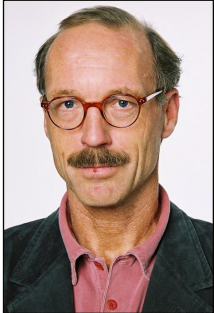


# SRF – “uniform reporting”

## One-sided reporting on the US Ramstein Air Base in Germany

by Helmut Scheben\*



Helmut Scheben.  
(Picture ma)

*The US base is a blessing for Germany, according to the news magazine “Echo der Zeit” published by Swiss public broadcasting agency SRF. The message sounds like a NATO press release.*

Weeks before the US and Israeli attack on Iran, transport aircraft were taking off and landing at *Ramstein Air Base* in Germany almost every minute, as plane spotters observed.<sup>1</sup> Ramstein is the nerve centre of the wars and drone strikes that the US has waged and continues to wage in Arab countries and West Asia. Without Ramstein as a relay point, these operations would not be technically possible.

For this reason, the German government – and indeed all German governments since the 1950s – have been implicated in US wars via the Ramstein operations centre. Insofar as these involve wars of aggression and “pre-emptive” killings by drones in violation of international law, the German governments are thereby violating the German Basic Law. In Article 26, it prohibits acts that disrupt the peaceful coexistence of peoples. For decades, German governments have responded to all complaints from Parliament and civil society accusing the executive of criminal acts with evasive answers and the flimsy justification that the government’s complicity cannot be legally proven. Many legal experts, however, regard the German government in the Ramstein case as an accomplice to serious violations of international law.



US Ramstein Air Base. (Picture wikipedia)

### “Nurseries, schools, sports centres, swimming pools”

On 3 June, the news magazine “Echo der Zeit”, produced by Swiss public service radio, broadcasted a report on Ramstein in which this political dispute was not mentioned at all.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, the US military presence is portrayed as a great boon for Germany. Ramstein, in the district of Kaiserslautern, has around 8,000 residents, four-fifths of whom vote for the CDU. In the market square, an elderly woman tells “Echo der Zeit” that Ramstein is “all right”, as all the doctors are practically within walking distance for her. The infrastructure is excellent, the reporter sums up: “Nurseries, schools, sports centres, a swimming pool – all thanks to the Americans who live here.”

Including smaller facilities, there are several dozen US military bases on German territory.<sup>3</sup> Wherever they are located, economic paradise reigns, according to the “Echo der Zeit”: “The municipality of Ramstein has a financial strength that others can only dream of.” If one is to believe the most well-known current affairs programme on Swiss radio, the presence of the US Army is a great boon for a region of 50,000 people in the Palatinate: “Shops, landlords, hotels, restaurants, but also tradespeople and construction firms – everything depends on the US military. According to the tax authorities, the Americans generate two billion euros in added value for the region.”

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These figures may well be accurate. However, not everyone benefits equally from this economic value. Mayor *Ralf Hechler* (CDU), a supporter of the USA since childhood and, as he puts it, a fan of its incomparable marshmallows and ice cream, mentions in passing during his eulogy to the US military that there is a shortage of affordable housing: "There are, after all, many who invest here purely in the business with the Americans – in flats and short-term apartment rentals at exorbitant prices."

According to official figures, the German government funds the US bases to the tune of around one hundred million euros a year,<sup>4</sup> a fact not mentioned in "Echo der Zeit". One may, however, assume that these official figures represent only a fraction of the actual costs. The environmental damage and health consequences of military operations have so far been carefully glossed over.

The very same media outlets that, like "Echo der Zeit", regularly remind us of climate change, the ecological footprint and our "responsibility for the planet", are mostly blind and deaf when it comes to one of the biggest polluters: the military-industrial complex.<sup>5</sup> Under pressure from NATO member states, its CO2 emissions were excluded from the *Kyoto Protocol* and other UN climate documents. Yet armament and wars are anything but climate neutral.

The US military is the world's largest single consumer of energy. At the US's officially recognised 868 military bases (in reality, there are around a thousand), 320,000 barrels of oil are consumed every day. For decades, the Pentagon has faced lawsuits worldwide over contaminated sites and the long-term effects of depleted uranium munitions, which were used by NATO, for example, in Iraq and during the Balkan wars. *Depleted uranium* is a toxic heavy metal that causes kidney damage and other illnesses when inhaled or ingested through contaminated food.

During take-offs and landings at Ramstein Air Base,<sup>6</sup> well over one billion cubic metres of exhaust fumes are released annually.<sup>7</sup> These contain large quantities of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, bromine, lead and soot. The carcinogenic NATO aviation fuel *JP-8* is regularly jettisoned into the air by large transport aircraft before landing, as they are not permitted to exceed a certain landing weight. Behind closed doors, foresters warn against consuming contaminated fruit and

mushrooms from the woods within the approach area of Ramstein Air Base. The airfield is situated right in the middle of nature reserves and landscape conservation areas.

### **Controlled remotely via fibre-optic cables**

Former US drone pilots, such as the whistleblower *Brandon Bryant*, have helped to ensure that these extrajudicial, secret killings and their consequences have been brought to the attention of a wider public over the past two decades and are regarded as crimes by scientists and legal experts worldwide.

The drone operators are based somewhere in California or New Mexico. Their remote-control signals are transmitted via fibre-optic cable to Ramstein and relayed from there via satellite to the attack drones. Live video footage and sensor data are transmitted back along the same route. Due to the curvature of the Earth, a direct satellite link between the American continent and the Middle East is technically impossible.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, governments in Washington have justified their "extrajudicial killings" as self-defence. They claim that the US government "has the right to kill, anywhere in the world, any person whom it believes poses a threat to the US. The US government need not be formally at war with the country in which it carries out the killings, nor does it have to present any evidence – whether before a civil court, a military court or the public – that the person killed has committed a crime". This is how *Medea Benjamin* describes it in her book "Drone Warfare: Killings by Remote Control", one of many studies documenting how the practice of "drone executions" has become routine policy for the US.

### **Troop withdrawal from Ramstein barely an issue**

In just one instance, "Echo der Zeit" mentioned that Ramstein Air Base is "controversial among locals due to questions of war and peace". A resident of nearby Kaiserslautern says he is "sometimes worried about what might happen there". What he means is that the US wars could one day reach Ramstein. This brief passage is the only shadow cast over the political "wellness oasis" of T-bone and Tomahawk steaks presented in the report.

Finally, we hear from David Sirakov, director of the Atlantic Academy of Rhineland-Palatinate,

which, according to its own statements, “aims to strengthen transatlantic relations” – in other words, essentially an academy modelled on the NATO concept. Sirakov allays any fears that the withdrawal of 5,000 US soldiers (5,000 out of 35,000) announced by *Trump* might leave Ramstein defenceless against economic decline. In Weilerbach near Kaiserslautern, the Americans are currently building the largest military hospital outside the US on a site covering more than a hundred football fields. Of the budgeted 1.8 billion euros, Germany is set to pay a mere 266 million, according to the plan. The construction of this mega-clinic shows that the future of Ramstein Air Base is clearly secure.

The whole story in the “Echo der Zeit” follows the same tune: let’s be happy and cheerful. The troop withdrawal threatened by Donald Trump is no big deal. No one is being withdrawn from Ramstein. Ramstein can continue to function as an operational hub for the US’s wars and its drone strikes. The message sounds like a

press release from NATO headquarters in Brussels: “Don’t worry folks, everything will be all right.”

Source: <https://www.infosperber.ch/politik/welt/air-base-in-ramstein-ein-abzug-der-usa-waere-eine-katastrophe/>, 9 June 2026

(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.austrianwings.info/2026/02/us-verlegungen-in-richtung-iran-hochbetrieb-auf-der-ramstein-air-base/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.srf.ch/audio/echo-der-zeit/ramstein-die-bedeutung-des-groessten-us-militaersuetzpunktes?partId=YAWJLOT0SMNU6mzvzYcDcvu9Iro>

<sup>3</sup> [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste\\_der\\_amerikanischen\\_Milit%C3%A4rstandorte\\_in\\_Deutschland](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_amerikanischen_Milit%C3%A4rstandorte_in_Deutschland)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/kosten-fuer-us-truppen-deutschland-zahlte-fast-eine-milliarde-euro-in-zehn-jahren-a-d4a670c3-8b6f-4b54-8770-eaecf2236d69>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/aktuelles/gastbeitrag-militaer-und-krieg-als-klimakiller>

<sup>6</sup> <https://umwelt-militaer.org/us-air-base-ramstein-altlasten/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.pressenza.com/de/2019/06/die-umwelt-killer/>