

# CHICAGO: Rick Rozoff Challenges NATO's 'Endless Wars' Agenda

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*By hosting a self-proclaimed "nuclear alliance" like NATO, Chicago is violating the spirit if not the letter of the city's status as a nuclear free zone, passed unanimously by the City Council in 1986 and signed by Mayor Harold Washington, says Rick Rozoff.*

It's one of dozens of points that came up in several wide-ranging talks with Rozoff, a Chicagoan who for 13 years has edited the Stop NATO blog, almost certainly the most comprehensive source for news and critical analysis of the alliance in the world.

On Thursday, Rozoff and a representative of Iraq Veterans Against the War will take the anti-NATO position in a debate with former Undersecretary of State R. Nicholas Burns and NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary James Appathurai at the Pritzker Military Library.

## **Making war around the world**

Stop NATO started in 1999, a watershed year according to Rozoff, when NATO launched its first war, a 78-day bombing campaign against Yugoslavia. That's the point at which NATO moved beyond its posture as a strictly defensive organization protecting its members' territories to become "an active war-making organization" – and when promises of post-Cold War demilitarization and a "peace dividend" were betrayed, he says.

Since then NATO has conducted wars in Asia and Africa – a brutal twelve-year slog with heavy civilian casualties in Afghanistan, NATO's first ground war, and a six-month bombing campaign in Libya.

Despite the unprecedented presence of 150,000 troops from 50 nations (including NATO members and partners) waging war in a single, relatively small country, Afghanistan is widely viewed as a defeat for the alliance. NATO claims Libya as a victory, though the nation is now dominated by fundamentalists and riven by clan wars, with instability spreading to other African nations, Rozoff points out.

## **Global expeditionary force**

A major function of these wars, he argues, is to integrate the militaries of NATO members and scores of partner nations into a "global expeditionary force," with small countries enlisted in efforts to ensure Western access to resources and hem in nations with independent foreign policies – notably Russia, China, and Iran.

NATO's expanded military alliance "puts smaller countries in the position of having to

respond when the major powers call for assistance,” obliges them to accept U.S. and NATO bases on their territory, and requires them to purchase advanced weaponry – which they don’t need and can’t afford – from Western nations, Rozoff says.

The Chicago summit will deal with transitioning to a new phase of involvement in Afghanistan, further integrating the forty NATO partner states that participate in the alliance’s wars, and upgrading the alliance’s military capabilities. NATO is expected to announce that its European interceptor missile system has achieved initial operational capability.

## **Nuclear tensions**

While touted as a defense against attacks from North Korea or Iran, the missile system seems to be aimed at Russia, destabilizing the continent’s nuclear balance and ratcheting up tensions. Indeed, Rozoff says the system “is not to be construed as a defensive project whatsoever,” and ultimately could be part of a first-strike nuclear system.

Rozoff notes other developments to watch, including U.S. plans to spend \$4 billion to modernize its European-based nuclear weapons, NATO’s first move to acquire drone technology, and calls for NATO to intervene in Syria and Mali. It’s all covered in detail at Stop NATO, a compilation of international news reports along with Rozoff’s trenchant commentary.

The Chicago summit “leaves us face to face with the most burning question of our era,” Rozoff told interviewer Allen Ruff on WORT-FM in Madison earlier this month. “Which is that 21 years after the end of the Cold War, we have lived through incessant warfare, there have been wars after wars after wars, in Iraq and Somalia and Bosnia and Kosovo and Afghanistan, in Iraq again, in Libya, we’re seeing bombing and missile attacks into Pakistan and Somalia and Yemen, and on and on and on.

“And it is about time that the people of Chicago, of the United States and the world, say look: there was a promise 21 years ago when the Cold War ended, that we would have peace, that we would have disarmament, we would have a peace dividend that directed funds from killing to fund human needs and human development.”

He points out that the United States spent \$729 billion last year for the Defense Department — \$2,400 for every person living in the country. “There are better things to do with that money than to kill people.”

*Stop NATO e-mail list home page with archives and search engine:*

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stopnato/messages>

*Stop NATO website and articles:*

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com>

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