



Maps show U.S. counterterrorism efforts across globe, spanning 78 countries (Credit: Illustration: Veronica Bravo/USA Today, Photos: Getty Images) Illustration: Veronica Bravo/USA Today, Photos: Getty Images

## **Exclusive: Maps show U.S. counterterrorism efforts across globe, spanning 78 countries**

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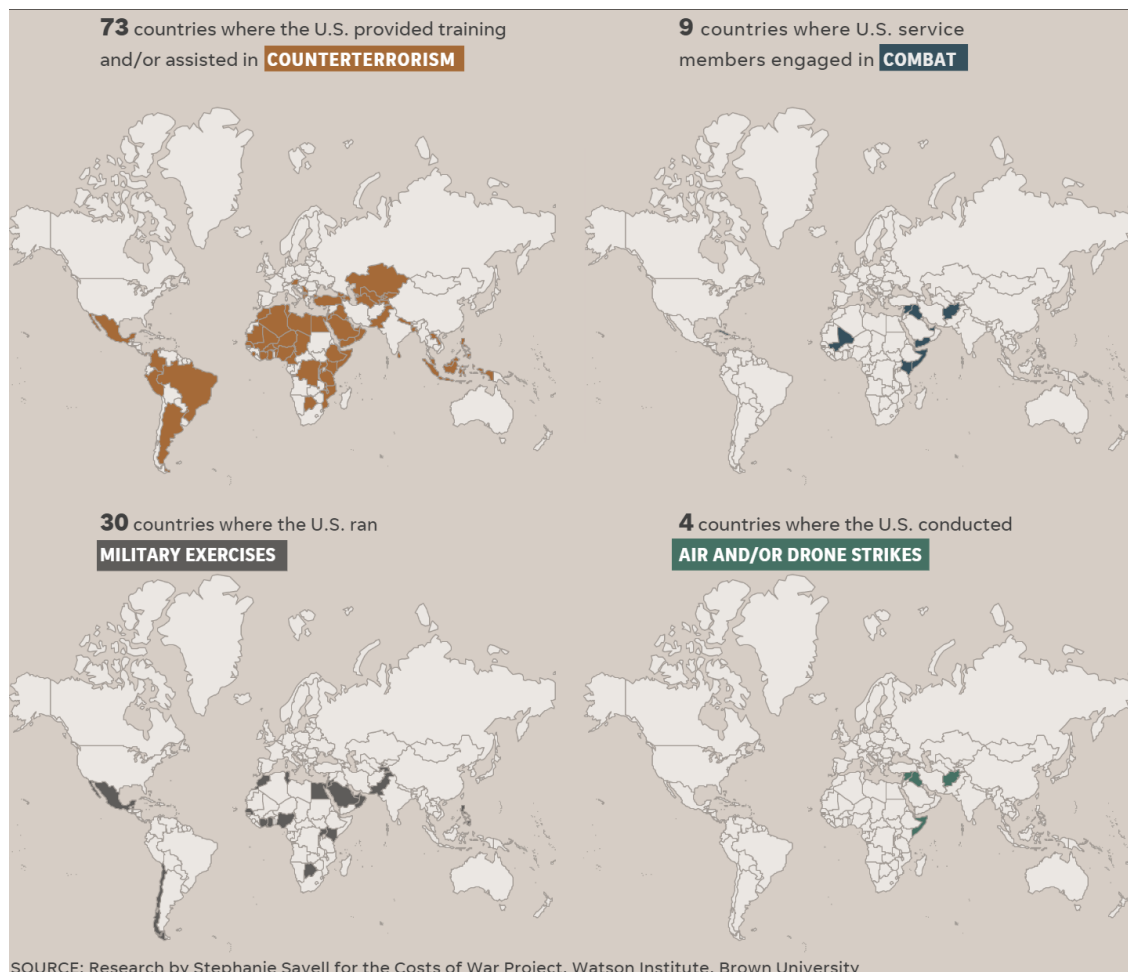
**By Kim Hjelmggaard and Karina Zaiets**

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Nearly a quarter-century after the U.S. launched its response to 9/11, the Pentagon continues to pursue military actions in the Middle East and in many more parts of the world than Americans may realize, according to exclusive data obtained by USA TODAY. The data comes from research by the Costs of War project at Brown University's Watson Institute.

The findings cover the first three years of the Biden administration and show the range of globe-spanning operations where U.S. troops have engaged in direct combat, launched drone attacks, patrolled borders, gathered intelligence and trained other nations' militaries and security forces.

The scope of the operations is partly determined by the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force, or AUMF – and a 2002 measure authorizing the war in Iraq. For more than two decades, these authorizations have been used to justify U.S. counterterrorism operations in dozens of countries. Opponents of these laws – who label them "zombie war" authorizations – such as Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., say they go far beyond the scope of their original intention. Multiple attempts to repeal them are now stalled in Congress.



**Map of U.S. global counterterrorism activity, 2021-2023**

The data, an update from an earlier set published by USA TODAY covering 2018 to 2020, show that the U.S. military carried out counterterrorism operations in 78 countries from 2021 to 2023. The findings are of special interest in light of an increase in attacks by Iran-backed militant groups on U.S. forces housed at bases in Iraq and Syria in retaliation for U.S. support for Israel in its war with Hamas.

The data do not include places where the U.S. supplies weapons, such as in Ukraine.

**'It's hard, but they're holding on':** On the ground in Ukraine, the war depends on U.S. weapons

Stephanie Savell, the Brown researcher who compiled the data, said they illustrate that even though U.S. policy has officially shifted to confronting Russia and China, "we still have this counterterrorism apparatus trudging onward. It makes U.S. forces vulnerable to attack and increases the likelihood of the U.S. engaging in a much bigger offensive war."

She said militia groups angry about what Israel's conduct in Gaza and the West Bank can "take revenge on U.S. forces" because they "are right there" in nearby Iraq and Syria.

Savell said successive U.S. presidents have used the authorizations in different ways, noting that the Biden administration has "tightened limits on drone strikes the Trump administration loosened."

Previous research by Savell has calculated that the indirect count of people who have died following post-9/11 conflicts and the U.S. war

on terrorism – from violence, hunger and the spread of disease, among other things – could be as high as 4.5 million. The report does not blame the U.S. or any other single party for all these deaths.

There are up to 800 U.S. military bases overseas, according to data from the Pentagon and David Vine, an anthropologist and expert on the U.S. military at American University.

The map below, last updated in 2021, shows the locations of about 350 U.S. bases from Vine's research. In the years since this map was created, the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit 3 in Egypt and Camp As Sayliyah in Qatar have closed.

### Map of US military base openings, 1948-202



According to Vine, the Biden administration signed an agreement in June that will bring six new U.S. military bases to Papua New Guinea.

Vine says the following locations have seen a buildup of some combination of U.S. military bases, forces, and weaponry under Biden: Australia, Estonia, Germany, Great Britain, Guam, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, the Northern Mariana Islands, Norway, Palau, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Somalia, Spain and Taiwan.