

## Plenty of Troops by Dan Jacoby

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates wants to send an additional 4,500 American troops to Afghanistan to supplement the 30,000 already there. The problem is that 30,000 isn't enough to get the job done, especially since our NATO "allies" aren't sending as many as they said they would. Meanwhile, Secretary Gates is being told that we don't have 4,500 additional troops to send, so Americans are dying in Afghanistan, the American-backed "government" is corrupt and ineffective, and the Taliban is getting stronger.

The truth, however, is that we have plenty of troops. We could easily deploy far more than 4,500 to Afghanistan, and we could deploy them without reducing our forces in Iraq.

The Pentagon's "Base Structure Report" for FY2007<sup>1</sup> recognizes over 800 American military bases overseas. Some of these bases have well over 10,000 U.S. troops. Global Research in Canada puts the total number of American troops overseas at over 250,000.<sup>2</sup>

What are these troops doing there? Hundreds of the bases were created either as post-WWII occupation posts or to stop an invasion by Soviet and Warsaw Pact tanks. WWII ended over 60 years ago, and there is no more Soviet Union or Warsaw Pact – in fact, our European enemies in WWII and several former Warsaw Pact countries are now members of NATO. Yet the "Base Structure Report" lists almost three pages of bases in Japan, and over six pages of bases in Germany.

We are spending tens, if not hundreds, of billions of dollars every year maintaining worthless overseas bases. Meanwhile, since our troops have no real function there (and don't think they don't know that), they're spending too much idle time. The result is little girls in Japan being raped, and 20 skiers were killed when a U.S. military plane flying out of Aviano Air Force Base in Italy sliced through the ski lift cable.

It's no wonder we're having problems with our "allies."

There is no doubt that some of these bases actually serve an important function. There are training exercises that require weather and ground conditions not available in the United States. Joint exercises with NATO and other allies sometimes require locations that are not only outside the U.S., but are also militarily secure. Some of these bases serve as staging areas for moving U.S. forces into combat zones, and others are needed as evacuation posts with major medical facilities. Most of these overseas bases, however, could be shut down without hurting our defense efforts.

Then there are the 4,400 U.S. military bases right here at home. How many of them are only kept functioning because some local Congressional representative has too much power and not enough patriotism?

If we closed even a small fraction of the unnecessary military bases, we could free up tens of thousands of military personnel. They could be reassigned to Iraq, Afghanistan, or anywhere else the Secretary of Defense deems – and we could finally defeat the Taliban, end the threat of Al Qaeda, and bring our troops home.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/BSR\\_2007\\_Baseline.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/BSR_2007_Baseline.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=5564>