



NO FOREIGN MILITARY BASES IN AFRICA!



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1. Why No Foreign Military Bases in Africa

A base is any installation, facility, or site accommodating military personnel, weapons systems, and/or logistical infrastructure, used for training, information gathering, operational planning, command and control, administrative tasks, weapons storage, and/or launching attacks. A foreign base is any base located outside the operating country that is financed, operated, leased, rented, or temporarily accessed by that country, even if also used by the host country, and even if not formally labeled a base of the occupying country.

Africa has been home for foreign military bases. The #NoBasesAfrica campaign is grounded in the conviction that these bases in Africa do not promote peace, security, or stability but instead undermine them. Across the continent, the bases facilitate rapid military intervention by pre-positioning troops, weapons, aircraft, and logistical infrastructure, making war easier rather than less likely. Their presence heightens tensions, fuels militarism, and transforms African countries into strategic targets in global rivalries. Instead of deterring violence, foreign bases often provoke radicalization, deepen terrorist threats, and entrench arms races. They frequently bolster authoritarian and repressive regimes, granting legitimacy and military backing to governments implicated in human rights abuses while weakening democratic accountability. At the same time, these installations cause lasting environmental damage, pollute air and water, displace local and Indigenous communities from their lands, distort local economies, and impose social costs that far outweigh any promised benefits. Military personnel stationed abroad often operate under legal arrangements that shield them from accountability, leaving affected populations without recourse for crimes and abuses. Foreign military bases in Africa are not instruments of peace, they are mechanisms of militarization, dependency, and structural injustice. Therefore, the African chapters of World BEYOND War decided to conduct the #NoBasesAfrica campaign to call for a fundamental shift toward sovereignty, human security, environmental protection, and nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution.

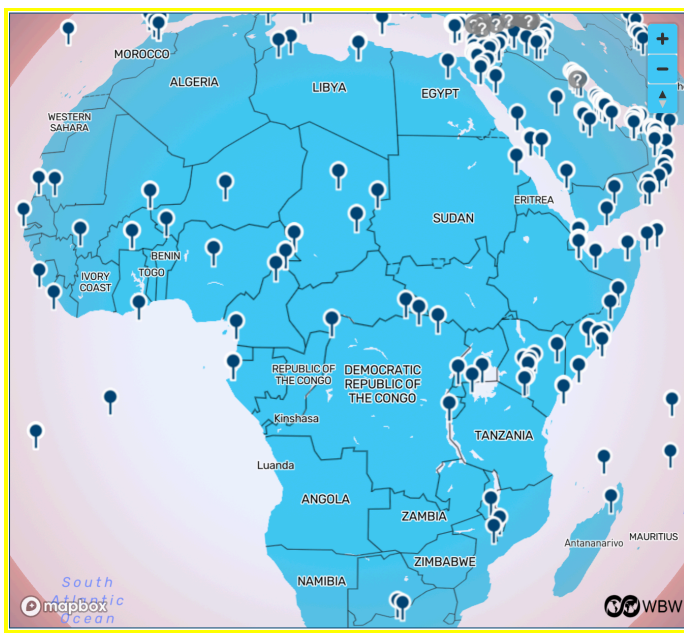
In fact, foreign military bases should not exist in Africa because they undermine sovereignty, reinforce authoritarian rule, and prolong conflict rather than promoting genuine security. Foreign bases operated by countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Türkiye, and others, often prop up unaccountable governments, allowing leaders to remain in power through external military backing instead of popular legitimacy.

This dynamic weakens democratic institutions and silences civil society, as decisions about base agreements are typically made in secrecy under the guise of “national security.” Beyond governance, foreign bases extend colonial patterns of control by making African states dependent on external military powers, a reality increasingly rejected in Sahel countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. These bases contribute to militarization and arms races, importing global rivalries such as the U.S. - Russia or NATO-related tensions onto African soil, thereby intensifying conflicts in places like Sudan.

Environmentally, bases cause severe damage through land appropriation, pollution, and resource depletion like in Djibouti, where large volumes of groundwater are extracted from multiple wells to supply military bases in a [semi-desert country that receives less than 200 mm of rain per year](#), putting extra stress on already scarce water resources.

Also, the heavy financial and social costs of hosting foreign troops divert scarce resources away from critical sectors like health, education, and economic development. Taken together, foreign military bases obstruct Africa’s self-determination and development, that’s why it’s necessary to consider closing them as a step toward lasting peace, sovereignty, and decolonization.

2. Who Has Military Bases in Africa?



Foreign Military Bases Map, at <https://worldbeyondwar.org/military-empires>

Several global powers maintain foreign military bases and military facilities across Africa, either on a permanent basis or through temporary arrangements. Officially, these military presences are justified as necessary to combat terrorism, secure maritime routes, train local armed forces, support peacekeeping operations, or provide logistical and humanitarian assistance. In practice, these bases form part of broader geopolitical and military strategies that extend far beyond the security needs of African populations.

The United States maintains by far the largest foreign military footprint in Africa with 49 bases, that is 61,25% of the foreign bases in Africa. As the world's most extensive military empire, the U.S. operates a wide network of bases, drone sites, logistics hubs, and access agreements across the continent. These installations are coordinated under the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) and are spread across multiple regions of Africa, many of which operate with limited transparency and democratic oversight.

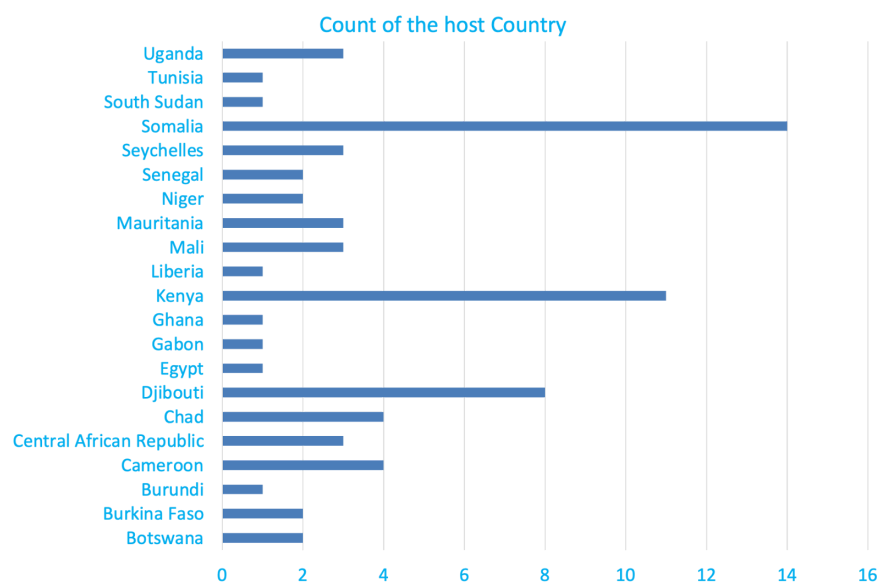
Beyond the United States currently operating its largest permanent base on the continent at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, several other foreign powers maintain military bases or military facilities in Africa:

- The United Kingdom operates bases and military installations, particularly in East Africa, and maintains long-standing defense arrangements with several African states
- The United Arab Emirates has expanded its military presence, especially around strategic maritime corridors, using bases and port facilities linked to regional conflicts and commercial interests
- France and Italy often through bilateral agreements or NATO-linked operations have maintained military infrastructures, particularly in former colonial spheres of influence
- Turkey has increased its military footprint in recent years, notably through training bases and defense cooperation agreements
- China, India, Canada, and Singapore maintain small military facilities, often linked to logistics, training, or naval operations.

In addition, Russia is actively expanding its military influence on the continent. While it currently operates fewer formal bases, Russia has forged military alliances and security agreements that may translate into new bases, often accompanied by arms transfers and private military involvement.

Foreign military bases in Africa today reflect geopolitical competition and strategic interests of multiple non-African states. China maintains its first overseas military facility in Djibouti as well, aimed at supporting naval logistics, anti-piracy missions, and securing its trade routes through the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Several European states have long had a presence; although France is reducing its footprint by closing permanent bases in West Africa such as in Senegal and transferring facilities back to local control after decades of presence, it still maintains forces in Djibouti and limited cooperation elsewhere. Japan also has its only overseas base in Djibouti, while other countries such as Italy, Germany, and Spain historically have had military outposts tied to broader anti-piracy and training missions. Plans for a Russian naval base on Sudan's Red Sea coast highlight emerging competition by Moscow for strategic footholds, potentially joining those of the U.S. and China in the region. Across Africa, independent deployments and bilateral agreements mean around 13 non-African countries currently have military presences through bases or outposts on the continent, with concentrations in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

Taken together, these foreign military installations are concentrated in a number of host countries, particularly those located in geopolitically strategic areas such as the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and key maritime routes, such as Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti . Rather than contributing to long-term peace and stability, this concentration of foreign forces has deepened militarization and exposed local populations to new risks.



For an overview of foreign military bases worldwide, including Africa, see:

<https://worldbeyondwar.org/bases>

3. Why Foreign Bases Are Dangerous

Far from maintaining peace and protecting civilian populations as officially claimed, the presence of foreign military bases in Africa has often contributed to the entrenchment of authoritarian rule, the erosion of democratic governance, and the deterioration of human rights.

Rather than strengthening civilian institutions, foreign military cooperation frequently reinforces ruling elites and security apparatus, grants political legitimacy and military support to governments that rely on repression to remain in power. In many cases, military bases serve as pillars for authoritarian regimes calling themselves democracies.

Cameroon offers a telling example. Despite being formally classified as a democratic state, the country has experienced over four decades of rule by the same leader, maintained in large part through the use of military force against political opposition and civilian populations. In such contexts, foreign military partnerships do not promote accountability or reform; instead, they contribute to the survival of entrenched regimes and the repression of citizens, pushing democratic aspirations further out of reach.

This pattern is not isolated. U.S. foreign military bases, in particular, are disproportionately located in some of the world's most repressive states, where they provide strategic support to governments with a record of abuse. These in Africa include, among others, Cameroon, Egypt, Gabon, Sudan and Uganda. In these settings, military cooperation often takes precedence over human rights considerations and reinforces systems of impunity.

Beyond governance, foreign military bases help perpetuate neocolonial power dynamics. They allow external actors to exert decisive influence over African political and security decisions. The sovereignty of African states is repeatedly undermined when key security choices are shaped or imposed by foreign powers that control military infrastructure on their soil. As a result, public resentment has grown, alongside strong anti-imperialist and anti-militarization narratives. This dynamic is particularly visible in the Sahel, where countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Chad have increasingly rejected French military presence as a symbol of continued domination rather than protection.

Africa has long been the stage of devastating armed conflicts that have claimed millions of lives in countries like Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Libya, Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso and a few others. Yet decades of foreign military presence have not resolved these crises. On the contrary, military bases have often accelerated arms races, intensified conflict dynamics, and militarized political solutions, but failed to address the root causes of violence. In several cases, external geopolitical rivalries have been exported onto African soil, turning local conflicts into proxy battlegrounds. The war in Sudan, where international rivalries (including those linked to Russia and Ukraine) have extended their influence, illustrates how foreign military interests can deepen instability rather than reduce it.

Foreign military bases do not enhance security in Africa. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies reports that [terrorism-related deaths in Africa have risen sharply in recent years, reaching a record 23,322 fatalities in 2023, with over 150,000 deaths linked to militant Islamist groups over the past decade](#), which contrasts with the very low levels of extremist violence recorded in the early 2000s. The two primary theaters of U.S. military operations (the Horn of Africa and the Sahel) have simultaneously witnessed some of the largest increases in civilian casualties. These trends expose the troubling reality that foreign military bases have neither delivered peace and security nor development.

4. Efforts ongoing to close bases in Africa

Efforts to close foreign military bases in Africa are growing, though they often unfold in politically sensitive and opaque environments. Decisions regarding the hosting of foreign troops and military infrastructure are frequently classified as matters of national security, which keeps citizens rarely informed and public debate limited. Civil society organizations that seek transparency on these issues are sometimes viewed with suspicion, accused of serving foreign interests rather than national sovereignty. This climate of secrecy makes accountability difficult and reinforces the imbalance between governments and the populations they represent. For example, the World BEYOND War chapter in Cameroon formally approached the U.S. Embassy to request information and dialogue regarding the U.S. military presence in the country. No response was received. This illustrates the broader challenge faced by civil society actors attempting to promote transparency and democratic oversight over foreign military agreements.

Despite these obstacles, resistance to foreign military bases has intensified in recent years. Across parts of the continent particularly in the Sahel, calls for the withdrawal of foreign troops have become central to broader movements for decolonization, sovereignty, and political self-determination. Popular mobilization and political decisions have led to the closure of bases or withdrawal of foreign forces in Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Chad. In several of these countries, governments, often with significant public backing, have demanded the departure of French forces and the renegotiation or termination of defense agreements.

Civil society movements have played a key role in shaping this momentum. In Niger, the M62 Movement mobilized large-scale demonstrations against foreign military presence. In Burkina Faso, the Balai Citoyen movement has voiced strong opposition to continued foreign military influence. In France itself, the association Survie has consistently advocated for the closure of French military bases in Africa and challenged neocolonial defense arrangements.

World BEYOND War chapters in Africa, particularly in Senegal, Mali, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia and Cameroon, have made plans to raise awareness about foreign military bases and advocate for their closure through education, public engagement, and campaigns including the #NoBasesAfrica. These initiatives are part of a global movement seeking to redefine security away from militarization and toward non-violent approaches to conflict resolution.

While foreign military presence remains extensive, recent developments in West Africa demonstrate that withdrawal and the closure of bases are possible when political will aligns with public demand. These cases suggest that organized civic action, combined with governmental decisions rooted in sovereignty and accountability, can begin to shift the trajectory toward a demilitarized future.

5. The expectancy of the campaign

The #NoBasesAfrica campaign seeks to generate public awareness and ultimately to end the presence of foreign military bases across the African continent. The primary expectation of the campaign is to increase public understanding of the risks associated with foreign military bases. These installations are part of an alarming

global rise in military spending and preparation for war. As militarization intensifies, the likelihood of armed conflict grows and military bases, along with surrounding communities, become potential targets in case of confrontations. Through educational events, public discussions, webinars, demonstrations, rallies, peaceful protests, meetings with government officials, and creative nonviolent actions, the campaign wants to bring the issue into public debate and encourage democratic oversight.

Another key expectation is to expose the environmental and social costs of foreign military infrastructure. Military bases frequently rank among the most severe environmental disaster sites, contributing to soil contamination, water pollution, air degradation, and intense noise pollution. In addition to ecological damage, many bases function as isolated enclaves where local populations face restricted access, second-class status, and limited legal recourse, while military personnel often benefit from immunity arrangements.

The campaign expects to stimulate a dialogue between civil society, policymakers, and diplomatic actors. Public pressure has historically led to the closure of military bases, the blocking of planned installations, or their conversion into civilian infrastructure with far greater social and economic benefits. The military facilities could be converted into projects that serve environmental sustainability, economic development, and peacebuilding. In the long term, the campaign envisions an Africa where security is no longer defined by foreign military presence, but by diplomacy and international cooperation, for the ultimate expectation of #NoBasesAfrica is not only the closure of foreign military bases, but a transformation from militarized dominance to a lasting peace based on respect and dialogue.

6. Call to Action: Sign and share the campaign petition

Despite often being justified as support for security and counter-terrorism, foreign bases in Africa carry significant dangers and risks for host nations and the continent as a whole.

First, they deepen dependency and erode sovereignty, especially when agreements are negotiated without democratic transparency or local consent, leading to decisions that prioritize foreign interests over African autonomy.

Second, these bases can become flashpoints for conflict and extremism in Africa already threatened by terrorism.

Third, the opacity of basing agreements can benefit elites and foreign contractors and therefore reinforce inequalities, while offering limited economic development for local populations.

For these reasons, **the African chapters of World BEYOND War call on the African Governments who allow the bases and the Foreign Governments who use the pretext of the bases to plunder Africa's resources, to close them immediately.**

For more information on the Global Days of Action to #CloseBases, see <https://daytoclosebases.org>