

NATO SUMMIT: Life in Occupied Chicago

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Through Monday, downtown residents live in occupied Chicago.

Secret Service agents, NORTHCOM and National Guard forces, as well as thousands of state and local police seem everywhere.

Getting around feels hazardous. Anyone may be stopped, searched, interrogated, even arrested.

Residents were advised to hunker down and stay out of harm's way as best as possible. For many, it's not easy. More on a city under siege below.

NATO is the world's first global war-making alliance. Largely a US imperial tool, it's a killing machine. Its 28 members and dozens of partner states comprise about one-third of the world's nations.

Article 4 of its charter calls for members to "consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of any" is threatened.

Article 5 considers an armed attack (real or otherwise) against one or more members, an attack against all, and calls for collective self-defense.

Imperial conquests are planned. Wars are launched. Fundamental laws are violated. Nonbelligerent states are targeted. Vast destruction follows. Millions die. Human misery is incalculable. One conflict follows another in an endless cycle of worldwide collective punishment.

NATO's a global menace, a killing machine, a weapon of mass destruction threatening humanity, an alliance for war, conquest and dominance, not peace.

Enemies don't exist so they're invented. Wealth and power interests alone benefit. Humanitarian intervention is code language for aggressive wars. Pretexts are contrived to wage them.

NATO plans global dominance. China's being encircled. Encroachment approaches Russia's borders. It's targeted by strategic missiles for offense, not defense. At the 2010 Munich Conference, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said:

After the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact dissolved, "a real opportunity emerged to make the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) a full-fledged organization providing equal security for all states of the Euro-Atlantic area."

“However, the opportunity was missed, because the choice was made in favor” of expanding NATO eastward to Russia’s borders.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a message. He cancelled plans to attend the May 18 and 19 G8 summit. He won’t be with NATO states in Chicago. Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev represents him. Both leaders are justifiably concerned.

Putin participated in the Moscow Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) summit with most former Soviet Republics.

On May 3 and 4, 50 nations attended the Moscow missile defense conference. Representatives from NATO’s 28 states came. So did China, Japan, and South Korea.

At issue was America’s so-called missile shield. It represents major friction between Moscow and Washington. So is concern about war on Syria and Iran, as well as Obama administration officials fomenting and backing anti-government protests in Russia.

Putin’s not silent. He opposes America’s aggressive wars. In February 2007 at Munich’s 43rd Conference, he said:

He’d “avoid excessive politeness.” He said “what (he) really (felt) about international security problems.”

What is a unipolar world, he asked? “(A)t the end of the day it refers to one type of situation, namely one center of authority, one center of force, one center of decision-making.”

It’s a world with “one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within.”

“And this certainly has nothing in common with democracy. Because, as you know, democracy is the power of the majority in light of the interests and opinions of the minority.”

“Incidentally, Russia - we - are constantly being taught about democracy. But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves.”

He categorically rejected unipolarity.

“Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force - military force - in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts.”

“We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law.”

“One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way.”

He “unequivocally” advocates “non-proliferation.” He opposes imperial wars. He favors international cooperation, not confrontation.

He seeks “responsible and independent partners” for peace in a “fair and democratic world order that (will) ensure security and prosperity not only for a select few, but for all.”

He's out of sync with warrior NATO states.

His remarks didn't go down well in Washington. At the time, Bush was still president. Since 2009, Obama exceeded his worst policies. He threatens global war. Putin and other leaders are concerned. So are tens of thousands protesting on Chicago streets.

On May 18, The New York Times headlined "Chicago Protests Draw Thousands Before NATO Event," saying:

On Friday, they filled a downtown city plaza. Throughout the week, other protests and marches will follow. Police lined downtown streets.

Busloads of out-of-town participants arrived. Police confirmed 13 arrests. Protest groups added another nine seized earlier in the week. Police declined "to comment or even confirm additional arrests, saying the case is continuing."

On May 18, the Chicago Sun Times said three protesters were "charged with conspiracy to commit terrorism."

They're accused of three felony crimes. They include alleged possession of an explosive or incendiary device, conspiracy to commit terrorism, and providing material support to terrorism.

No evidence whatever proved it.

According to National Lawyers Guild (NLG) attorney Sarah Gelsomino:

"We cannot say enough that we believe that these charges are absolutely....very trumped up charges. (They're) clearly an attempt to continue this intimidation campaign on activists."

"Charging these people who are here to peacefully protest against NATO for terrorism, when in reality the police have been terrorizing activists in Chicago, is absolutely outrageous."

Accusations claimed Molotov cocktail preparations. Gelsomino added:

Police "provided no evidence of criminal intent or wrongdoing on the part of the activists."

The men were driving. Police squad cars stopped them. They were "detained for no apparent reason and asked questions about why they were in Chicago and what they planned to do during the NATO summit."

Other arrests were made. On Friday, some were released. Police had no comment. They prepared months before NATO's arrival. Crowd control training using special equipment is involved.

Sound cannon use is planned. They emit ear-splitting chirping noise. Called LRAD (long range acoustic device), it's able to cause permanent hearing loss and other ill effects. The Illinois ACLU and other groups protested against using military technology on peaceful civilian demonstrators.

Chicago's version mounts mid-sized satellite dishes on vehicles or atop high poles. They focus intense sound beams on targets. They cover a 30 degree arc up to 1,600 feet away. They reach 150 decibels.

According to the National Institute of Deafness, noise above 85 decibels can cause permanent hearing loss. University of Missouri Professor Karen Piper participated in an earlier G20 protest. LRAD sound cannons were used. She partially lost hearing and sued. She said:

"The intensity of being hit at close range by a high-pitched sound blasts....is indescribable. The sound vibrates through you and causes pain throughout your body, not only in the ears."

"I thought I might die. It is shocking that (this) device is being promoted for use on American citizens and the general public."

Police deny clear dangers. Official statements call LRAD a "risk management tool."

Cops are also equipped with new armor, shields, "hippie-beaters," surveillance cameras, and other devices and equipment.

On Friday, thousands marched through downtown streets. NLG lawyer Ben Meyer denounced what he called an excessive police presence. Dozens of officers milled through crowds. Some videotaped activities.

"It's frustrating that the state needs to come out and show this much force," he said. At issue was a nurses' rally. Occupy Chicago and other OWS activists joined them. "They have everyone from from the superintendent on down there. It's just ridiculous."

Dozens of protesters blocked Michigan Avenue traffic peacefully. It's close to where this writer lives. Confrontations with police followed. One or more arrests were made for "aggravated battery of a police officer."

Bogus charges like this occur often. Cops commit violence. Victims are blamed. Justice is denied. The Chicago Tribune called Friday a "peaceful start to NATO protests."

In fact, scattered confrontations occurred. Roads were blocked. Demonstrators chanted "these are our streets (and) parks."

Larger-scale Saturday rallies and marches followed. Others are planned for Sunday. NLG's Gelsomino said arrests made are done to scare protesters. "This is playbook. (It's) "shoddy police work. It's a fear campaign."

The Chicago Sun Times headlined "What does an anarchist look like - or stand for?" saying:

They "don't conform to dress codes." They resemble "ordinary" people.

They oppose war and resent being called anarchists.

The Sun Times also published a "NATO Survival Guide." It advised staying home. For those traveling around the city, it said "good luck."

Expect traffic, bus and train delays. Some roads are closed. Open ones will be congested. Expect padowns, searches and other screenings. Forget about local museums and other downtown attractions.

Stay far away from McCormick Place NATO headquarters. Avoid the South Side entirely. Major arteries will be closed. Even side streets north of the Chicago River in this writer's neighborhood are affected.

To accommodate heads of state entourages, Kennedy Expressway to O'Hare airport will experience unannounced "rolling closures" over its entire route.

Through Monday, expect delays, discomfort, disruptions, and unprovoked police confrontations. Hopefully peaceful rallies and marches won't become battlegrounds.

Given Chicago PD's odious reputation, odds are long against avoiding what some longtime residents fear.

NATO doesn't arrive anywhere peacefully. Why should Chicagoans expect otherwise?

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