

Bases, Missiles, Wars: U.S. Consolidates Global Military Network

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Afghanistan is occupying center stage at the moment, but in the wings are complementary maneuvers to expand a string of new military bases and missile shield facilities throughout Eurasia and the Middle East.

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Over the past decade the United States has steadily (though to much of the world imperceptibly) extended its military reach to most all parts of the world. From subordinating almost all of Europe to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization through the latter's expansion into Eastern Europe, including the former Soviet Union, to arbitrarily setting up a regional command that takes in the African continent (and all but one of its 53 nations). From invading and establishing military bases in the Middle East and Central and South Asia to operating a satellite surveillance base in Australia and taking charge of seven military installations in South America. In the vacuum left in much of the world by the demise of the Cold War and the former bipolar world, the U.S. rushed in to insert its military in various parts of the world that had been off limits to it before.

And this while Washington cannot even credibly pretend that it is threatened by any other nation on earth.

It has employed a series of tactics to accomplish its objective of unchallenged international armed superiority, using an expanding NATO to build military partnerships not only throughout Europe but in the Caucasus, the Middle East, North and West Africa, Asia and Oceania as well as employing numerous bilateral and regional arrangements.

The pattern that has emerged is that of the U.S. shifting larger concentrations of troops from post-World War II bases in Europe and Japan to smaller, more dispersed forward basing locations south and east of Europe and progressively closer to Russia, Iran and China.

The ever-growing number of nations throughout the world being pulled into Washington's military network serve three main purposes.

First, they provide air, troop and weapons transit and bases for wars like those against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq, for naval operations that are in fact blockades by other

names, and for regional surveillance.

Second, they supply troops and military equipment for deployments to war and post-conflict zones whenever and wherever required.

Last, allies and client states are incorporated into U.S. plans for an international missile shield that will put NATO nations and select allies under an impenetrable canopy of interceptors while other nations are susceptible to attack and deprived of the deterrent effect of being able to retaliate.

The degree to which these three components are being integrated is advancing rapidly. The war in Afghanistan is the major mechanism for forging a global U.S. military nexus and one which in turn provides the Pentagon the opportunity to obtain and operate bases from Southeast Europe to Central Asia.

One example that illustrates this global trend is Colombia. In early August the nation's vice president announced that the first contingent of Colombian troops were to be deployed to serve under NATO command in Afghanistan. Armed forces from South America will be assigned to the North Atlantic bloc to fight a war in Asia. The announcement of the Colombian deployment came shortly after another: That the Pentagon would acquire seven new military bases in Colombia.

When the U.S. deploys Patriot missile batteries to that nation - on its borders with Venezuela and Ecuador - the triad will be complete.

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On January 28 the British government will host a conference in London on Afghanistan that, in the words of what is identified as the UK Government's Afghanistan website, will be co-hosted by Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Afghanistan's President Karzai and United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and co-chaired by British Foreign Minister David Miliband, his outgoing Afghan counterpart Rangin Spanta, and UN Special Representative to Afghanistan, Kai Eide.

The site announces that "The international community are [sic] coming together to fully align military and civilian resources behind an Afghan-led political strategy." [1]

The conference will also be attended by "foreign ministers from International Security Assistance Force partners, Afghanistan's immediate neighbours and key regional player [sic]."

Public relations requirements dictate that concerns about the well-being of the Afghan people, "a stable and secure Afghanistan" and "regional cooperation" be mentioned, but the meeting will in effect be a war council, one that will be attended by the foreign ministers of scores of NATO and NATO partner states.

In the two days preceding the conference NATO's Military Committee will meet at the Alliance's headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. "Together with the Chiefs of Defence of all 28 NATO member states, 35 Chiefs of Defence of Partner countries and Troop Contributing Nations will also be present." [2]

That is, top military commanders from 63 nations – almost a third of the world’s 192 countries – will gather at NATO Headquarters to discuss the next phase of the expanding war in South Asia and the bloc’s new Strategic Concept. Among those who will attend the two-day Military Committee meeting are General Stanley McChrystal, in charge of all U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan; Admiral James Stavridis, chief U.S. military commander in Europe and NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander; Pakistani Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and Israeli Chief of General Staff Gabi Ashkenazi.

Former American secretary of state Madeleine Albright has been invited to speak about the Strategic Concept on behalf of the twelve-member Group of Experts she heads, whose task it is to promote NATO’s 21st century global doctrine.

The Brussels meeting and London conference highlight the centrality that the war in Afghanistan has for the West and for its international military enforcement mechanism, NATO.

During the past few months Washington has been assiduously recruiting troops from assorted NATO partnership program nations for the war in Afghanistan, including from Armenia, Bahrain, Bosnia, Colombia, Jordan, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Ukraine and other nations that had not previously provided contingents to serve under NATO in the South Asian war theater. Added to forces from all 28 NATO member states and from Partnership for Peace, Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, Adriatic Charter and Contact Country programs, the Pentagon and NATO are assembling a coalition of over fifty nations for combat operations in Afghanistan.

Almost as many NATO partner nations as full member states have committed troops for the Afghanistan-Pakistan war: Afghanistan itself, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Colombia, Egypt, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, Jordan, Macedonia, Mongolia, Montenegro, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Korea, Sweden, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates.

The Afghan war zone is a colossal training ground for troops from around the world to gain wartime experience, to integrate armed forces from six continents under a unified command, and to test new weapons and weapons systems in real-life combat conditions.

Not only candidates for NATO membership but all nations in the world the U.S. has diplomatic and economic leverage over are being pressured to support the war in Afghanistan.

The American Forces Press Service featured a story last month about the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force’s Regional Command East which revealed: “In addition to...French forces, Polish forces are in charge of battle space, and the Czech Republic, Turkey and New Zealand manage provincial reconstruction teams. In addition, servicemembers and civilians from Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates work with the command, and South Korea runs a hospital in the region.”

With the acknowledgment that Egyptian forces are assigned to NATO’s Afghan war, it is now known that troops from all six populated continents are subordinated to NATO in one war theater. [3]

How commitment to the Alliance’s first ground war relates to the Pentagon securing bases

and a military presence spreading out in all directions from Afghanistan and how worldwide interceptor missile plans are synchronized with both developments can be shown region by region.

Central And South Asia

After the U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom attacks on and subjugation of Afghanistan began in October of 2001 Washington and its NATO allies acquired the indefinite use of air and other military bases in Afghanistan, including Soviet-built airfields. The West also moved into bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and with less fanfare in Pakistan and Turkmenistan. It has also gained transit rights from Kazakhstan and NATO conducted its first military exercise in that nation, Zhetysu 2009, last September.

The U.S. has lobbied the Kazakh government to supply troops for NATO in Afghanistan (as it had earlier in Iraq) under the bloc's Partnership for Peace provisions.

The Black Sea

The year after Romania was brought into NATO as a full member in 2004 the U.S. signed an agreement to gain control over four bases in Romania, including the Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base. The next year a similar pact was signed with Bulgaria for the use of three military installations, two of them air bases. The Pentagon's Joint Task Force-East (which operates from the above-named base) conducted nearly three-month-long joint military exercises last summer in Bulgaria and Romania in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan.

On January 24 eight Romanian and Bulgaria soldiers were wounded in a rocket attack on a NATO base in Southern Afghanistan. Three days earlier Romania announced that it would deploy 600 more troops to that nation, bringing its numbers to over 1,600. Bulgaria has also pledged to increase its troop strength there and is considering consolidating all its forces in the country in Kandahar, one of the deadliest provinces in the war zone.

Late last November Foreign Minister Rumyana Zheleva of Bulgaria was in Washington, D.C. to "hear the ideas of US President Barack Obama's administration on the strategy of the anti-missile defense in Europe." [4]

During the same month Bogdan Aurescu, State Secretary for Strategic Affairs in the Romanian Foreign Ministry, stated that "The new variant of the US anti-missile shield could cover Romania." [5] A local newspaper at the time commented on Washington's new "stronger, smarter, and swifter" missile shield plans that "A strong and modern surveillance system located in Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey could monitor three hot areas at once: the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Caspian and relevant zones in the Middle East." [6]

Also last November a Russian news source wrote that "Anonymous sources in the Russian intelligence community say that the United States plans to supply weapons, including a Patriot-3 air defense system and shoulder-launched Stinger missiles, worth a total of \$100 million, to Georgia." [7] In October the U.S. led the two-week Immediate Response 2009 war games to prepare the first of an estimated 1,000 Georgian troops for counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan, prompting neighboring Abkhazia - which knew who the military training was also aimed against - to stage its own exercises at the same time.

American Patriot Advanced Capability-3 interceptor missiles in Georgia would be deployed

against Russia, as they will be 35 miles from its border in Poland.

Former head of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency Lt. Gen. Henry Obering stated two years ago that Georgia and even Ukraine were potential locations for American missile shield deployments.

Middle East

Last October and November the U.S. and Israel held their largest-ever joint military exercise, Operation Juniper Cobra 10, which established another precedent in addition to the number of troops and warships involved: The simultaneous testing of five missile defense systems. An American military official present at the war games was one of several sources acknowledging that the exercises were in preparation for the Barack Obama administration's more extensive, NATO-wide and broader, missile interception system. Juniper Cobra was the initiation of the U.S. X-Band radar station opened in 2008 in Israel's Negev Desert. Over 100 American service members are based there for the foreseeable future, the first U.S. troops formally deployed in that nation.

In December the Jerusalem Post quoted an unnamed Israeli defense official as saying "The expansion of the war in Afghanistan opens a door for us."

The same source wrote "the NATO-U.S. plan to deploy a cross-continent missile shield in Europe also represents an opportunity for the Jewish state to market its military platforms...." [8]

"Meanwhile, recent months have seen several senior NATO officials travel to Israel for discussions that reportedly focused on, among other things, how Israel could help NATO troops fight in Afghanistan." [9]

Last June Israeli President Shimon Peres led a 60-member delegation that included Defense Ministry Director-General Pinhas Buchris to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, on opposite ends of the Caspian Sea. A year ago "Kazakhstan's defense ministry said...it had asked Israel to help it modernize its military and produce weapons that comply with NATO standards." [10]

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the first Arab country to provide troops to NATO for Afghanistan. It has a partnership arrangement with NATO under provisions of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members.

Early this month a local newspaper announced that "the UAE became the largest foreign purchaser of US defence equipment with sales of \$7.9bn, ahead of Afghanistan (\$5.4bn), Saudi Arabia (\$3.3bn) and Taiwan (\$3.2bn).

"The spending included orders for munitions for the UAE's F-16 fighter jets as well as a new Patriot defensive missile system and a fleet of corvettes for the navy." [11]

Nine days later the same newspaper reported on a visit by Lt. Gen. Michael Hostage, commander of the U.S. Air Force Central Command, to discuss "the possibility of setting up a shared early warning system and enhancing the region's ballistic-missile deterrence."

Hostage was quoted as saying "I am attempting to organize a regional integrated air and missile defense capability with our GCC partners." [12]

An Emirati general added, “The GCC needs a national and multinational ballistic missile defence (BMD) to counter long-range proliferating regional ballistic missile threats.” [13]

The missile shield is aimed against Iran.

Last September Pentagon chief Robert Gates said, “The reality is we are working both on a bilateral and a multilateral basis in the Gulf to establish the same kind of regional missile defense [as envisioned for Europe] that would protect our facilities out there as well as our friends and allies.” [14]

“In a September 17 briefing, Gates said...the United States has already formed a Gulf missile defense network that consisted of PAC-3 and the Aegis sea-based systems.” The exact system soon to be deployed in the Baltic Sea and Mediterranean and afterwards the Black Sea.

In addition, the “UAE has ordered the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, designed to destroy nuclear missiles in the exoatmosphere.

“Over the last two years, the Pentagon has been meeting GCC military chiefs to discuss regional and national missile defense programs....At the same time, the U.S. military has been operating PAC-3 in Kuwait and Qatar. The U.S. Army has also been helping Saudi Arabia upgrade its PAC-2 fleet.” [15]

Turkey’s Hurriyet Daily News reported at the end of last year that “Turkey is set to make crucial defense decisions in 2010 as the U.S. offer to join a missile shield program and multibillion-dollar contracts are looming over the country’s agenda.

“If a joint NATO missile shield is developed, such a move may force Ankara to join the mechanism despite the possible Iranian reaction....U.S. President Barack Obama’s administration has invited Ankara to join a Western missile shield system....” [16]

An account of the broader strategy adds:

“U.S. officials are also urging Turkey to choose the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) against Russian and Chinese rivals competing for a Turkish contract for the purchase of high-altitude and long-range antimissile defense systems....[A] new plan calls for the creation of a regional system in southeastern Europe, the Mediterranean and part of the Middle East.

“In phase one of the new Obama plan, the U.S. will deploy SM-3 interceptor missiles and radar surveillance systems on sea-based Aegis weapons systems by 2011. In phase two and by 2015, a more capable version of the SM-3 interceptor and more advanced sensors will be used in both sea-and land-based configurations. In later phases three and four, intercepting and detecting capabilities further will be developed.” [17]

One of Russia’s main news agencies reported on U.S. plans to incorporate Turkey into its new missile designs, with Turkey as the only NATO state bordering Iran serving as the bridge between a continent-wide system in Europe and its extension into the Middle East: “According to the Milliyet daily, U.S. President Barack Obama last week proposed placing a ‘missile shield’ on Turkish soil....Both Russia and Iran will perceive that [deployment] as a threat,’ a Turkish military source was quoted as saying.” [18]

A broader description of the interceptor missile project in progress includes: “Obama’s team has...sought to ‘NATO-ise’ the US plan by involving other allies more closely in its development and deployment. The idea is to create a NATO chain of command similar to that long used for allied air defences. That would involve a NATO ‘backbone’ for command-and-control jointly funded by the allies, into which the US sea-based defences and other national assets, such as short-range Patriot missile interceptors purchased by European nations including Germany, the Netherlands and Greece, could be ‘plugged in’ to the NATO system creating a multi-layered defence shield.” [19]

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Baltic Sea

Poland’s Defense Ministry revealed on January 20 that the U.S. will deploy a Patriot Advanced Capability anti-ballistic missile battery and 100 troops to a Baltic Sea location 35 miles from Russian territory.

The country’s foreign minister – former investment adviser to Rupert Murdoch and resident fellow of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. -Radek Sikorski, recently pledged to increase Polish troop numbers in Afghanistan from the current 1,955. “We will be at 2,600 by April and 400 additional troops on standby, which we will deploy if there is a need to strengthen security.” [20]

Fellow Baltic littoral states Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania combined have almost 500 troops in Afghanistan, a number likely to rise. The Lithuanian Siauliai Air Base was ceded to NATO in 2004 after the three Baltic states became full members. The Alliance has flown regular air patrols in the region, with U.S. warplanes participating in six-month rotations, ever since. Within a few minutes flight from Russia.

The three nations will be probable docking sites for U.S. Aegis-class warships and their Standard Missile-3 interceptors under new Pentagon-NATO missile shield deployments.

Far East Asia

South Korea pledged 350 troops for NATO’s Afghan war last year and in late December Seoul announced that it would send a ranking officer for the first time “to attend a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) conference to seek ways to strengthen cooperation with other nations in dispatching troops to Afghanistan and coordinate military operations there,” [21] likely a reference to the January 26-27 Military Committee meeting.

In the middle of January the U.S. conducted Beverly Bulldog 10-01 exercises in South Korea which “involved more than 7,200 U.S. airmen at Osan and Kunsan air bases and other points around the peninsula in an air war exercise” and “about 125 soldiers of the U.S. Army’s Patriot missile unit in South Korea....” [22]

On January 14 the new government of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama ended Japan’s naval refuelling mission carried out in support of the U.S. war in Afghanistan since 2001. However,

pressure will be exerted on Tokyo at the January 28 conference in London, particularly by Hillary Clinton, to reengage in some capacity.

On last year's anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, the U.S. and Japan held joint war games, Yama Sakura (Mountain Cherry Blossom), on the island of Hokkaido in northernmost Japan, that part of the country nearest Russia on the Sea of Japan. North Korea was the probable alleged belligerent.

Over 5,000 troops participated in drills that included "battling a regional threat that includes missile defenses, air defense and ground-forces operations...."

"Japan's military has been actively developing its anti-missile defenses in cooperation with the United States. It currently has deployed Patriot PAC-3 missile defenses at several locations and also has two sea-based Aegis-equipped Kongo-class warships with anti-missile interceptors," [23] the latter having engaged in joint SM-3 missile interceptions with the U.S. off Hawaii.

If support for the war in Afghanistan is linked with deployment of tactical missile shield installations in Israel and Poland, in the first case aimed at Iran and in the second at Russia, the case of Taiwan is even more overt.

Almost immediately after announcements that the U.S. would provide it with over 200 Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missiles and double the amount of frigates it had earlier supplied, with Taiwan planning to use the warships for Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System upgrades, the nation's China Times newspaper wrote that "Following a recent US-Taiwan military deal, the Obama administration has demanded that Taiwan provide non-military aid for troops in Afghanistan....The US wants Taiwan to provide medical or engineering assistance to US troops in Afghanistan that will be increased...." [24] Dispatching troops to Afghanistan would be too gratuitous an incitement against China (which shares a narrow border with the South Asian nation), but Taiwan will nevertheless be levied to support the war effort there.

Wars: Stepping Stones For New Bases, Future Conflicts

The 78-day U.S. and NATO air war against Yugoslavia in 1999, Operation Allied Force, allowed the Pentagon to construct the mammoth Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo and within ten years to incorporate five Balkans nations into NATO. It also prepared the groundwork for U.S. Navy warships to dock at ports in Albania, Croatia and Montenegro.

Two years later the attack on Afghanistan led to the deployment of U.S. and NATO troops, armor and warplanes to five nations in Central and South Asia. The war in Afghanistan and Pakistan has also contributed to the Pentagon's penetration of the world's second most populous nation, India, which is being pulled into the American military orbit and integrated into global NATO. The U.S. and Israel are supplanting Russia as India's main arms supplier and U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently returned from India where his mission included "lifting bilateral military relations from a policy-alignment plane to a commercial platform that will translate into larger contracts for American companies." [25]

With the quickly developing expansion of the Afghanistan-Pakistan war into an Afghanistan-Pakistan-Yemen-Somalia theater, NATO warships are in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean and the U.S. has stationed Reaper drones, aircraft and troops in Seychelles. [On the

same day as the London conference on Afghanistan a parallel meeting on Yemen will be held in the same city.]

After the 2003 invasion of Iraq the Pentagon gained air and other bases in that nation as well as what it euphemistically calls forward operating sites and base camps in Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

In less than a decade the Pentagon and NATO have acquired strategic air bases and ones that can be upgraded to that status in Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania and Romania.

Global NATO And Militarization Of The Planet

The January 26 Chief of Defense session of NATO's Military Committee with top military leaders of 63 countries attending - while the bloc is waging and escalating the world's largest and lengthiest war thousands of miles away from the Atlantic Ocean - is indicative of the pass that the post-Cold War world has arrived at. Never in any context other than meetings of NATO's Military Committee do the military chiefs of so many nations (including at least five of the world's eight nuclear powers), practically a third of the world's, gather together.

That the current meeting is dedicated to NATO operations on three continents and in particular to the world's only military bloc's new Strategic Concept for the 21st century - and for the planet - would have been deemed impossible twenty or even ten years ago. As would have been the U.S. and its NATO allies invading and occupying a Middle Eastern and a South Asian nation. And the elaboration of plans for an international interceptor missile system with land, air, sea and space components. In fact, though, all have occurred or are underway and all are integrated facets of a concerted drive for global military superiority.

Notes

- 1) <http://afghanistan.hmg.gov.uk/en/conference>
- 2) NATO, Allied Command Transformation, January 22, 2010
- 3) <http://www.isaf.nato.int/en/article/news/u.s.-chairman-of-the-joint-chiefs-of-staff-tours-bases-outposts.html>
- 4) Standart News, November 25, 2009
- 5) ACT Media, November 16, 2009
- 6) The Diplomat, November, 2009
- 7) RosBusinessConsulting/Komsomolskaya Pravda, November 10, 2009
- 8) Jerusalem Post, December 3, 2009
- 9) Xinhua News Agency, December 3, 2009
- 10) Agence France-Presse, January 22, 2009
- 11) The National, January 2, 2010
- 12) The National, January 11, 2010
- 13) Gulf News, January 12, 2010
- 14) World Tribune, September 30, 2009
- 15) Ibid
- 16) Hurriyet Daily News, December 30, 2009
- 17) Ibid
- 18) Russian Information Agency Novosti, December 16, 2009
- 19) Europolitics, January 20, 2010

- 20) Sunday Telegraph, January 17, 2010
- 21) Xinhua News Agency, December 22, 2009
- 22) Stars and Stripes, January 16, 2010
- 23) Washington Times, December 3, 2009
- 24) China Times, December 27, 2009
- 25) The Telegraph (Calcutta), January 2, 2009

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