

Oh, and your reubens are too gristly, even if the pasta salad more than makes up for it.

*Justin Bengtson
Eugene*

IMPORTED HERB

Thank goodness for *EW* letters. 'Tis about the only place to find occasional mention of the War On (some) Drugs. Writer Robert Simms, in his letter "Politics of Poppies" (11/15), makes noise about some of the most

glaring points in the perpetuity of failure that is the drug war.

Besides the economic boost our drug war is providing to the Taliban and others in the Middle East, here at home the story is the same but different. Instead of funding the Taliban, we here in the U.S. fund Asian cartels operating indoor pot farms and Latin American crime organizations responsible for outdoor pot "farms" growing thousands and tens of thousands of plants in single loca-

tions, ruining domestic water sources and destroying habitat. Where once domestic herb came from the toil of hard-working locals, now we have international criminal syndicates reaping the profits.

The drug war is a boon, a goose laying golden eggs, for the world's drug cartels (and its corporate counterpart, the for-profit military-drugwar-industrial-prison-complex).

Here in Oregon — where we have probably the nation's most successful medical

cannabis program — "crime fighting" knucklehead Kevin Mannix is seeking to dismantle the state's self-sufficient Oregon Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP) and replace it with a policy that would have the state paying for the synthetic cannabinoid pharmaceutical Marinol for patients who want to continue using cannabis medicine. He wants to replace a program (the OMMP) that put back almost one million dollars into the state's coffers in 2005. How many med-

viewpoint BY MARK GILLEM

Land Clash

The impact of our sprawling military outposts

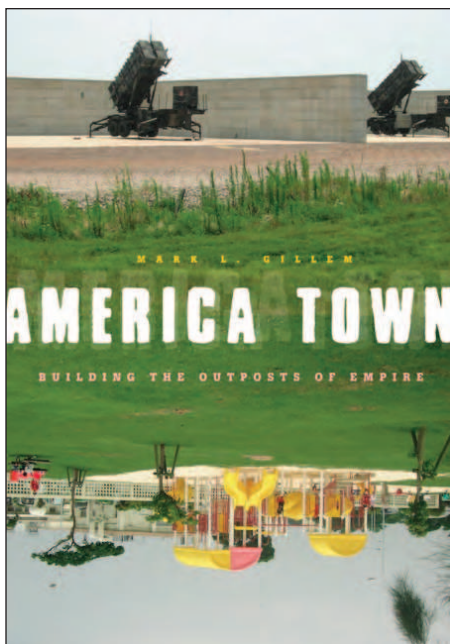
"Can you drop 500 feet?" I asked the pilot. "Sorry, I can barely hear you," came the muffled reply. After I adjusted my headset, I tried again. The helmet kept out some of the din, but I could still barely hear the pilot's confirming response, "OK, entering 2,500 feet."

I felt it, though. The drop and accompanying banking maneuver forced me against the seat. We had lifted off just after sunrise and were hovering near the Pacific coastline. A cerulean sky and still seas would greet the throngs of swimmers and boaters that usually played over the colorful coral reefs. After arriving at the right spot, I opened the side door and pulled a spring-loaded lever; my seat lunged out of the hovering Blackhawk and locked into place with a jerk. I was outside the relative safety of the helicopter, and the only thing between the ground and my seat was 2,500 feet of clear air.

With the exterior seat firmly in place, I began the photo shoot. I took the best shots when the helicopter was banking 90 degrees and I was face down above the striking landscape of Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, Japan. Beneath me was the landscape of America's Defense Department sprawled across the beautiful tropical island.

The most striking views were at the borders where the 11,018-acre base met its Japanese neighbors. America's landscapes of consumption had found their way to Okinawa. The base's subdivisions and strip malls abutted the compact urban fabric of Okinawa-chi, Kadena-cho and Chatan-cho. The golf course stood ready to defend the base at its western edge. The split-level ranch homes had yards big enough to land several Blackhawks. The main shopping center's parking lot was bigger than the dense town center of Okinawa-chi. What was the U.S. doing building like this in a place so short of land that airports are constructed on artificial islands?

Since Sept. 11, 2001, scholars have published numerous books on empire. Some have even focused on the expanding network of America's overseas bases. Yet none of these authors addressed questions I posed in the Blackhawk that morning. Their focus has principally been on the strategic implications of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. On the political left, these wars testified to imperial hubris. America was acting largely alone, without the consent of the global order. On the political right, scholars viewed the wars as a justifiable use of imperial power. Largely missing from these accounts, however, was a discussion of the spatial impacts of projecting imperial might. I am not interested in essentializing American troops as lazy, sex-starved imperial storm troopers, as some writers have done. Nor am I content with simply quantifying the impact in terms of the numbers of overseas bases - which now totals nearly 900 bases occupying more than 700,000 acres. Sheer numbers can mask real issues. As an architect and planner, I am more interested in the actual bases themselves and the processes used in their design and planning. How imperial powers use land is a significant concern. Despite widespread media attention focusing on the tragic stories of rapes, deadly accidents and environmental damage, surveys of local residents near some of these outposts reveal not so much an all-consuming desire for their demise but disgust, above all, with the excessive use of land by American forces. The excesses of American culture are indeed most evident in the way the U.S. military consumes land.



An aerial photo shows urban Okinawa on the left and the sprawling U.S. Air Force Kadena Air base on the right

A few years ago, in a unique form of protest against these land use practices, the Korea Confederation of Trade Unions coordinated the efforts of 600 citizens under a "buy one pyong movement" to acquire land just outside Osan Air Base as a symbolic foothold against its growth. One pyong is about 35.5 square feet. Like the Japanese tsubo (which is also roughly 35.5 square feet), this measure is a telling example of the value of land. American planners typically measure land in terms of acres. One acre is 43,560 square feet. While land has been plentiful in America, the units of measure in South Korea and Japan reveal that land is a precious resource. After all, banks do not measure gold by the ton but by the ounce. Blissfully unaware of the value of foreign land, military planners continue to demand even more of it for their sprawling compounds. In February 2007, for example, more than 80,000 Italians marched in protest of a planned expansion of a U.S. Army installation near Vicenza, Italy. In Asia and Europe, American land use practices are helping convert allies into opponents.

Imperial powers have extended an imposing reach across the globe, which at a minimum included the establishment of temporary and permanent military outposts used both to project imperial power and to control the occupied territories and populations. From the Peloponnesian wars to the Iraq wars, building military outposts has been a central function of power projection that scholars too often ignore in the imperial debates. These places, built by and for expatriates, incorporate familiar building patterns but are also transformed by local conditions. They bring together diaspora communities searching for spatial familiarity.

Understanding the impact of these outposts is increasingly relevant in this era of preemptive war. This summer the Bush administration cited South Korea as its model for "temporary" outposts in Iraq. Department of Defense leaders favor an extended troop presence similar to the South Korea model, where the U.S. still has roughly 37,000 soldiers more than 50 years after the end of armed conflict. By looking at "enduring" outposts in South Korea, we may be able to better understand what might happen in these war-torn regions as "temporary" locations often become "permanent."

I suggest that the spatial model used for these enduring outposts is a low-density suburb, exported from the homeland, replete with auto dependency, isolated uses and low net densities. It is a model that requires vast tracts of buildable land to give residents a slice of the American Dream. It requires the demolition of Korean villages and Italian farms. And it is a model that vastly increases the social, political and environmental cost of empire's reach.

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