

CHICAGO SUMMIT TO CONSOLIDATE “GLOBAL NATO”: Hillary Clinton Promotes 22nd Century NATO Ahead Of Summit

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After wars in three continents - Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Libya - and permanent naval operations in the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Sea, Clinton envisions that the Chicago summit will consolidate and expand the role of the world's only military bloc as a global interventionist force:

“In Chicago we will build on these partnerships, as promised. We’ll recognize the operational, financial, and political contributions of our partners across a range of efforts to defend our common values in the Balkans, Afghanistan, the Middle East, and North Africa.”

On April 3, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton addressed the only North Atlantic Treaty Organization command in the United States, Allied Command Transformation, and the World Affairs Council of Greater Hampton Roads, both in Norfolk, Virginia, against the backdrop of the annual Norfolk NATO Festival. On the same day, one day before the 63rd anniversary of the founding of NATO, she also spoke at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington.

The first venue, known by its acronym ACT, is successor to the Cold War-era Allied Command Atlantic and was established as one of many post-September 11, 2001 initiatives of the George W. Bush administration and its then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Washington’s NATO allies dutifully ratified the decision for its creation at the military bloc’s summit in Prague, the Czech Republic in 2002.

The three sites chosen for her busy day speak volumes about the unique role of the U.S. in the world, as the country’s top diplomat’s topics were more suited to the nation’s defense secretary, the difference between the secretaries of state and defense, and for that matter the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee triumvirate of John McCain, Joseph Lieberman and Lindsey Graham, becoming an increasingly narrow one - except that the first and third plan wars and the second executes them.

Clinton’s address at ACT headquarters was short and perfunctory, but that at the World Affairs Council 2012 NATO Conference was considerably more in-depth and revealing.

She stressed continuity and development between the last NATO summit in Lisbon in late 2010 and the upcoming one in Chicago in May.

Her first point was the now over ten-year war in Afghanistan (and Pakistan), NATO’s first war in Asia and its first ground war, and the longest war in the history of the U.S.

While obligatorily speaking of an end to the mission two years from now, she also indicated that the Pentagon and its NATO allies don't intend to ever fully leave the beleaguered country: "In Chicago we will discuss the form that NATO's enduring relationship with Afghanistan will then take. We also hope that, by the time we meet in Chicago, the United States will have concluded our negotiations with Afghanistan on a long-term strategic partnership between our two nations."

Without delineating the issue in any detail, what she was alluding to was the U.S. maintaining three major strategic air bases: at Bagram, outside the nation's capital; at Shindand near the Iranian border; and near the capital of Kandahar province close to the Pakistani border. Air fields also capable of monitoring Central Asia, Russia and China.

NATO, which has been building an Alliance-interoperable Afghan army and air force from scratch under the auspices of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, will also never fully depart the country.

Clinton spoke in the bland, cliché-ridden and self-congratulatory manner suited to such occasions, glossing over entirely the mounting attacks by Afghan soldiers on their NATO counterparts and the Kandahar massacre of March 11 and the deadly NATO attack on a Pakistani outpost last November with the resultant closing of NATO supply routes in the country. In her view, nothing has been done wrong in Afghanistan - except that the counterinsurgency war there should have been waged with greater intensity years earlier. In 2004, while she was a senator from New York, she demanded that U.S. troops in Afghanistan be quintupled from the then-12,000 to 60,000. As secretary of state she assisted in realizing that goal, adding 40,000 for good measure.

The two other points addressed in her speech at the World Affairs Council 2012 NATO Conference were "to update NATO's defense capabilities for the 21st century" and "to cement and expand our global partnerships." The three were identified as "goals for Chicago."

In terms of expanding NATO's global military capabilities in line with the new Strategic Concept adopted at the last summit, she highlighted concerns with developments in North Africa and the Middle East, with particular emphasis on Syria, stating with all due presumption and menace: "Syrians are undergoing horrific assault by a brutal dictator. The end of the story has not yet been written."

With respect to the role of NATO, she added: "Europe is America's partner of first resort. We're working together in the Middle East and North Africa, in Afghanistan, and reaching out to emerging powers and regions, like those nations in the Asia Pacific." Where the Pentagon goes the Alliance is sure to follow.

To prove the point, Washington and its NATO allies, she stated, "are collaborating on a new Alliance Ground Surveillance system, which uses drones to provide crucial intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance information to our forces." And "in Chicago, we'll decide how to use this system as a hub for joint operations."

As the most ominous specimen of NATO serving the interests of U.S. global military plans, she also said: "In Lisbon...we agreed to deploy a missile defense system to provide full coverage and protection for NATO European territory, population, and forces...In Chicago, we will look to advance that goal by developing our plans for NATO to exercise command

and control of missile defense assets.” NATO is now the main partner in Washington’s global interceptor missile system.

The now eight-year-old NATO air patrol operation over the Baltic Sea’s Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – all bordering Russia – by rotating Western, including U.S., warplanes was not left out, as in Chicago “we will highlight NATO’s decision to extend the Baltic Air Policing Program...”

By way of belated acknowledgement that the main purpose of NATO’s war in Afghanistan was to build an international, integrated expeditionary military force – there are 50 nations contributing soldiers, equipment, artillery and aircraft for NATO’s International Security Assistance Force – for future wars, Clinton said that the Chicago summit will enhance the allies’ “commitment to joint exercises and training programs that deepen the habits of cooperation we have developed through our work together in Afghanistan.”

Segueing from the second to the third point, she stated: “More than 20 non-NATO countries are providing troops and resources in Afghanistan. Elsewhere, we work with non-NATO partners to fight piracy, counter violent extremism, keep peace in Kosovo. And when NATO moved to enforce U.N. Security Council resolutions on the protection of civilians in Libya, it did so in lockstep with non-NATO partners from Europe and the Middle East.”

The use of the word lockstep was an inadvertent example of candor from the secretary.

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Referring to George Marshall whom she lavishly praised repeatedly during her long day in Virginia, Clinton pledged “we will once again make the right bet, a bet on America’s leadership and strength, just as we did in the 20th century, for this century and beyond.”

NATO was formed 63 years ago, supposedly as a counterbalance to the Soviet Union in Central Europe; 21 years after the disappearance of the USSR, the world’s sole military superpower and its secretary of state are promising its continuation and growth into the 22nd century. And beyond.

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