



# **AUSA BACKGROUND BRIEF**

## ***U.S. OVERSEAS BASE RIGHTS MAY BE IN JEOPARDY***

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Since the end of World War II, the United States has relied on an extensive network of overseas bases to project military power to all corners of the globe. In recent years, however, U.S. military installations have increasingly been threatened with closure by their host nations. Even otherwise staunch U.S. allies such as Spain, Portugal, Greece and the Philippines are showing a growing reluctance to accommodate large U.S. military bases on their soil.

### **BACKGROUND**

At the outset of the cold war hundreds of U.S. military installations around the world served as crucial forward staging areas and facilities for the Armed Forces in an effort to contain Communist military expansion. Certain technological and political changes over the years, however, have obviated the need for particular bases. For instance, as the range of U.S. aircraft and missiles have increased, and as the Navy has launched additional aircraft carrier task forces, the need for bases in certain areas has dissipated. Likewise, the assumption of military responsibilities in some locations by U.S. allies has made an American U.S. presence less compelling.

Not surprisingly, more than three-fourths of all U.S. overseas bases are located in Europe. In fact, 224 U.S. military bases, airfields, depots and installations are in West Germany alone. Bases located outside Central Europe, because they are so few in number, tend to have greater individual strategic value. The strategic importance of a particular base or airfield is often related to the availability and cost of an equivalent substitute facility or capability. Thus, losing a base in Central Europe where such bases are more common and closer together, would not have the same impact on Western security interests as would the loss of a major facility in the Western Pacific.

Turning to the difficulties we currently face in Spain, Portugal, Greece and the Philippines, it is important to understand the similarities and differences in each nation's attempt to limit the U.S. military presence. First, these countries generally see U.S. military presence as a vestige of unpopular former rulers or governments. Second, these nations seemingly resent the dwindling foreign assistance funds the U.S. has made available to them in recent years. The threat to cancel or renegotiate base agreements is used by some as a lever to obtain greater levels of aid from the U.S. A brief review of the status of U.S. base rights negotiations in several key nations follows.

### **GREECE**

Prime Minister Andreas Papandrcou has served notice that he intends to close Hellenikon Air Base, near Athens, as the price for extending the Defense and Cooperation Agreement of 1983. That pact permits American access to three other major bases and some minor facilities in Greece the U.S. State Department seems prepared to sacrifice Hellenikon, an important staging base for USAF-Europe and the Military Airlift Command. The air base, is viewed as a symbol of Washington's support for the undemocratic military junta which ran Greece in the 1960's. Additionally, the government in Athens is upset, with the current level of American economic and military assistance about \$350 million annually and with U.S. military support for its perceived enemy Turkey.

### **THE PHILIPPINES**

In October 1988, the Reagan Administration agreed to pay \$962 million for continued access to Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Base in the Philippines through 1991. That agreement ended a long series of public negotiations wherein the Aquino government had originally demanded \$1.2 billion annually for continued U.S. use of these strategically vital Western Pacific installations.

Subic Bay, one of the largest naval facilities in the world, supports the two carrier battle groups of the U.S. Seventh Fleet. Clark Air Base, the largest American military facility outside the continental United States, is the home of the 13th Air Force, the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing and a tactical airlift wing.

It is not clear whether President Corazon Aquino will extend the base agreement beyond the 1991 expiration. Renegotiations are sure to include demands for increased economic and military assistance in return for continued American access. Moving the U.S. forces—perhaps to Guam or Saipan, twelve hundred miles east of the Philippines, while possible, would be incredibly expensive. (Estimates range from \$8-\$10 billion). Such a move would distance U.S. ships and planes from the South China Sea, Taiwan and from Japan's oil transit routes. The United States would also lose its local counterpart to Cam Ranh Bay, the U.S.-built naval base in Vietnam, now used extensively by the Soviet Pacific fleet.

## PORTUGAL

Our basing agreement with Portugal is also scheduled to expire in 1991. In a clear message of its intentions, the new government of Prime Minister Cavaco Silva last year threatened to end American use of the Lajes Air Base in the Azores unless Washington agreed to a substantial increase in the \$163 million in security assistance granted in fiscal year 1989. Lajes is a vital refueling station for Military Aircraft Command flights to Europe and the Middle East. It also serves as an Anti-Submarine Warfare facility to track Soviet submarines in the Atlantic.

## SPAIN

Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez won election under a pledge to reconsider Spain's military relationship with NATO. The 1986 Spanish vote to remain within the Atlantic Alliance included a commitment to reduce the American military presence in Spain. Since then, a major target for reduction has emerged in Torrejon Air Base near Madrid, headquarters for the U.S. 16th Air Force in Europe. The path of democratization, pursued by the Spanish government since the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975, is seen by many Spaniards to require increased military independence as well.

The government has demanded the closing of Torrejon and the removal from Spain of the 72 F-16 fighter aircraft of the U.S. 401st Tactical Fighter Wing by 1991, as the price for continued American access to other major bases in Spain. Among the latter are the huge naval facility at Rota, the air base at Moron, the air base at Zarazoga and the Bardenas bombing range.

The accord covering access to these bases actually expired in May 1988, but the U.S. and Spain have remained relatively quiet on the issue during negotiations for a new agreement. Fortunately, the Italian government has agreed to accept the displaced 401st Wing and other NATO allies, excluding the United States, have agreed to foot the \$800 million bill for the transfer.

## CONCLUSION

Although the temporary resolution of base rights problems in the Philippines and Spain has removed the matter from the headlines, the issues are certain to re-emerge in the near future.

In the next five years, the United States will need to renegotiate base agreements with Spain, Portugal, Morocco, the Philippines, Kenya, Oman, Greece and Turkey. Additionally, new negotiations will more than likely be required in Honduras and especially in Panama, where the future of the U.S. Southern Command Headquarters is in doubt. With little likelihood of any increased foreign assistance funds becoming available to assuage host nation's economic or military concerns, and with nationalism continuing to play an important role in our allies political decisions regarding base rights, the United States undoubtedly faces many difficult challenges in maintaining its present network of overseas bases.

(Prepared by the Institute of Land Warfare with information current as of November 1988.)