

TITLE: Explained: the US military's global presence across the world

SUMMARY: It is an unprecedented power spread, but Washington has established military bases and deployed troops across all seven continents.

From Hollywood to Coca-Cola and Google, many of the world citizens have long felt that the US has a cultural hegemony across the globe.

While there are different dynamics for ensuring American cultural domination, ranging from the powerful economy, to its unusual political structure, Washington's global military presence across continents appears to be [the real reason](#) behind its worldwide supremacy.

America has hundreds of military bases across the world from Honduras to Australia, Japan, Iraq, Qatar to Germany, covering all continents. [According to David Vine](#), an anthropologist at the American University, who [wrote a book on American bases](#), the US might even maintain close to "800 military bases in more than 70 countries and territories abroad."

Washington keeps troops numbered around 150,000 to 200,000 abroad across more than 150 countries, [according to different sources](#). US troop numbers vary from time to time depending on changes in policies, as well as the classified nature of military data. In 2017, the [Defense Manpower Data Center](#) noted that the US military had at least 200,000 active-service members abroad, being deployed across 170 countries worldwide.

Remember scenes from Hollywood movies? American special forces and CIA units conducting top-secret operations and going after anti-American counterparts?

In real life, from the capture of Iraq's former President Saddam Hussein on home soil, to the killing of Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan, Americans have exerted their power and standing all over the world.

In 2016, US special forces operations happened [across 138](#) nations, meaning Washington's clandestine units have run over territories, covering 70 percent of the globe.

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The global clout of American foreign deployments is unparalleled against any other modern nation and state in world history. In great contrast, other Western military powers, Britain, France and Russia, only "have about 30 foreign bases combined", wrote Vine.

"As distinct from other peoples, most Americans do not recognize—or do not want to recognize—that the United States dominates the world through its military power. Due to government secrecy, our citizens are often ignorant of the fact that our garrisons encircle the planet," [said Chalmers Johnson](#), a former CIA consultant.

Official numbers vs real numbers

The US government's secrecy also prevents a definite estimate of just how many American military troops operate abroad, misleading many through official numbers that differ from true troop presence in countries like Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq.

More recently, as Washington prepares to leave Afghanistan, it was reported that there were 3,500 troops in the war-torn country, [according to American, European and local officials](#), despite the fact that the official number stands at 2,500.

One thousand soldiers makes an important difference in military terms because the US is able to control some territories in states like Syria with hundreds of troops, giving most military tasks to proxies like the YPG, the Syrian wing of the PKK, a terror group, according to both Washington and Ankara.

In Syria, Washington has applied almost the same secrecy and political manoeuvring as Afghanistan, much to the dismay of President Trump.

James Jeffrey, former special envoy to Syria, publicly acknowledged that he and his colleagues were [hiding real troop](#) numbers from the president himself. "We were always playing shell games to not make clear to our leadership how many troops we had there," he [said](#) in an interview published last year.

In 2019, Trump agreed to leave about two hundred troops in northern Syria ahead of a Turkish operation against the YPG/PKK, deferring to Ankara's demands. But real numbers never decreased to 200 and were kept around 900, according to [anonymous sources](#).

"What Syria withdrawal? There was never a Syria withdrawal," Jeffrey said.

In Iraq, a country which suffered hugely from the 2003 US occupation, a similar kind of secrecy continues. The US has more than 5,000 troops stationed in different locations in Iraq, [according to American media accounts](#). Then again, experts approach that estimate with a lot of reservation.

"Except the American military officials, nobody can know the number of American forces in Iraq," said Mehmet Bulovali, an Iraqi-Kurdish political analyst, [in a previous interview](#).

At the height of the invasion, there were more than [500 American military bases](#) around the country, from Erbil, the Kurdish regional capital, to Ramadi and Baghdad, the capital of the central government. Currently, Washington keeps 12 bases across Iraq, [according to military sources](#).

US continental commands

Almost like ancient Rome's different legions across the world, which ranged from Africa to central and Western Europe to its Asian territories, Washington has also established commands across the world. Overall, under the Pentagon, the US military has eleven [unified combatant commands](#).

The Central Command, which appears to be the most important unit among others, focuses on operations mainly based in the Middle East and Central Asia. [According to the US media](#), Washington has troops numbering around 45,000 to 65,000 across the Gulf.

The greatest number of US troops, which have been [estimated](#) to be around 50,000 to 55,000, are stationed in Japan, a WWII rival of Washington, as part of the Indo-Pacific Command. In South Korea, the US has also a sizable presence with 26,000 troops.

The European command's headquarters is based in Germany, another rival of Washington, where the US keeps its largest foreign military presence in any country after Japan. Different estimates exist over the number of American troops in Germany, but the [most recent ones point](#) to a figure of around 33,000.

Besides Europe, Indo-Pacific and Middle East commands, the Pentagon has also the African Command, which focuses on operations across the continent, and the Southern Command, which concentrates operations across Central and South America.

Ends here...

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All ends here....

- US military spending
- US commands x
- Germany and Japan examples x

Qs:

1. There are various estimates over the number of US troops across the world. Could you give us your estimate on that matter? Also what is your estimate over the number of American bases abroad?
2. In how many countries, the US has a military presence?
3. Some think the US global military presence is something unparalleled in world history. What do you say about that? How do you rate it in a historical context?
4. How has the US come to this point of global military dominance? Could you give a little explanation on the expansion of the US military across the globe?
5. Do you think the US military power is the greatest factor of the American global dominance?
6. Do you think the US military presence will eventually diminish or increase across the world?
7. How do host nations usually react to American military presence?

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