US military since WWII. Currently, US bases cover 20% of the main island. Despite years of grassroots protest and resistance there, the US is in fact expanding its presence with a new Marine Corps Air Base at Henoko in northern Okinawa. Ongoing construction is decimating the habitat of the endangered dugong species and destroying precious coral reefs in Oura Bay.

Military bases dot the world's landscape. Today, the US has 150,000 troops deployed on more than 800 military bases in 80 countries. That's 95% of all foreign military bases worldwide. Bases cause enormous social and environmental damage. Communities living near bases often experience high levels of rape committed by foreign soldiers, other violent crimes, loss of land and livelihood, and pollution and other health hazards caused by everyday base operations as well as weapons testing. In many countries, the bilateral governmental agreement that permits the bases also grants immunity to foreign soldiers who commit crimes. Although local communities and international civil society have long called for the closure of these bases and an end to the occupation of these lands, there has been little success.

Greta is the Organizing Director of World BEYOND War (WBW). Prior to her work with WBW, she was a New York Organizer for Food & Water Watch on issues of fracking, pipelines, water privatization, and GMO labeling. Reach her at greta@worldbeyondwar.org.

However, 2018 was a pivotal year in the work to abolish military bases, with the growth of a unified, worldwide base closure movement. World BEYOND War was one of 17 organizations that founded the Coalition Against US Foreign Military Bases in January 2018. In November in Dublin, Ireland, the Coalition held the first International Conference Against US/NATO Military Bases. The Conference brought together over 300 activists from 35 countries to share struggles and successes, and to strategize campaign tactics for movement-building. The schedule and videos of the conference are at nousnato-bases.org. World BEYOND War is also a member of the newly launched US-based transpartisan Overseas Base Realignment and Closure Coalition (overseasbases.net), a collection of academics, consultants, veterans and former Congressmembers who are working to influence Congress and the Trump administration.

At the Dublin conference, World BEYOND War Director David Swanson remarked:

"A tiny fraction of what just the United States spends on foreign bases could end starvation, the lack of clean water, and various diseases. Instead we get these bases, these toxic instigators of war... War and preparations for war are the top destroyers of our natural environment. They are a top cause of death and injury and destruction. War is the top source of the erosion of liberties. The top justification for government secrecy. The top creator of refugees. The top saboteur of the rule of law. The top facilitator of xenophobia and bigotry. The top reason we are at risk of



Graphic: wagingpeacetoday.blogspot.com/2011/06/lockheed-martin-developing-ninja-robots.html.

nuclear apocalypse. War is not necessary, not just, not survivable, not glorious. We need to leave the entire institution of war behind us. We need to create a world beyond war."

Pat Elder, a member of World BEYOND War's Coordinating Committee, spoke at the conference about the severe groundwater contamination that is sickening communities near US military bases worldwide.

"Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) are the active ingredients in the fire-fighting foam routinely used to train soldiers to extinguish aircraft fires at US military bases around the world. The toxic chemicals are allowed to leach into surrounding soil to poison groundwater. The result is one of the greatest water contamination epidemics in human history... The health effects of exposure to these chemicals include frequent miscarriages and other severe pregnancy complications, like long-term fertility issues. They contaminate human breast milk and sicken breast-feeding babies. PFOS and PFOA contribute to liver damage, kidney cancer, high cholesterol, decreased response to vaccines, an increased risk of thyroid disease, along with testicular cancer, micro-penis, and low sperm count in males."

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Pat's investigative work about this massive public health threat bolsters the call for closure of all military bases both here and abroad.

One focus at the Dublin conference was the campaign urging Ireland to comply with its policy of neutrality and cease the US military's use of Irish airports. Currently, the US military funnels tens of thousands of troops through Ireland's airports on their way to bases in the Middle East. Save the date for World BEYOND

War's #NoWar2019 Conference from October 3-5 in Limerick, Ireland, which will include a nonviolent demonstration at Shannon Airport.

To learn more and get involved in World BEYOND War's base closure campaign, you do not have to live near a military base (though we'd be surprised if you don't). We work to build alliances between local communities impacted by military bases and those who live near centers of governmental and military

power. Through diverse coalition-building and international networking, we help strengthen the collective voice of peacemakers to demand policies that value people and the planet over military might. See what we are working for at worldbeyonddwar.org/bases.

The Beyond War and Militarism Committee, a joint committee of the Peace Council and the CNY Solidarity Coalition, is affiliated with World BEYOND War. ♻️

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OUR PLANET IS ON FIRE

Join us in building community, collectively reducing emissions, and organizing to win the right and resources to do more. Alliance for a Green Economy (AllianceforaGreenEconomy.org) works for a just transition to a carbon-free, nuclear-free energy system and educates the public about alternatives that can revitalize the economy and safeguard public and environmental health.

Our new HeatSmart CNY initiative is helping people across CNY find out what it would take to get buildings off fossil fuels. Learn about building envelope improvements, cold-climate air source, geothermal, and hot water heat pumps. Attend open houses and workshops (event list at HeatSmartCNY.org) to connect with vetted installers and receive information about grants and credits. If you can afford to, switch now to



renewable heating; if you can't afford it, plan now to get off fossil fuels next time you replace a heating system.

— Andra Leimanis

ACTIVIST APPRECIATION: HILARY-ANNE COPPOLA

Hilary came to SPC as a summer intern with a strong commitment to environmental education and activism, a special interest in Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON) and the *Peace Newsletter (PNL)*, and a willingness to try anything. She quickly became integral to our organizing, and we were thrilled that she decided to continue with SPC.

Hilary was one of the main organizers of NOON's "Celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day, Not Columbus Day" event in October, and has accepted major responsibility for editing *PNL* articles, in-

cluding writing articles herself. She has cheerfully taken on some of the "grunt" work that helps make things happen—taking minutes, setting up meetings and making phone calls.

Her "doing" of the work comes with an exceptional spirit. She deeply feels the human element of every political action, piece of writing and conversation, and acts with both her head and heart.

Thank you, Hilary. We are grateful for your presence and your work.

— Carol Baum

NUCLEAR FREE WORLD

The Nuclear Free World (NFW) Committee is excited to announce that, with Beyond War and Militarism, we are organizing a talk with Dr. Ira Helfand for March. Ira co-chairs Physicians for Social Responsibility's Nuclear Weapons Abolition Committee, and also is co-president of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. (IPPNW). He is on the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)'s International Steering Committee. Both IPPNW and ICAN are Nobel Peace Prize recipients.

NFW is taking part in the NY Campaign for Peace in Korea, a group of inter-generational Korean Americans and allies whose mission is to help bring an end to the nearly 70-year-old Korean War. Ending the war is a key step towards normalizing US relations with North Korea. Our part here in Syracuse is to meet with our representatives to promote this goal.

As part of the Reinvestment Alliance, NFW is keeping nuclear weapons a central issue. Reinvest CNY extends the "Don't Bank on the Bomb" campaign, which guides divestment individually and institutionally from banks and companies profiting from nuclear weapons. To learn more, see reinvestcny.com.

We continue to meet with our Senators' aides to support the Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act and to address the failed Pentagon audit.

We are accepting applications for the annual Peace Youth Award. Application and instructions available at peacecouncil.net/youthpeaceaward.

— Margrit Diehl and Diane Swords

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