

NATO Boosts Military Build-up Against Russia as Protests Spread in East Ukraine

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As seizures of government buildings and anti-regime protests spread in eastern Ukraine, the puppet government in Kiev and its Western imperialist backers are recklessly escalating their aggressive policies, threatening to provoke not only a full-blown civil war in Ukraine but a military confrontation with Russia, a nuclear-armed power.

On Wednesday, NATO countries stepped up military deployments throughout Eastern Europe aimed at encircling Russia. Six McDonnell Douglas CF-18 Hornet multirole fighter planes, a C-17 cargo plane and hundreds of Canadian Forces military personnel left for Romania, which shares a border with Ukraine and is located at the Western shore of the strategically important Black Sea.

Another four Danish fighter planes landed on the Amari airbase in Estonia on Wednesday.

“We are sending out a message to Russia and we are reassuring our allies that we are taking steps and making a point consistent with what NATO has been saying, the actions so far are unacceptable by Russia and we are sending out a very clear message,” Canadian Defense Minister Rob Nicholson told CBC News.

Already on Monday, Britain and France had sent eight fighter jets to Lithuania and Poland. According to the British and French defense ministries, four UK Typhoon fighter planes landed in Lithuania and four French Rafale jets touched down in Malbork, a town in northern Poland.

Today Polish, British and Danish jets begin patrolling the air space over the Baltic States, which all share a direct border with Russia. According to ITAR-TASS, the operation will last for at least four months.

Already on Monday, the last contingent of a deployment of 600 US paratroopers arrived in Estonia. The 150 soldiers from the 173rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team will take part in a NATO exercise called “Spring Storm” in May.

US Air Force General Philip M. Breedlove, the top military commander of NATO in Europe, announced on Tuesday that the military alliance will hold maneuvers in Poland, Romania, the Baltic region, and the Black Sea. Speaking in Lisbon, he reaffirmed the “collective defense” principle of NATO—i.e., that the alliance will collectively retaliate if one of its members is attacked.

NATO’s war-mongering comes against the backdrop of intensifying military tensions in Ukraine and anti-government protests in the country’s rebellious eastern provinces.

Pro-Russian activists reportedly occupied the regional government building and seized the local police headquarters in Gorlovka, an eastern Ukrainian coal mining city with a population of nearly 300,000.

In the major industrial city of Luhansk, police handed over their headquarters to protesters. On Tuesday, crowds had stormed the government building of the city, proclaiming the "People's Republic of Luhansk" and announcing plans to hold a referendum on autonomy on May 11.

As the right-wing regime in Kiev increasingly loses control over eastern Ukraine, it is desperately seeking to reorganize its 'anti-terrorist' military operation to crush the protests. The crackdown, planned in discussions with Western officials including CIA chief John Brennan and US Vice President Joseph Biden, came to a halt when the Ukrainian military confronted broad popular resistance, and soldiers refused to shoot at protesters or even defected to the other side.

Yesterday, interim President Oleksandr Turchynov said that the Ukrainian military had been placed on full alert. The Kiev city government announced that military exercises were planned in downtown Kiev itself, in the early morning hours today: "Special tactical exercises will be held in Kiev on the night of April 30 to May 1. As part of the exercises, it is envisaged that columns of military vehicles will move in the city."

Speaking at a council of heads of Ukrainian regions in Kiev on Wednesday, Turchynov admitted that Kiev has lost control of eastern Ukraine. He accused defecting soldiers and police of "cooperating with terrorist organizations," the Kiev puppet regime's term for anti-government activists who are seizing state buildings in the East.

He threatened "to prevent the spread of the terrorist threat to other regions of Ukraine," vowing that the army was ready for the alleged "threat of a Russian invasion."

He called on the audience to speed up the creation of regional militias loyal to Kiev. "We must have the capability to move those units fast to support other regions against such a threat," he stressed. Several such militias have been created in eastern Ukraine, led by business oligarchs or officials of the fascist Right Sector paramilitary force.

At a UN Security Council meeting on Tuesday, the Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations Vitaly Churkin warned that "the Kiev regime, encouraged by the Western 'friends,' is persistently pushing the country towards a catastrophe."

Churkin said that just several days after talks in Geneva ostensibly aimed to de-escalate the conflict, "there was the resumption of the so-called 'antiterrorist,' and in essence punitive operation." He said that "some 15,000 troops, tanks, artillery, planes, units of the Right Sector [a fascist group which played a leading role in the putsch] were sent to the southeast of Ukraine."

As Ukraine descends into civil war, the Western powers are stoking anti-Russian hysteria and trying to lay the political basis for a permanent military build-up and rearmament program directed against an alleged Russian threat.

US Secretary of State John Kerry tellingly described the "events in Ukraine" as "a wake-up call" while addressing the Atlantic Council, a Washington-based think tank, on Tuesday. He

called NATO territory “inviolable”, threatening to “defend every single piece of it.” As usual, Kerry was turning reality on its head in order to justify NATO aggression against Russia.

Kerry accused Russia of failing to live up to the Geneva agreement, claiming it was “fair to say they have escalated the crisis even further.” He cynically added: “What Russia’s actions in Ukraine tell us is that today [President Vladimir] Putin’s Russia is playing by a different set of rules. Through its occupation of Crimea and its subsequent destabilization of eastern Ukraine Russia seeks to change the security landscape of eastern and central Europe.”

“So we find ourselves in a defining moment for our transatlantic alliance—and nobody should mistake that—and we are prepared to do what we need to do, and to go the distance to uphold that alliance.” In a barely veiled war threat against Russia, he threatened to “push back against those who want to try to change sovereign borders by force.”

The accusations of Kerry, a grand master of lies and propaganda, are rubbish. The crisis in Ukraine is not the result of “Russian aggression,” but of a criminal strategy by the US and its European allies to install a hostile regime on Russia’s borders in Ukraine and, ultimately, dismember Russia itself.

It is not Moscow, but the US and its European allies, led by Germany, who are changing “borders by force” and provoking Russia. Washington and Berlin first orchestrated the fascist-led February 22 putsch to replace the elected, pro-Russian government of President Viktor Yanukovich with a pro-Western puppet regime. The West of course knew that the installation of a violently anti-Russian regime in Kiev would provoke a reaction from both Moscow and in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine is a former Soviet Republic and Crimea the historic home of Russia’s main naval base. Especially in the eastern Ukraine, the population has close cultural and linguistic ties to Russia and is not willing to accept a government including fascist, anti-Russian forces like the Svoboda party and the Right Sector militia.

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