

Impending Explosion: U.S. Intensifies Threats To Russia And Iran

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Washington and its NATO allies launched two of the three major wars in the world over the past eleven years in March – against Yugoslavia in 1999 and against Iraq in 2003. The war drums are being pounded anew and the world may be headed for a catastrophe far worse than those in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

The United States, separately and through the military bloc it controls, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is accelerating military deployments and provocations throughout Eurasia and the Middle East.

Embroiled with fellow NATO members in the largest-scale military offensive of the joint war in Afghanistan launched eight years ago last October and well on the way to both extending and replicating the Afghan aggression in the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula [1], Washington and its allies are also taunting and threatening Russia as well as surrounding Iran with military forces and hardware preparatory to a potential attack on that nation.

The rapid pace of the escalation – almost daily reports of missile shield expansion in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Persian Gulf and Turkey; heightened and progressively more bellicose words and actions directed against Iran – is occurring at a breakneck and almost dizzying speed, drawing in larger and larger tracts of Europe and Asia.

On January 12 new U.S. ambassador to Bulgaria James Warlick, speaking “at his first public event in the country,” announced that Washington is entering into negotiations with the Bulgarian government to station interceptor missile facilities, most likely at one of the three new military bases the Pentagon has acquired there in the past four years. “The US military already has bases in Romania and Bulgaria that were created some years ago for delivering troops and cargo to Iraq and Afghanistan....” [2]

“The United States is planning to expand its European missile shield to other parts of Europe” and “will consult closely with Bulgaria and other NATO allies on the specific options to deploy elements of the defense system in those regions,” according to the American envoy. [3]

During the same speech Warlick also “called on Bulgaria to find other alternatives to stop its dependence on Russian gas,” [4] a reference to sabotaging the Russian South Stream project to transport natural gas from the eastern end of the Black Sea to Bulgaria and from there to Austria and Italy.

An analyst at a pro-NATO think tank in Bulgaria said of the proposed missile shield components that “They can be deployed virtually anywhere. Naturally they will need special

infrastructure that provides logistical processes, and technically everything should be enforced by NATO standards.” [5]

The news of including Bulgaria in U.S. and NATO missile shield plans came eight days after a comparable announcement was made by Romanian President Traian Basescu that his country, where the U.S. has four new military bases, will host land-based U.S. interceptor missiles. The news from Romania in turn came only two weeks after Poland disclosed that a U.S. Patriot Advanced Capability-3 anti-ballistic missile battery will be stationed 35 miles from Russian territory as early as March. [6]

The head of the Russian lower house of parliament’s Committee on International Affairs, Konstantin Kosachev, responded to the latest news by saying it is “not in line with the ‘reset’ of US-Russia relations,” [7] an almost unintentionally comic understatement, and other Russian officials have pointed out that the Bulgarian report, as with those relating to Poland and Romania, came to their attention by reading of it in the press. Moscow’s American friend doesn’t feel constrained to notify Russia of its intention to base missile shield installations near the latter’s borders or across the Black Sea from it.

Former Joint Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces retired general Leonid Ivashov was less restrained in his reaction. He recently told a major Russian radio station that U.S. missile strategy “remains unchanged” vis-a-vis that of the former George W. Bush administration and missiles in Romania are an integral component of Washington’s plan to “neutralize Russia as a geopolitical competitor” [8] in the Black Sea and in general. In fact Washington’s plans are to destroy the strategic balance in the European continent two and a half months after the expiration of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Recent announcements concerning U.S. missile deployments near Russia have been interpreted by some observers as intentionally designed to bury START negotiations and any hope for a treaty for the limitation and reduction of strategic offensive arms.

A Russian military analyst, Alexander Pikayev, said of the above dynamic that “US/Russia relations were improving but these proposals really don’t help the situation. This situation is a time bomb. If these plans go ahead it could cause big problems in five to ten years time.” [9]

The White House and Pentagon explain the drive to deploy a solid wall of interceptor missile bases along Russia’s western borders as an alleged defense against Iranian, North Korean and even Syrian missile threats, the argument used by the last American administration in furtherance of plans to place ground-based midcourse missiles in Poland and an X-band missile radar site in the Czech Republic.

The rationale was false then and remains so now. How short-to-medium-range missiles in Poland can in any manner be a response to Iran is unexplained – because it is unexplainable.

Ivashov refuted this transparent lie by stating “Iran will never be first to deliver a military strike.” [10]

On January 12 the Polish parliament took the next step and approved the deployment of 100 U.S. troops, the first foreign forces to be based on its soil since the end of the Warsaw Pact almost twenty years ago, to staff the missile battery near Russia’s border.

Regarding the addition of Bulgaria to the expanding range of American missile shield sites – not the last as will be seen below – Konstantin Sivkov, First Vice President of the Russian Academy for Geopolitical Problems, said that the move “directly threatens Russia.” A news account of his comments added “that after Bulgaria, the next country to make a similar announcement may be Georgia, which has already expressed similar desires.” [11]

He also anticipated the statement of the former top Russian military commander cited above in asserting “the argument that the US missile defense in Europe will be directed against missiles from Iran and North Korea is ridiculous as neither of the two states has the capacity to carry out such strikes.”

In his own words, Sivkov warned: “The US missile defense in Europe is being created in order to level down Russian operational and tactical missile weapons. The USA has started creating a military infrastructure for exerting military pressure on Russia.” [12]

Another geopolitical analyst, Maxim Minaev of the Russian Center for Political Affairs, said of the new and continent-wide European missile shield system planned by the U.S. and NATO that “In its scope it envisages a much stronger structure than the one that was supposed to be in located in the Czech Republic and Poland,” [13] one which logically will include Georgia and Azerbaijan on Russia’s southern border.

Poland became a full NATO member in 1999 and Bulgaria and Romania five years later. On the day U.S. ambassador Warlick first revealed plans to extend interceptor missile plans to Bulgaria, Prime Minister Boiko Borissov hastened to add “My opinion is that we have to show solidarity. When you are a member of NATO, you have to work towards the collective security.” [14]

To indicate the extent to which U.S. missile shield provocations in Eastern Europe are linked with NATO’s drive east into former Soviet space, fraught as that strategy is with heating up so-called frozen conflicts and the very real threat of hot wars, this year’s developments in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria immediately gave rise to dangerous military prospects east of the Black Sea.

The latest news from Romania was coupled with the announcement that “the Czech Republic is in discussions with the Obama administration to host a command center for the United States’ altered missile-defense plan,” [15] and on February 18 the Romanian government began bilateral discussions with neighboring Moldova “on U.S. missile defense plans in Europe....” [16]

The former Soviet republic of Moldova has been coveted by Romania since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the current, Western-supported post-“Twitter Revolution” government is more than willing to oblige its patrons in Bucharest and Washington.

Recently Vladimir Voronin, president of Moldova until last September 11th, spoke of the Romanian president’s disclosure that he would allow the stationing of U.S. missiles in his country and, drawing a parallel with Romania’s World War II fascist dictator, said “The steps taken by Basescu are similar to the agreements to form an anti-Soviet coalition reached by Antonescu and Hitler.”

Voronin added, “Moldovan society is against basing U.S. anti-missile defense systems in Romania. Strained Moldovan-Romanian relations will become worse. We do not accuse

Romania for this decision as we are aware of its unionist policy. [Absorbing Moldova into Romania.] Romania cannot accept that Moldova exists as an independent state.” [17]

“Though the Americans said the rockets are designed to prevent dangers from Iran, the essence is different. These events remind one of Europe’s return to the Cold War of the last century.” [18]

On February 11 Moldovan political analyst Bogdan Tsirdia warned that the U.S. “is very consistently moving NATO infrastructure in Russia’s direction,” specifically mentioning American bases in Romania and Kyrgyzstan, and added “the US wants to create another base in Georgia.”

He added in relation to the Black Sea in particular that “in the near future the US will have a conventional arms advantage over Moscow in the region...[T]he United States is turning the Black Sea into an American lake to control transit in the region.” [19]

On February 15 Transdniestria, formerly part of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic but independent since 1990 and a war with Moldova two years later – and which fears that Romanian incorporation of Moldova would be a prelude to armed attacks to subjugate it – offered to host a Russian missile defense system to counter the American one in Romania.

Transdniestria’s president, Igor Smirnov, said “we could deploy what Russia needs” as the stationing of U.S. interceptor missiles “will not be a stabilizing factor.” [20]

His country is bordered by Ukraine to the east and has been blockaded by that nation after the U.S.-backed “orange revolution” in Ukraine in late 2004 and early 2005. The recent presidential election has rid the nation and its people of the “orange” duo of Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Timoshenko, and incoming head of state Viktor Yanukovich pledged that “There is no question of Ukraine joining NATO,” [21], thereby renouncing one of the two major objectives of his pro-Washington opponents: Pulling Ukraine into the military bloc against the will of the overwhelming majority of its population and ousting the Russian Black Sea fleet from Sevastopol in Crimea.

The outgoing Yushchenko regime recently assigned Ukrainian troops to the global NATO Response Force and hosted NATO Military Committee Chairman Admiral Giampaolo Di Paola who presented a draft cooperation plan for 2010-2011.

A member of the new president’s Party of Regions, Vasil Hara, deputy chairman of the party’s parliamentary group, recently stated “that by offering to deploy U.S. anti-missile systems on its territory, Romania is turning Ukraine into a risk zone.”

He also affirmed that incoming President Yanukovich “will not leave Transdnestr without support.” [22]

NATO expansion not only allows nations increasingly closer to Russia and Iran to be used for global interceptor missile facilities. The eastward drive of the bloc is expressly intended to secure such bases and related sites for that purpose.

Recent developments, however, signal a new advance in U.S. and NATO strategy to neutralize potential adversaries’ ability to respond to military aggression from the West. The extension of missile shield deployments and technology to the Black Sea and from there

further east and south marks the confluence of hostile intentions toward Russia and Iran simultaneously.

In the third public warning on NATO expansion since last month, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad recently said “The West’s ultimate goal is not Iran, but India and China” and “named the recent concentration of NATO forces around India and unrest in Pakistan as an argument.” He added that NATO now “almost completely surrounded Russia” and advocated that “Russia should respond to the deployment of NATO forces along its borders.” [23]

Earlier this month former president Hashemi Rafsanjani issued a similar warning, saying “the deployment of NATO forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Azerbaijan will constitute a serious threat to Iran....” [24]

In discussing Western pressure not to provide Iran with S-300 surface-to-air missiles for defense against prospective U.S. and Israeli attacks, Russian Security Council Deputy Secretary Vladimir Nazarov recently said, “This deal is not restricted by any international sanctions, because these are merely defensive weapons,” and recalled earlier Russian concerns about the U.S. and its NATO allies arming Georgia on the eve of the August 2008 war with Russia.

But, Nazarov rued, “Our calls were ignored. It should be recalled that the Georgian aggression resulted in deaths among Russian servicemen and Russian civilians.” [25]

Russian concerns have not abated in the face of recent news.

The website of the U.S. Air Forces in Europe divulged that American airmen from the Ramstein Air Base in Germany have arrived at the modernized, massively upgraded Krtsanisi National Training Center in Georgia, “a forward operating base of sorts,” to join American Marines there training the Georgian armed forces on a “mission that involves providing a top-notch service to fellow warfighters.” [26] The Marines have been in the nation and at the Krtsanisi base since last August, and in October conducted the latest Immediate Response war games. Immediate Response 2008, which also included U.S. Marines, ended the day before Georgia invaded South Ossetia and triggered a five-day war with Russia.

U.S. Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke will arrive in Georgia on February 22 on a visit “devoted to the Georgian military contingent’s participation in the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan.” (Holbrooke was in the Persian Gulf on February 15 and while speaking in Qatar said of Afghanistan “We cannot make the disastrous mistake of 1989. The international community must stay in Afghanistan to help it,” [27] meaning 1992 presumably, when the U.S.’s Mujahideen clients took over the nation, and “The U.S. has led and won similar wars in Kosovo and Bosnia....” [28])

Georgia is to send another 700 troops trained by U.S. Marines to Afghanistan to serve under American command shortly. Leading Georgian officials have unapologetically acknowledged that the training and combat experience provided them by the U.S. can be used for subjugating South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Any such attempt would guarantee another and far larger war with Russia which has expanded its military presence in both nations since the 2008 war. [29]

Georgia can also be used by the U.S. for military strikes against Iran by providing surveillance radar, air bases and its Black Sea waters for cruise missile launches.

The Russian Itar-Tass news agency revealed on February 12 that in addition to supplying Georgia with aerial drones, Israel is delivering a large consignment of arms and ammunition to the nation.

Citing sources in the Russian secret services, the report revealed: "Under an effective contract Israel's Ropadia company, registered in Cyprus, plans to supply through Bulgaria's Arsenal firm 50,000 AKS-74 automatic rifles, about 1,000 grenade launchers RPG-7 and nearly 20,000 40-millimeter shells for them, as well as about 15,000 5.56-millimeter assault rifles....The hardware and ammunition was ready for shipment back several days ago." [30]

In line with recent announcements that Washington is building up both land-based and sea-based interceptor missile capabilities in the Persian Gulf, the same combination as will be deployed along Russia's western frontier from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and from the latter into the South Caucasus, Georgia and neighboring Azerbaijan are key components in the strategy to prevent Iranian retaliation in the event of U.S. and Israeli attacks. American and NATO bases in Bulgaria and Romania were used for the 2003 war against Iraq and are for the war in Afghanistan to the current day.

Azerbaijan, which has consolidated military ties with the U.S., NATO and Israel, is on Iran's northwest border. [31]

Recently an official with the Azerbaijan president's Academy of Public Administration spoke at a conference titled Azerbaijan's Integration into Europe: Problems and Prospects, organized by the NATO International School in Azerbaijan. He advocated NATO intervening in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict with Armenia as the military bloc had "in the early 1990s in the Balkans, Bosnia," when NATO deployed 400 warplanes in a bombing campaign against Bosnian Serb positions.

According to the official, Elman Nasirov, "the main aim of Azerbaijan in integrating into NATO and European structures is to provide security and restore its territorial integrity," [32] meaning the military conquest of Karabakh.

Azerbaijan can be a major base for operations against Iran, where ethnic Azeris comprise as much as a quarter of the population. The Bosnia model has been alluded to above on two occasions.

On February 16 NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen hosted Major General Yaylym Berdiyev, the defense minister of Turkmenistan, Iran's northeastern neighbor, at the Alliance's headquarters in Brussels. As the French Voltaire Network wrote five days before, "NATO has encircled Iran almost entirely: it has a foothold in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. It just needs one in Turkmenistan for the siege to be complete." [33]

To Iran's west, Turkey's Zaman newspaper wrote on February 17 that U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke in the Persian Gulf state of Qatar and while identifying Iran as a "long-term threat" because of its "nuclear weapons," said that the U.S. interceptor missile system being steadily expanded from Eastern Europe to locations east and south "would protect into the Caucasus and down to Turkey, would provide some additional guarantee

against threatening behavior.” (NATO Deputy Secretary General Claudio Bisogniero was in Qatar on February 8 and 9 to consolidate military partnerships with members of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative and the Mediterranean Dialogue: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. [34])

The same Turkish source quoted U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates: “The dialogue on what Turkey could do within NATO to counter the proliferation of ballistic missiles via a missile defense system continues. We have discussed the possibility of erecting two radar systems in Turkey.” [35]

The Pentagon is simultaneously deploying land-based and ship-based interceptor missiles throughout the Persian Gulf to render Iran incapable of retaliation against massive missile attacks and bombing runs from the U.S. and its allies. [36]

After a five-day tour to Afghanistan and Pakistan to oversee the escalation of the wars in both nations, U.S. National Security Adviser James Jones – former Marine Commandant and NATO Supreme Allied Commander – said that Washington was pursuing tighter sanctions against Iran and revealed what the true purpose of such economic warfare is: “We are about to add to that regime’s difficulties by engineering, participating in very tough sanctions,” which “could trigger regime change.” [37]

On February 14 Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen arrived in Israel to meet with Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and military Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant-General Gabi Ashkenazi, and stated that the option of war against Iran “is still on the table.” [38]

During his trip it was reported that “Mullen’s visit follows a visit last month by U.S. National Security Adviser James Jones and a leaked secret visit two weeks ago by Central Intelligence Agency director Leon Panetta.” [39]

In a masterful analysis of the current crisis in Yemen, American professor Robert Prince examined that nation’s role in American plans for armed hostilities against Iran.

In addition to “countering Chinese access to Middle East and African oil and gas moves, in the long run Yemen offers the United States strategic access to the Horn of Africa – Somalia, Sudan, Kenya – all of which are in varying degrees of turmoil and opens the door for expanding the roles of either AFRICOM or NATO – not only in the Middle East, but in Africa.

“There is another possible strategic consequence to US bases in Yemen, hypothetical but not out of the range of possibility: a US air base in Yemen could be used as a launching pad for an air attack on Iran, not only for US planes but for the Israelis as well.” [40]

On February 15 the earlier-cited Vladimir Nazarov, deputy secretary of Russia’s Security Council, warned that “Any military action against Iran will explode the situation, will have extremely negative consequences for the entire world, including for Russia, which is a neighbor of Iran.” [41]

On the 17th Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces General Nikolai Makarov was quoted by his nation’s Interfax news agency as stating, “The U.S. is currently

conducting two military operations - in Afghanistan and in Iraq. A third one would be a disaster for them. So, as they're tackling their tasks in Iraq and Afghanistan, they could deliver a strike against Iran." [42]

Washington and its NATO allies launched two of the three major wars in the world over the past eleven years in March - against Yugoslavia in 1999 and against Iraq in 2003. The war drums are being pounded anew and the world may be headed for a catastrophe far worse than those in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Notes

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