Temporary Occupation, 2003

Sean Snyder

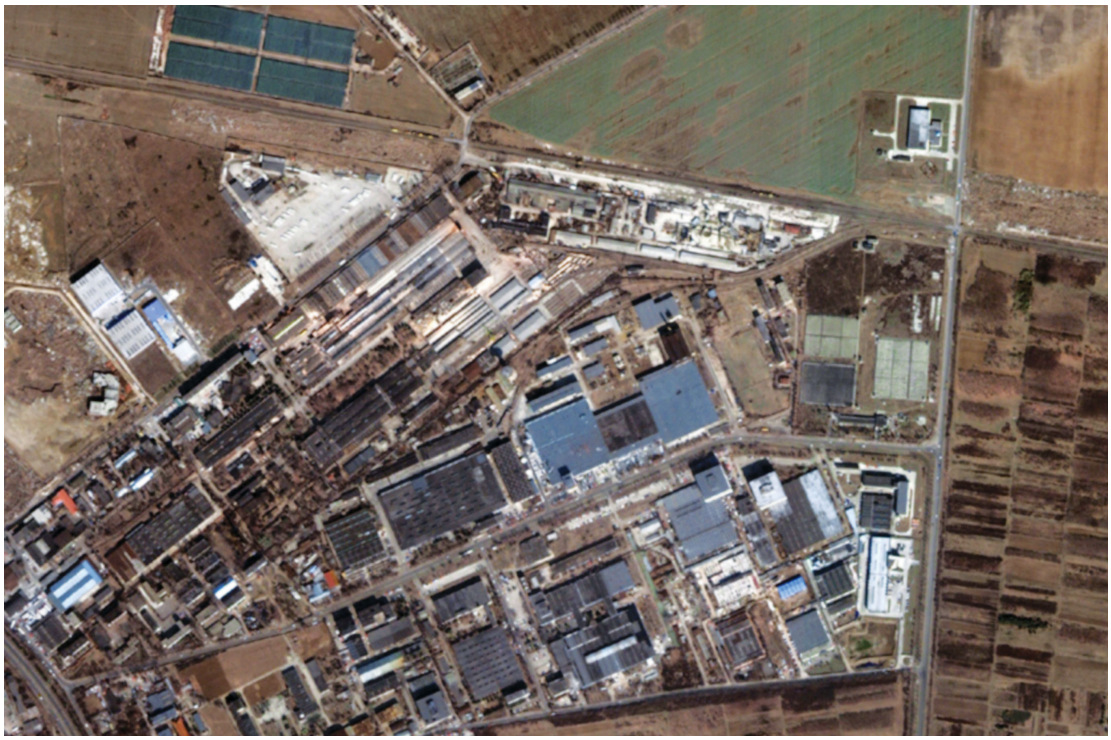
Artist contribution – April 7, 2004

In 2003, Sean Snyder (USA, 1972) showed his project *Temporary Occupation* (DVD, 4'33", colour, sound) as part of the 'Territories' exhibition at the Witte de With centre for contemporary art in Rotterdam. The military bases shown are temporary and scattered all over the world. They are enclaves offering all necessary facilities and services. They are constructed and outfitted in such a way that military personnel never need to leave the base, creating an illusion of security. For this project, Snyder made a video using images made available by the US Department of Defense and its imagery services. He mixed these images with photographs by (former) residents and with photographs he took himself of decommissioned bases redeveloped by local authorities. Snyder compiled a selection of photographs and video stills from this project especially for *Open*.

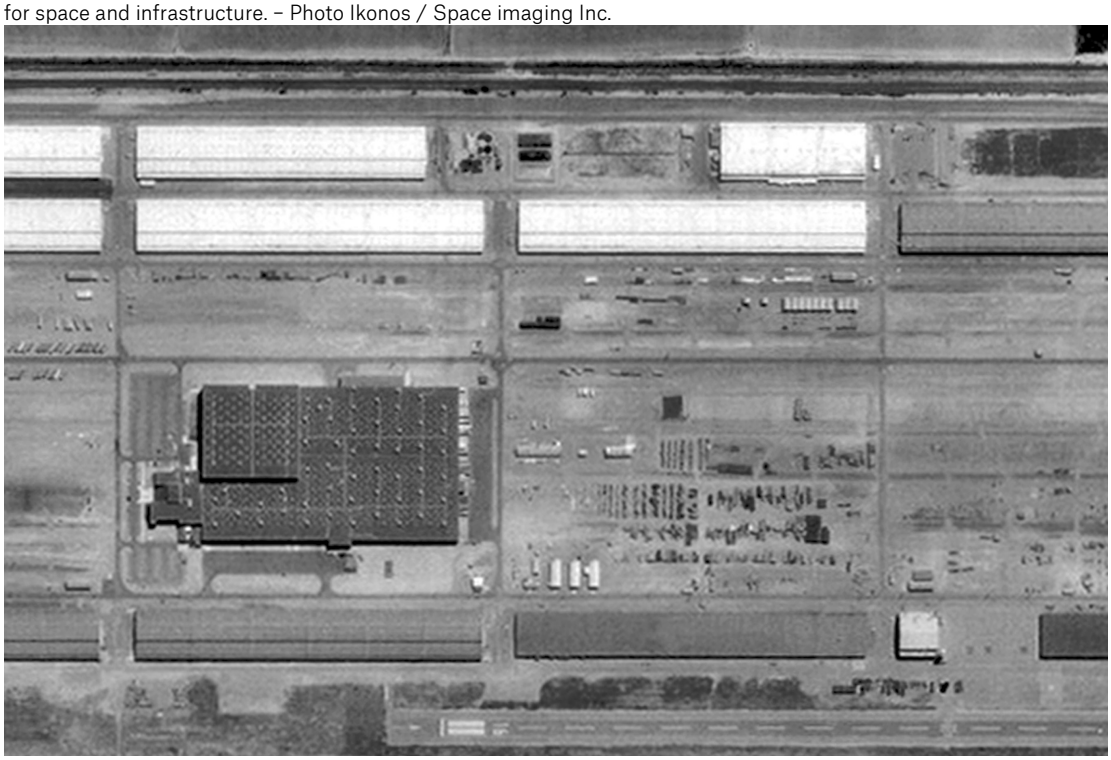
Image essay



The term 'military installation' means a base, camp, post, station, yard, centre, homeport facility, ship, or any other activity under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense. According to the Pentagon, the United States military currently maintains a presence overseas in 93 countries, forming a network of American dependencies. The existence of some bases is only speculated. – Photo globalsecurity.org



Private commercial intelligence companies that analyse geo-political currents are contracted by the US government to scope out prospective base locations in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia and elsewhere. America subsidizes and invests in local resources and products in exchange for space and infrastructure. – Photo Ikonos / Space imaging Inc.



Detailed satellite imagery charts the processes of military worldwide. In US government circles, there is open concern about military security because of the democratization of imagery. – Photo Ikonos / Space imaging Inc.



Highly edited documentation of what goes on inside of the bases are made public through official agencies responsible for the diffusion of imagery, like CENTCOM, the Defense Visual Information Center, and various branches of the armed services. – Photo Department of Defense Visual Information Directorate



Photo globalsecurity.org



Photo Department of Defense Visual Information Directorate



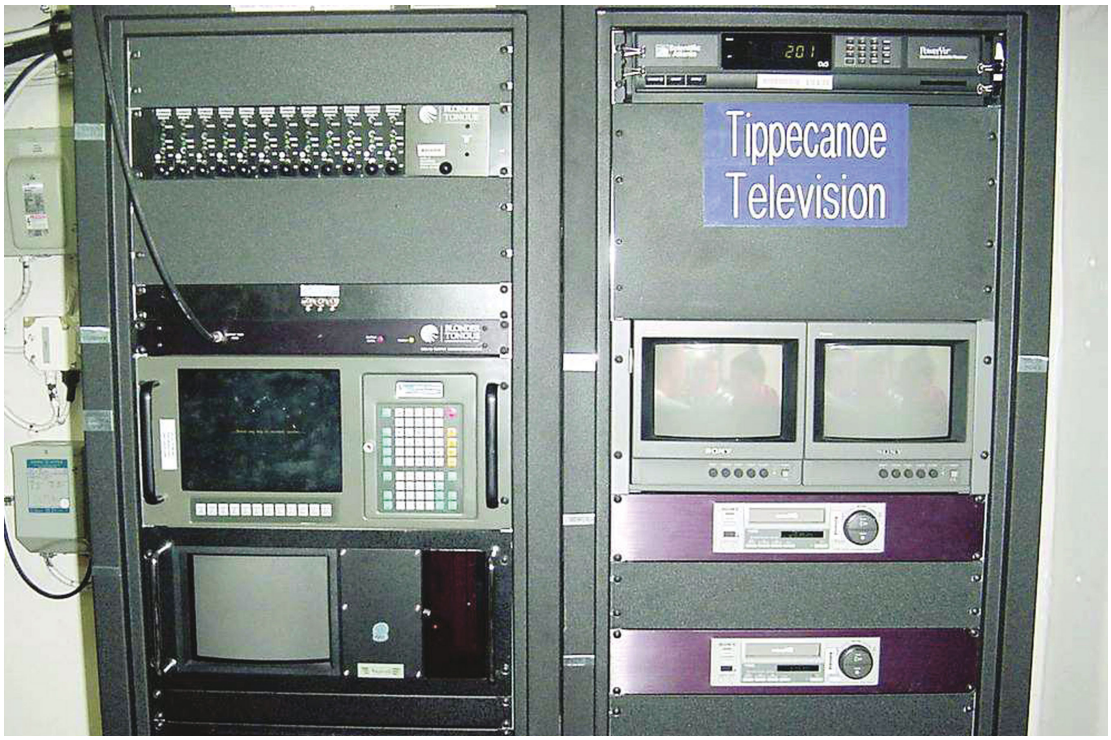
The Army and Air Force Exchange Service operates a number of service industries that make it unnecessary for a soldier to ever leave the base. The vast majority of money paid to American soldiers and civilians is spent in the on-base shopping and social facilities. Before the end of the Cold War, US forces started using American contractors rather than local suppliers. Tax money spent inside the military facilities is meant to return to the US economy. – Photo globalsecurity.org



Many US military bases, containing enclaves of housing, commercial and recreational facilities, are temporary oases for military personnel within secure boundaries. – Photo globalsecurity.org



To insulate personnel from the potential culture shock of overseas duty, the physical structure of the bases as well as the amenities and services are built in a way that is familiar to them. – Photo globalsecurity.org



Media run by the military, such as AFN (American Forces Network), broadcast television and radio programming wherever they go. The same mobile/aerial broadcasting equipment used to entertain the forces can be used for psychological operations. – Photo globalsecurity.org



The post-usage restructuring of military bases poses a difficult problem as well as a secondary base industry. Bases that are returned to local authorities are redeveloped to new uses; an old officer's club might be used as a discotheque, fuel reserves might be used by a petroleum company, an airfield might be turned into a budget airline hub. – Photo Sean Snyder



Many facilities such as housing, administrative offices and storage areas may be reused immediately, while facilities like helicopter airfields and ammunition dumps lack realistic conversion options. – Photo Sean Snyder

Sample list of facilities on American military bases

- Housing area
- Library
- 24-hour gas station
- Post office
- Medical and dental clinic
- Optical shop
- Military clothing store
- Clothing store
- Sports store
- Gift shop with local items
- Theatre
- 24-hour cinema
- Chapel
- Off-base travel and entertainment
- Hunting and fishing office
- Safari park
- Officers' club
- Banquet and special event hall
- Armoured Division Museum
- Commissary
- Base exchange
- Bakery
- Deli
- Pizza Inn
- Taco Bell
- Burger King
- Shwarma bar
- Popeyes Chicken & Biscuits
- Baskin Robbins
- Pub
- Service club
- Shopette
- Laundry service
- Bookstore
- Box Office video rental
- Toyland
- Furniture store
- Shoe department
- Jewelry store
- Power Zone audio / video equipment
- Entertainment and gaming equipment
- Garage and auto accessories
- Hobby shop
- Flower shop
- Garden centre
- Basketball court
- Volleyball courts
- Men's sauna
- Women's sauna
- Swimming pool
- Whirlpool
- Aerobics centre

- Fitness centre
- Gym
- Community arts & crafts
- Games tent
- Miniature golf course
- Pool tables
- Bowling centre
- Shooting range
- Golf course
- Camp ground
- Outdoor barbecue area

Sean Snyder is a visual artist. He is originally from the United States and lives and works in Berlin.

Tags

Control, Image

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