

Italy to Declare Independence from US Military

By [David Swanson](#)

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Do they have a fourth of July in Italy? That's not a trick question. This July 4th, Italians plan to gather in Vicenza to take nonviolent action aimed at freeing Italy from U.S. occupation and opposing the proposed construction of an enormous new U.S. military base in a town already swarming with U.S. troops stationed at existing bases. For years now, a [major campaign](#) organized by local residents has resisted the construction of the new base. The history of this campaign is chronicled in English [here](#) and [here](#). A local referendum voted 95 percent against the base. A leader of the opposition to the base has been elected to the local government. An Italian prime minister has been temporarily thrown out of power. Local activists and members of parliament have visited Washington to oppose the base, and testified before the U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs on April 23, 2009. The European media has been unable to avoid the story.

Last month, participants broke into the fenced off construction site to plant flags and banners: ([video](#)). Last week, U.S. soldiers jogging through Vicenza were greeted with signs asking them to go home: ([video](#)). I used to live in Vicenza in the late 1980s and was enthusiastically welcomed as an American and a friend. The military presence was already pervasive, but since then it has grown tremendously, while Italians' opinions of the purposes served by the U.S. military have plummeted. The U.S. Army is not liberating Italy from Nazism, but sending soldiers off to fight aggressive wars in the Middle East, and bringing them back disturbed, suicidal, and prone to drinking and causing trouble. In April, Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez visited Venice (Venezia in Italian, and not far from Vicenza), [where she told Italians](#) that they would just have to accept the new base, and that the United States needs it in order to more easily attack Africa.

This week the "No Dal Molin" campaign (named for the Dal Molin site of the proposed base) sent a letter to U.S. President Barack Obama that quoted his victory speech from November 4, 2008, in Chicago: "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people . . . I will listen to you, especially when we disagree." The letter noted that Obama will soon be in Italy for a G8 summit and invited him to visit Vicenza, which has hosted U.S. military installations since 1955. The letter read, in part:

"For three years, women and men, young and old, wealthy and ordinary people have been working together to defend the city and the future of our land for future generations. We, like you, started in neighborhoods and built a community working for change. This has nothing to do with anti-Americanism, which is how our movement is often painted. Our concerns are based on facts, and we would therefore like to ask you a few questions:

"In the United States would it be possible to build a military base one mile from the center of a UNESCO World Heritage site? This is what is happening in Vicenza.

“In the United States would it be possible to do this without consulting the local population and going against the will of local residents, who during a recent referendum voted 95 percent opposed?”

“In the United States would it be possible to build a military base above one of the most important ground water sources on the continent (the one in Vicenza is considered one of the most important here in Europe), vital for the population, placing it at serious risk of contamination and in violation of existing legislation? This is what is happening in Vicenza.

“Vicenza, a city that has always had a strong vocation for peace, is destined to become the home of the most important US base in Europe, a command center for Africom as well as an integral part of preventive war designed and pursued by the Bush administration, which has thus far proved a failure. With which rights do you impose this upon us?”

“If the words written in the Declaration of Independence of the United States have real value and if you, like us, believe in values such as democracy, respect, legality, and transparency, then you should know that these values are being denied in Vicenza.”

On the eve of the G8 summit (July 8-10 in L’Aquila), the No Dal Molin organization is inviting people from all over Italy and the world to celebrate the Fourth of July in Vicenza and “declare our independence from the US military, freeing the land from the presence of a new war base.” The words of these new Jeffersonians are worth quoting in the original:

“Il 4 luglio è l’anniversario in cui gli statunitensi festeggiano la propria indipendenza; quest’anno sarà anche il giorno in cui i vicentini - e tutti coloro che vogliono la pace e la difesa dei beni comuni - decreteranno la propria indipendenza dalle servitù militari.”

Translation: July 4th is the holiday with which the people of the United States celebrate their own independence. This year it will also be the day on which Vicentines, and all those who support peace and defense of the common good, declare their own independence from military servitude.

And it’s worth considering the use to which the words of my neighbor here in Charlottesville, Thomas Jefferson, are now being put. Jefferson borrowed from Filippo Mazzei, but it is the words of Jefferson that are now being translated back into Italian in ironic and tragic protest of what Jefferson’s nation has become:

“Quando nel corso di eventi umani, sorge la necessità che un popolo sciolga i legami politici che lo hanno stretto a un altro popolo . . . un conveniente riguardo alle opinioni dell’umanità richiede che quel popolo dichiari le ragioni per cui è costretto alla secessione.”

To support this effort, write to international@nodalmolin.it

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#yiv1928473783 p.p2 {margin:0.0px 0.0px 12.0px 0.0px;font:12.0px Times;min-height:14.0px;}

David Swanson is the author of the upcoming book “Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union” by Seven Stories Press. You can pre-order it and find out when tour will be in your town: <http://davidswanson.org/book>. Arrange to review it on your blog and Seven Stories will get you a free copy. Contact crystal at sevenstories dot com.

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