

NATO Expansion into the Middle East, Confronting Russia, Systematic Surrounding of China

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[Voice of Russia and Stop NATO](#)

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NATO expansion into the Middle East, the systematic surrounding of the People's Republic of China, the current state of relations between Russia and NATO and what appears to be broken promises and continued aggression on the part of the U.S. and incumbent President Barack Obama - these topics are discussed with Rick Rozoff, a regular Voice of Russia contributor and the owner of Stop NATO International.

Hello, this is John Robles. I'm speaking with Rick Rozoff, the owner of Stop NATO.

Eliminating counter-strike from target completely?

Yeah, that would be the equivalent of somebody out on the street firing at you from a bullet-proof car: they can shoot at you and you can't shoot back. It's fraught with a lot of dangerous scenarios of the sort I've laid out. And it's viewed with suspicion and with good reason. In recent days the governments not only of Russia, but of Syria and Iran, have spoken out very forcefully about the deployment of the NATO Patriot missiles in Turkey, because the governments of three countries I just mentioned see the potential of an expansion of the system to the point where it could serve the purpose that I just described.

Can you tell us a little bit about NATO's role in Israel and Gaza? What about future plans for taking out Syria and Iran?

I'm sure there are contingency plans for just those two scenarios; I'm just as sure that I don't know what they are. They have not been publicly divulged. However, we should remind ourselves of the very special relationship that has existed for almost 20 years now between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Israel. Israel is one of seven members of a special military partnership program set up by NATO, I believe in 1994, called the Mediterranean Dialogue. This is the program to foster both bilateral and collective military cooperation between NATO and seven countries in North Africa and the Middle East. They are Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Israel. But several years ago amongst those seven, Israel was the first to be granted what's called an Individual Cooperation Program under the auspices of the Mediterranean Dialogue. And there's always been a particularly good relationship because of that.

NATO secretary generals have visited Israel. One of them, the preceding one, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, visited Israel immediately after the last assault on the Gaza Strip, so-called Operation Cast Lead, in December of 2008 and January of 2009.

Another curious fact about Israel: it's the only country in the Middle East, in fact it's the only country outside of Europe, that falls within the area of responsibility of the Pentagon's

European Command, U.S. European Command, the chief commander of which, currently Admiral James Stavridis, is simultaneously the top military commander of NATO in Europe, what's called the Supreme Allied Commander Europe. By that very fact, the fact that the U.S. European Command and its commander overlaps with NATO and its top military commander, in fact the two commanders are one and the same person, also indicates the special relationship that exists between NATO and Israel.

What's your prediction for Egypt and for the whole situation in the Middle East with Gaza and Israel and all the "Arab Spring" countries? They seem to be going in a dictatorial direction, how's that going to affect NATO relations?

Throughout the Arab world and if not the rest of the world certainly in the West there were pretty generous expectations about the so-called Arab Spring and people anticipated a complete and substantive democratic transformation, but at the end of the day - and we're talking about 1.5 year after the resignation of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and his replacement for a year and a half by what can only be described as a military junta in Egypt in the interim which saw an exacerbation of violations of civil liberties, mass arrests and martial law - that what we see now, afterwards, is that Egypt remains another stalwart of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue military partnership.

The government has not even suggested that Egypt move out of that program. Second of all, to the best of my knowledge Egypt continues to get its three billion dollars a year in U.S. assistance aid, which is overwhelmingly military in nature. The Bright Star military exercises that have occurred regularly between the United States and Egypt in Egypt have in fact been suspended since the beginning of the Arab Spring, but I have not seen any information that they are not going to be resumed at any point in the future. So, I don't want to say that the more things change, the more they remain the same, but there certainly is no indication that in terms of its general foreign policy orientation that the government of Morsi in Egypt is any different than the Mubarak government.

What should we be watching out for in the next few weeks?

The big question, of course, is the missile deployment on the Syrian border. And if this were simply an isolated incident - we've just discussed that it is not, it is in conjunction with, in tandem with the deployment of the missile radar facilities in Turkey and Israel, Turkey this year, Israel four years ago. But we also have to recall that a similar development has occurred twice before, where NATO has deployed the same Patriot missile batteries, though they're more advanced now, they have longer range, up to 600 kilometers is the latest figure I have seen. This was done in 1991 and it was done again early in 2003 and in both instances immediately before military assaults on Iraq. To see the third deployment of NATO Patriot missiles to Turkey suggests, if the pattern holds true, that it may portend plans for military action against Syria.

But the very least we know is this, and Russian officials have mentioned this most prominently, that with what are called missile enhancement capabilities that the Patriots now have they could effectively be used to enforce a no-fly zone over northern Syria. That they can not only knock out ballistic missiles but cruise missiles and aircraft. And even though the Turkish government and NATO are denying the fact they intend to use the Patriot missiles for this purpose, there's no reason why they could not use the deployment of NATO interceptor missiles to enforce a de-facto no-fly zone over Syria in the manner that

it was done in Libya last year, that is as the beginning of outright military hostilities against the country.

Aren't there any international rules that have to be followed before the U.S. and NATO can go and deploy whatever weapons they want in whatever country they want?

Unfortunately, no. The United Nations permits, in its Charter, for one or more countries to seek military assistance from an ally if they can portray themselves as in some manner being threatened. Of course, Turkey isn't threatened by Syria and that's an absurd contention on the part of NATO or the West or the Turkish government suggests it is. Nevertheless, that's the rubric under which they requested and evidently now are going to be granted the NATO missiles. So, technically, it's not illegal. If the missiles are used over Syrian territory to in effect maintain a no-fly zone, then that is clearly a violation of the sovereignty of Syria and that is a violation of international law.

Can you give us a brief outline of NATO's up and coming plans for Russian relations?

Russia's certainly been accommodating, it's been very obliging, through the NATO-Russia Council, in terms of participating in the Northern Distribution Network for the transport of non-lethal supplies to Afghanistan, presumably out of Afghanistan at some point in the future. Russia's made the offer for joint interceptor missile defense participation, but NATO has insisted that their program is distinct and Russia cannot be incorporated in any common program.

So what we see is example after example of the Russian government making overtures and having them refused by Washington and by Brussels. And we also have to realize the Anti-Ballistic Treaty, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and others have been severely jeopardized, damaged because of the movement of U.S. and NATO military hardware into countries that are not covered by the CFE Treaty. I'm talking about the Baltic states and certain Balkan states and the fact that the U.S. is aggressively moving ahead with the interceptor missile system despite repeated reservations and even warnings by Russia. It suggests that the U.S. is not acting in good faith and not terribly interested in cultivating a productive relationship with Russia.

We talked before about the presidential elections. There's not going to be any change with Obama? He's not going to become friendlier towards Russia, is he?

I know the speculation you're alluding to, the unguarded comment to Medvedev that suggested that he was going to be or could be. A lame-duck presidency cuts both ways. It allows a well-meaning chief executive to do things he might not do otherwise because he doesn't have to run for reelection, as you mention. On the other hand, as perhaps we saw with the escalation of violence in the Middle East and other activities very shortly after the reelection of Barack Obama, that it also gives him a free hand to do things in a destructive manner where he's not going to be held accountable either.

Where do you see Obama going?

A continuation of the same. In terms of geopolitics, let's keep in mind his first trip overseas after his election was to Southeast Asia, where he visited Thailand, where American presidents have visited in the past, but he was in Myanmar/Burma and Cambodia. To the best of my knowledge it's the first time an American President had visited Myanmar at all,

and perhaps definitely the first time Cambodia in the last 40 years or more and perhaps ever. The emphasis or pivot toward the Asia-Pacific region, which is clearly targeted against China to rally regional powers into economic and ultimately military alliances with the U.S. to isolate and encircle China. What we saw from President Obama, almost immediately after his reelection, is he's staking out territory in Southeast Asia and putting China on notice.

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