

Post-Base Urbanism

What happens to former U.S. military bases abroad?

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This capstone uses the Military Empires dataset from global nonprofit World Beyond War along with my own research on each facility's current state. Base Nation by David Vine, Turning Bases Into Great Places: New Life for Closed Military Facilities by the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Global Defense Posture, 1783-2011 by Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Nick Turse's reporting, and informal interviews with veterans and contractors also provided invaluable color.

World Beyond War: Military Empires

By a foreign military base, we refer to any installation, facility, or site located outside the operating country that is financed, operated, leased, rented, or temporarily accessed by that country. These bases accommodate military personnel, weapons systems, and/or logistical infrastructure, and fulfill diverse functions such as training, information gathering, operational planning, command and control, administrative tasks, and/or weapons storage. Regardless of their size or permanence, these bases inherently support military objectives that may include preparation for or facilitation of military interventions or warfare.

Additional parameters

Bases that consisted solely of U.S. forces, no coalition forces or co-bases. For air bases, I only included places where we built facilities in addition to pre-existing airstrips, airfields, and airports. For naval bases, I only included places where we built facilities in addition to harbors, ports, and marinas. This is to explore the effects of American planning, construction, and occupation in these environments.

Data Cleaning

- Excluded U.S. territories (Guam, USVI, Puerto Rico)
- Excluded places that were merely leased but weren't expanded
- Grouped facilities at the same location
- Excluded intelligence and surveillance sites

Data Analysis

I used R to answer some of my most pressing questions:

1. What are the most common reuses of military bases?
2. What causes most military bases to close?
3. Which facilities are the easiest to convert?

Current use data collection

Each base location has a set of coordinates. I took a multi-pronged approach to determine the current use.

1. Looking up the coordinates on Google Earth and surveying the landscape
2. Keyword searching in Google with the name of the base and country to see news mentions
3. Reading location-specific news articles, archival documents and development plans
4. Labeling the former base with one of the following categories

Categories

Abandoned: Military base features are clearly visible but have fallen into disrepair

Agriculture

Aviation

Air park
Airfield
Airport
Airstrip
Aviation school

Commercial/Business

Business park
Commercial district
Commercial zone
Ferry terminal
Headquarters
Offices
Port
Shopping center/mall

Cultural/Historical

Cultural district
Heritage district
Heritage site
Historical landmark
Museum
Theatre
UNESCO World Heritage Site
War Museum

Demolished

Development Phase
Construction phase
Planned
Planning phase

Educational/University

School
Student housing
University

Energy

Oil refinery
Power plant
Solar farm
Wind farm

Entertainment

Convention center
Entertainment
Event venue
Filming location

Government

Government buildings
Intelligence
Intelligence agency
NATO site
U.S. Embassy
United Nations offices

Harbor/Pier

Harbor
Pier
Wharf

Industrial

Industrial park
Industrial zone
Manufacturing
Manufacturing plant
Mine
Quarry
Storage facility
Warehouse

Infrastructure

Ammunition disposal facility
Cemetery
Communications tower
Mail distribution facility
Meteorology station
Prison
Radar station
Transmitter tower
Water tower

Inconclusive: Resources do not point to a single use

International dispute: Site is part of contested land

Law Enforcement

Police school
Police station
Police training center

Medical

Hospital
Nursing home

Mixed-Use: Mix of two or more of the other categories

Military

Military academy
Military airport
Military barracks
Military base
Military cemetery
Testing ground

[View more categories →](#)

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Nature/Recreation

Campground
Campgrounds
Hiking area
Nature
Nature preserve
Recreation area

Natural State: No evidence of use

No record: Unable to corroborate the base's existence

Social Services

Community center
Immigration office
Refugee camp
Refugee center
Rehabilitation center



Park

Memorial park
Park
Theme park

Tourism

Hotel
Resort
Tourist attraction

Residential

Residential
Residential district
Residential neighborhood
Senior citizen housing
Trailer park

Unspecified: No current use found and coordinates are unavailable

Waste/Environmental

Nuclear waste dump
Waste site

Road/Parking

Highway
Parking lot
Road
Vehicle storage



Science/Technology

Data center
Technology campus
Technology park



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