US and NATO use Ukrainian crisis to advance military build-up in Eastern Europe

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Statements issued by White House and NATO officials over the weekend on the Ukrainian crisis, including allegations that Russia is poised to invade several of its neighbours, point to advanced preparations by US imperialism for a heightened military build-up across Eastern Europe.

US President Barack Obama today begins a four-day trip to Europe, beginning in The Hague, Holland. On the sidelines of a pre-scheduled Nuclear Security Summit there, Obama has convened a meeting on Ukraine involving the leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan—the G8 minus Russia.

After working with Germany to orchestrate a regime-change operation in Ukraine, Washington's aim is to diplomatically isolate Vladimir Putin's administration and consider further damaging economic sanctions against Russia, while also developing trade and energy mechanisms that bring Ukraine and other Eastern European states under the strategic control of the US and EU. On Wednesday, Obama will meet in Brussels with European Union officials and NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, US Air Force General Philip Breedlove, yesterday issued a bellicose denunciation of Russia. He accused the Putin administration of building up its military forces on Russia's western borders and of preparing to intervene into Transnistria, a part of the former Soviet republic of Moldova that has a significant ethnic Russian population and which attempted to become independent following the disintegration of the USSR. Breedlove also raised the spectre of Russian troops invading the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

"The [Russian] force that is at the Ukrainian border now to the east is very, very sizeable and very, very ready," Breedlove declared at an event held by the German Marshall Fund think-tank. "There is absolutely sufficient force postured on the eastern border of Ukraine to run to Transnistria if the decision was made to do that, and that is very worrisome."

After referring to the Russian annexation of Crimea, the NATO commander asked: "How do we change our deployment? How do we change our readiness? How do we change our force structure such that we can be ready in the future? We need to think about our allies, the positioning of our forces in the alliance and our readiness of our forces in the alliance, such that we can be there to defend against them if required, especially in the Baltics and other places."

Breedlove added that Russia was now acting as "an adversary" of NATO—underscoring the active preparations of the US and its European allies to launch a war against Russia.

Obama's deputy national security adviser Tony Blinken, speaking on CNN yesterday, backed Breedlove's statements, declaring that it was "deeply concerning to see the Russian troop build-up on the border." Blinken added that "it's possible that they're preparing to move in [to Ukraine]."

Polish Defence Minister Tomasz Siemoniak declared on Saturday that Washington "must increase its [military] presence in Europe, also in Poland." During US Vice President Joe Biden's visit to the country last week, Siemoniak explained, "There was a clear expectation from our side, and also from all NATO allies [in] Eastern Europe, that we expect a larger military presence of the US and that this eastern flank of NATO must be strengthened."

Siemoniak added that it was "natural", given developments in Ukraine, to discuss the prospect of a permanent, major US base in Poland.

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These statements, which follow the US deployment of twelve F16 fighter jets and 300 troops to Poland earlier this month, underscore the brazen hypocrisy of the White House and its allies. Washington is now drumming up a war scare over alleged Russian troop movements within the country's own borders, while at the same time the US armed forces are being deployed in a provocative effort to cordon off Russia from its neighbours.

The installed regime in Kiev is also ratcheting up the rhetoric. Foreign Minister Andrii Deshchytsia yesterday appeared on US television and stated that the prospect of military conflict with Russia was "very high" and "growing." He added: "We are ready to respond… It's very difficult to keep people restrained, and they are patriots of their homeland ... [It] would be difficult for them just simply sit or stay and look at Russia invading their country."

Deshchytsia's reference to "patriots of their homeland" is an allusion to the extreme right-wing and nationalist forces that formed the base of the Washington-European operation in Ukraine, have been brought into top government posts and are being integrated into the armed forces.

Defence Minister Igor Tenyukh, one of several senior government figures who are members of the fascistic Svoboda party, yesterday bemoaned the failure of Ukrainian forces in Crimea to attack Russian troops. Over the weekend, Russian forces secured control of the Belbek air base, one of the few remaining bases in Crimea still occupied by Ukrainian troops.

Speaking to journalists in Kiev, Tenyukh declared that "our commanders had the authorisation to use force." However, he complained: "Unfortunately, the commanders made decisions on the spot. They chose not to use their weapons in order to avoid bloodshed."

Having installed a regime in Ukraine that includes forces intent on triggering a war between the US and Russia, the White House is now preparing to build up its military capacities. Republican congressman Mike Rogers, chair of the House of Representatives intelligence committee, yesterday told NBC's "Meet the Press" that Obama's rhetoric did not "match the reality on the ground." He demanded military aid that the Ukrainian government "can use to really protect and defend themselves."

Obama's deputy national security adviser Tony Blinken responded by declaring that the prospect of directly arming Ukraine was currently being reviewed.

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