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## AGENDA ITEM 98

Elimination of foreign military bases in the countries  
of Asia, Africa and Latin America (continued) (A/  
6399, A/C.1/L.369, A/C.1/L.385, A/C.1/L.386)

### GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. AUGUSTE (Haiti) said that some knowledge of the history of foreign military bases was useful for a clear understanding of the item before the Committee.

2. In 1949 part of Europe had been in the grip of anxiety and fear inspired by recent events. Vast territories, with an area of some 450,000 square kilometres and a population of about 30 million, had been annexed, and political régimes had been imposed by force on other areas, amounting to 1 million square kilometres and with a population of 95 million. Small European States weakened by the Second World War had been unable to halt the expansionist policy of their over-ambitious neighbours; in the face of the growing danger, the instinct of self-preservation had prompted them to form alliances and they had turned to the United States for help. Men of conviction such as President Truman and Secretary of State Marshall had overcome traditional United States isolationism and persuaded the Senate to adopt the Vandenberg resolution<sup>1/</sup> authorizing a peace-time military commitment outside the American continent. The existence of many military bases therefore stemmed from multilateral and bilateral treaties freely concluded in order to oppose a common danger; they were strictly defensive bases, established to repel attack. Some bases had been established in colonial territories as links in a large system of collective defense. They certainly had not been established merely to stifle liberation movements, and for that reason, when such territories had become independent, new arrangements on the bases had been concluded with the new States that desired to continue them.

<sup>1/</sup> See *Congressional Record*, Proceedings and Debates of the 80th Congress, second session, vol. 94, part 5 (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), pp. 6053-54, Senate Resolution 239.

3. International law recognized self-defence as one of the most sacred duties of all States. A State which believed itself threatened had the right, in full exercise of its sovereignty, to conclude such treaties and enter into such alliances as it deemed necessary to safeguard the inviolability of its territory and the security of its people. Alliances, like bases, could be made or unmade only through the decision of the contracting parties, without over-zealous and often self-serving intervention by others. Attempts to use the United Nations in order to place a different interpretation on the question of bases amounted to intervention in the internal affairs of States. Those who alleged that certain reciprocal long-term accords were invalid because they had not been freely agreed to could take up the matter in the proper tribunal.

4. The bases also had considerable economic importance. Some of them had become essential parts of the economy of the country in which they were situated. They increased the country's invisible assets and were important to its balance of payments. If such bases were dismantled there would be problems of reconversion, which were serious even in a developed economy and still more so in an undeveloped one.

5. His delegation would vote against the Soviet draft resolution.

6. Mr. LOPEZ VILLAMIL (Honduras) said that it would be naive and illogical to regard the draft resolution as anything but a propaganda salvo in the cold war and an intrusion of politics and ideology into the work of the United Nations.

7. First of all, the great Powers had not arrived at a basic agreement for the establishment of general and complete disarmament that would end international tension and provide valid reasons for practical measures such as the dismantling of military bases.

8. Secondly, both under the principles of international law and under the provisions of the United Nations Charter, Member States were entitled, in full exercise of their sovereignty, to enter into such economic, political, military or other treaties as they saw fit. Such treaties had been concluded by the communist countries of Europe for strategic reasons, as well as by non-communist European countries and by countries in other parts of the world. Sovereignty was indivisible and inalienable and was not subject to outside interference by the international legal community. The on-site observation of nuclear tests had been firmly opposed by one of the great Powers precisely on the ground of its exclusive rights of sovereignty.

9. Moreover, the Charter of the Organization of American States explicitly stated that measures adopted for the maintenance of peace and security in accordance with existing treaties did not constitute a violation of the principles of non-intervention in the affairs of a State and of the inviolability of its territory. Every State had the right to establish such political, economic and social systems and such defence systems as it considered most suitable.

10. Thirdly; while the draft resolution spoke of military bases in Africa, Asia and Latin America, it did not mention the elimination of military bases in Europe, particularly the withdrawal of occupation forces from European countries, many of which had fought against Nazism. The amount of military equipment and the number of troops in the military bases in Africa, Asia and Latin America were far exceeded by the military equipment and troops which the Soviet Union had stationed in Eastern Europe and was using to impose a political system in the occupied countries and in the territories it had seized from its neighbours. The failure of the draft resolution to mention the Soviet forces, or the very different case of the military base on Spanish soil at Gibraltar, showed that the draft resolution was merely propaganda on the part of the Soviet Union to increase its own power in the world while hiding its imperialistic intentions behind the banner of anti-colonialism.

11. His delegation would vote against the draft resolution.

12. In Latin America there were Soviet troops, disguised as civilian technicians, in a country which threatened a number of other Latin American countries with aggression and intervention and had more military equipment than all the rest of the Caribbean countries. Moreover, the world could not but be alarmed at the fact that the Soviet Union and Communist China, alone among the great Powers, had continued their territorial expansion at the expense of small countries surrounding them. The colonization of Tibet, the aggression against India, and many well-known events in Asia since Mao Tse-tung's seizure of power in mainland China seemed to be consistently overlooked by the Soviet Union, which apparently attached a very restricted meaning to such words as "colonialism" and "imperialism".

13. Honduras had no foreign military bases in its territory and hoped it would never need any. It had been able to assert its territorial claims in the General Assembly, unlike the countries whose territory had been seized by the Soviet Army. Until a climate of genuine understanding between the two opposing blocs was established, however it could not accept the Soviet proposal. Great changes had taken place in the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries since the death of Stalin, and the policy of peaceful coexistence had permitted some improvement in international relations; but those facts alone were not enough to create confidence in the Soviet Union's propaganda manoeuvres in the United Nations.

14. Mr. TARABANOV (Bulgaria) said that foreign military bases in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America had been set up on the pretext of

"collective security", but they were actually used to advance the policies of the imperialist States and aggressive military and political groups. The increase in the number of military bases equipped with modern weapons, including weapons of mass destruction, was one of the most alarming features of the armaments race and increased the danger of a world conflagration. Their elimination would therefore be a partial disarmament measure that would help to ease international tension.

15. Unfortunately, a few delegations, including those of the two great Powers which held the greatest number of foreign military bases throughout the world, had displayed a negative attitude and used language which suggested that they were trying to divert attention from the serious questions before the Committee.

16. The history of the post-war period showed that the imperialist Powers were using their military bases in other countries not for collective security but as jumping-off points for aggressive actions and armed intervention aimed at securing world domination and supporting colonialist régimes everywhere. For example, United States aggression against the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam and its armed intervention against the people of South Viet-Nam were being carried out through the United States military bases in South Viet-Nam, Thailand and other Asian countries. In September 1966 official United States sources had announced that United States troops in Thailand numbered 35,000, three times as many as in 1965. The modern military airfields and other large installations manned by those troops were being used to support the aggression in Viet-Nam.

17. Dozens of United States military bases and installations scattered throughout Latin America were being used to support United States domination of Latin American countries and intervention in their internal affairs. The United States claimed that its military bases in other countries had been established with the sovereign consent of those countries; but the hypocrisy of that argument was most clearly demonstrated by the fact that the United States continued to maintain its military base at Guantánamo, even though the people and Government of Cuba had demanded its removal precisely on the ground of Cuban sovereignty.

18. In other cases the continued existence of foreign military bases had been justified by reference to various imposed agreements and other so-called legal instruments. But the fact was that most of the military bases maintained by the imperialist Powers in other countries were relics of the colonial régime and were now being used as an instrument of neo-colonialism and to suppress national liberation movements. The military bases of the United States and other colonial Powers in Africa and the Middle East had already acquired a rather unsavory reputation in that respect. The armed intervention by imperialist forces in the Congo, the provocations committed by Portuguese colonialists against the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the armed attacks on Yemen by United Kingdom troops operating from their bases in Aden and southern Arabia were only a few examples of events

which proved beyond doubt that the military bases of the imperialist countries were being used as a weapon against national liberation movements. That was why the General Assembly had, in resolution 2105 (XX), requested the colonial Powers to dismantle the military bases installed in colonial territories and to refrain from establishing new ones.

19. Bulgaria advocated the elimination of foreign military bases in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe alike. In opposing the Soviet draft resolution, the Honduran representative had suggested that a start should be made by eliminating foreign military bases in Europe, particularly the Soviet bases alleged to exist in European countries. In fact, the Soviet Union had itself originally suggested the elimination of foreign military bases in Europe and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from European countries. But the countries which were interested in maintaining military bases in Europe had objected to the proposal on precisely the same grounds as those they were now invoking against the proposal for the elimination of foreign military bases only in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In a declaration on the strengthening of peace and security in Europe, adopted at Bucharest on 5 July 1966, the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty had reaffirmed their desire for the elimination of foreign military bases in Europe. They hoped that the elimination of foreign military bases in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, as a first step, would create favourable conditions for the subsequent elimination of bases in Europe and other parts of the world. The elimination of bases in regions at present beset by tensions and conflict would benefit the peoples there and increase security throughout the world. The Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, at their Conferences at Belgrade in September 1961 and at Cairo in October 1964, had categorically demanded the elimination of foreign bases.

20. His delegation whole-heartedly supported the Soviet draft resolution. Its adoption would show that the United Nations was anxious to reduce international tension and strengthen peace and security not only in Asia, Africa and Latin America but throughout the world.

21. Mr. BOUATTOURA (Algeria) was glad that the USSR had suggested the inclusion of item 98 in the agenda of the current session.

22. The question of the elimination of foreign military bases was one which had been discussed in recent years by a number of international bodies, including the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament. In 1964 the Cairo Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries had declared its support for countries which were seeking to secure the evacuation of foreign bases on their territory and had called upon all States maintaining troops or bases in other countries to remove them forthwith.

23. Foreign military bases retained on the territories of newly independent developing countries were relics of a past era. The true nature and manifold purposes of military bases retained or established in countries of the "third world" were quite

clear from recent history. In the first place, foreign military bases formed part of a global strategy of encirclement. The most active bases at the present time were those in South-East Asia. The squadrons which carried out daily bombing raids on North and South Viet-Nam were based on airfields in the Pacific. There had recently been a massive build-up of strategic bases on islands in the Indian Ocean, such as Mauritius and the Seychelles, where the local populations—reduced to a few thousand—were unable to demand that the bases should be removed.

24. For the moment, the bases were being used principally for maintaining the *status quo* and protecting economic interests, particularly in oil. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, they had been used for direct military intervention in the domestic affairs of young States. They were obviously intended to suppress all popular movements and maintain in power oligarchic factions representing colonial or neo-colonial interests. They were fundamentally aggressive in nature and were permanent sources of tension. Some Powers even believed that they had sovereign rights in the territories where their bases were established. Some representatives' definition of a base as a complex of military installations usually including a port or an airfield, and containing stockpiles of military equipment, was too narrow. With the perpetuation of colonialism some bases, particularly in Africa, extended over whole territories. The Portuguese colonies in Africa were helping to maintain the immense neo-colonial base of South Africa and to strengthen Southern Rhodesia as a new aggressive base. In the Middle East too an artificial State had been created as a base for foreign intervention.

25. Those enclaves in Africa and Asia were designed to exert permanent pressure on the peoples of the two continents and to protect the economic and strategic privileges of foreign Powers. The continued existence of foreign military bases should not be considered in the abstract. It was one of the major obstacles to the political, economic and social freedom and independence of the peoples of the "third world".

26. In resolution 2105 (XX) the General Assembly had recognized that the existence of foreign military bases was incompatible with the sacred right of peoples to national independence and freedom. Foreign bases were a direct or potential threat to the security of the host country and to the whole area covered by their activities.

27. The elimination of foreign military bases would contribute significantly to the total liberation of young nations. It would help to usher in a new era of international co-operation based on mutual respect and the equality of all States, and thereby to realize the lofty ideals proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.

28. Mr. ECOBESCU (Romania) said that the existence of foreign military bases and the presence of foreign troops on the territories of States was one of the major obstacles to the normalization of international relations and the establishment of fruitful co-operation between all States. The vast network of foreign

military bases maintained in various regions by certain Western Powers, and particularly the United States, was a permanent source of interference in the domestic affairs of States. It prevented peoples from exercising their fundamental sovereign rights and was a threat to international peace and security. In the preceding discussion several delegations had quite rightly pointed out that the existence of foreign military bases in newly independent countries was tantamount to the continuation of colonialism. Neo-colonialist practices of that kind were incompatible with the irreversible process of the elimination of all forms of colonial domination.

29. The whole history of the post-war years, and particularly the aggressive war now being waged by the United States against the Viet-Nameese people and the United States intervention in the domestic affairs of other States in South-East Asia, showed that foreign military bases provoked tension and conflict and did not really guarantee the security of the countries in which they were located. Romania advocated the total abolition of all foreign military bases in all continents, particularly in the newly independent States, where the presence of foreign military bases was a serious obstacle to independent political and economic development. The abolition of all bases would improve the international situation, promote confidence and co-operation between peoples and facilitate agreement on disarmament. His country also favoured the abolition of military blocs, which were an anachronism.

30. Some representatives had argued that the maintenance of foreign military bases on the territory of other States was legally justified, in the sense that it was sanctioned by international agreements. But the problem of foreign military bases was so important that considerations of a purely formal character could not be regarded as decisive. If the agreements invoked had been imposed by one State on another in order to perpetuate an illegal situation, if they violated the sovereignty of States or if they constituted a threat to peace, security and co-operation between States in general, then they were contrary to the principles of *jus cogens*, from which States were not permitted to derogate in their treaty arrangements. Under article 50 of the draft articles on the law of treaties adopted by

the International Law Commission,<sup>2/</sup> a treaty was void if it conflicted with a peremptory norm of general international law from which no derogation was permitted. The agreements invoked to justify the maintenance of foreign military bases should be regarded in that light.

31. The Romanian delegation supported the Cuban people's legitimate demands that the United States abandon its military base at Guantánamo. The United States representative had tried to justify the maintenance of that base by reference to certain agreements concluded between the United States and Cuba. But the real nature and value of those agreements was clear from a careful study of their provisions. Under article III of the Agreement concluded at Havana on 16 February 1903, the United States was allowed to exercise complete jurisdiction and control over and within the part of Cuban territory occupied by the base. Under article 3 of the Treaty of 22 May 1903, it was permitted to intervene in the domestic affairs of Cuba. Under article I of the Agreement of 2 July 1903, it had agreed to pay to the Republic of Cuba the annual sum of 2,000 dollars in gold coin of the United States, as long as it occupied that part of Cuban territory.

32. By armed intervention the United States had prevented the People's Republic of China from exercising its rights over Taiwan, a part of Chinese territory. It had justified its action by invoking certain agreements concluded with the Taipeh authorities. But what value could be attached to legal instruments concluded in violation of the fundamental principles of international law?

33. The preceding discussion had amply demonstrated the importance and urgency of the item the Soviet Union had proposed for discussion. The Committee should give the item serious attention, and the General Assembly should support the efforts already being made by several States to secure the elimination of foreign military bases and the withdrawal of foreign troops to their own countries.

*The meeting rose at 12 noon.*

<sup>2/</sup> See Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-first Session, Supplement No. 9, pp. 16-17.