

Military Escalation: NATO-Russia War Tensions Laid Bare at Washington Summit

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In remarks delivered from the US-Nordic Leaders' Summit Friday in Washington, US President Barack Obama denounced the Russian government in belligerent tones, warning that members of the NATO alliance remain "united in our concern about Russia's growing aggressive military presence and posture in the Baltic-Nordic region."

The US President lavished praise on the Scandinavian regimes, expressing his gratitude for their "significant contributions in the fight against ISIS," including deployment of special forces and logistical aid in support of US-led operations in Iraq.

He expressed special thanks for the fact that "Denmark and Norway will be joining the United States in contributing to an enhanced allied forward presence to bolster our collective defense in Europe."

The American president vowed to "continue to support Ukraine, and maintain sanctions against Russia." Obama's comments were closely echoed by the Swedish prime minister, Stefan Löfven, who declared: "We will not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea, or accept Russian aggression in Ukraine."

The US media presented Obama's sharp remarks as a "response" to warnings issued by Putin earlier in the day, in which the Russian leader attacked the establishment of the new US-NATO Aegis Ashore missile base at Deveselu, in Romania.

US leaders have sought to defend the system by claiming that it is directed against Iran and other "rogue nations." The real purpose of the missile deployments, part of the preparation for an offensive and nuclear war against Russia, was made clear by US Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work, who said the system is geared for "the central and northern arc of NATO," i.e., Russia's western and Arctic flanks.

"They aren't defensive systems, they are part of the US strategic nuclear potential deployed on the periphery, in eastern Europe," Putin bluntly noted in his own remarks Friday. In an official statement, Russia's foreign ministry condemned the new base for "gravely undermining the INF Treaty," referring to the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty between Washington and Moscow.

The sharpness of Putin's response to the NATO escalation is an index of the historic levels of geopolitical tensions building up under the impact of Washington's relentless war drive.

While deeply anxious over the immense pressures being imposed by the US and NATO,

Russia's capitalist class sees no alternative but to pursue conciliation with the far more powerful American and European imperialists.

Following this usual pattern, Putin moderated his criticisms with appeals for compromise, affirmed that Russia and NATO ultimately share common interests, and pleaded for rationality by Western leaders.

He expressed frustration over the insistence of NATO, which he referred to as "our partners," on continuing to expand their missile infrastructure, despite the signing of the nuclear deal with Iran. "The threat is gone, but the creation of the missile defense system is continuing," Putin complained.

While Putin's overtures are premised on the assumption that more rational Western leaders might choose to de-escalate in order to avoid an all-out war, the entire history of the imperialist epoch has proven that there can be no lasting peace with, or between, the major imperialist powers. Instead, the current standoff between NATO and Russia, coming after decades of intensifying world crisis, has brought geopolitical tensions to their highest pitch since the 1930s.

Russia, a vast and resource-rich territory with the largest land area of any state, once the core of the Soviet Union, represents the choicest of prizes in the eyes of the American and European elites. They see no way out from their own crisis apart from a mad scramble to dismember and subjugate the Russian Federation, along with China and the ex-colonial nations of Africa and Asia.

The predatory designs of the US and NATO powers are stated openly in policy documents. Official NATO doctrines promulgated earlier this year define Russia as a "resurgent and aggressive" power and call for a qualitative escalation of NATO's military posture towards Moscow, in their jargon, from "assurance to deterrence."

Recent months have seen NATO match deeds with words, deploying new forces and hardware throughout areas bordering Russia, including new intelligence and command outposts and large amounts of pre-positioned heavy weaponry in every major Baltic and East European country.

Last week, NATO officials quietly informed the media that 4,000 additional NATO forces are being deployed to the Baltic states and Poland, to be reinforced at the start of 2017 by a further 4,200 NATO troops. US military officials told the *Wall Street Journal* last week that they plan for an "increased rotational presence" in the East, including "more regular exercises and presence in both Romania and Bulgaria."

The announcements came amid large-scale war drills in the former Soviet republic of Georgia, still ongoing, including more than 1,000 US, British and Georgian soldiers, held provocatively in a geopolitical flashpoint that nearly brought Washington and Moscow to blows in 2008.

The drills, hailed by Georgian officials as "the biggest our country has ever hosted," with "the biggest number of troops on the ground, and the largest concentration of military equipment," include a full company of US mechanized combat troops, complete with M1A1 battle tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles.

The growing momentum of NATO's push against Russia is evident from the deepening ties

between the Western powers and the fanatically anti-Russia regimes in the Baltic states, Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region, which are enthusiastically embracing the transformation of their territories into armed camps.

At a groundbreaking ceremony for new air force facilities in Poland last week, President Andrzej Duda boasted, "Although we joined NATO years ago, now we are seeing that NATO is truly entering Poland."

Recent weeks have seen the Ukrainian government and NATO members Romania and Turkey demand NATO escalation in the Black Sea, including formation of a multinational naval force which would patrol the waters surrounding Russia's only warm-water port, Sevastopol in Crimea, on a permanent basis. NATO officials told the *Wall Street Journal* last week that plans for such a fleet are already well advanced.

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