

Obama escalates NATO confrontation with Russia

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President Barack Obama unveiled in Poland Tuesday a new \$1 billion initiative aimed at ratcheting up NATO's military encirclement of Russia and preparing for a direct armed conflict between the two nuclear-armed powers.

The four-day trip to Europe, which is to include meetings with representatives from throughout eastern Europe as well as with the president-elect of Ukraine, the "chocolate king," Petro Poroshenko, came amid a bloody escalation of the Ukrainian regime's "antiterrorist operation" against the populations in the east of the country.

On Monday, Ukrainian warplanes carried out air strikes in the center of Luhansk, a city of nearly half a million near the Russian border. What are believed to have been cluster bombs were dropped directly on the regional administration building, killing at least eight civilians and wounding 28 others, many of them critically. Among the dead was Natalya Arkhipova, the public health minister of the Luhansk People's Republic, which was proclaimed following an autonomy referendum last month. When the warplanes struck, she was at the building's entrance speaking to another woman, who was also killed.

This is only one of the more bloody actions in a growing number of atrocities, as the Ukrainian regime has unleashed warplanes, heavy artillery, mortar fire and assaults by thugs of the fascist Right Sector against the population in the east. Schools, hospitals and residential areas have all been severely damaged by indiscriminate bombardment directed at terrorizing entire regions where opposition to the regime installed by the US-backed and fascist-led coup last February has only increased since the May 25 election of the billionaire oligarch Poroshenko.

In Poland, Obama provocatively combined a threat of

new sanctions and an ultimatum to the Russian government of President Vladimir Putin to order those resisting the onslaught by Kiev regime forces and Right Sector fascists to "stand down" with the unveiling of a \$1 billion program aimed at increasing US and NATO military deployments on Russia's border and providing new military aid to Ukraine.

The funding is intended to pay for a constant rotation into the region of US land, air and ground forces. This has already begun, with the deployment of a detachment of 18 US F-16 fighter planes, which Obama visited on Tuesday, as well as some 600 US paratroopers, who have been sent into Poland and the former Soviet Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

"We'll increase the number of American personnel—Army and Air Force units—continuously rotating through allied countries in Central and Eastern Europe," Obama said during a joint press conference with Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski. "And we will be stepping up our partnerships with friends like Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia as they provide for their own defense."

Like Ukraine, there are sharp tensions between Moscow and Moldova and Georgia, where regions have formed breakaway states in reaction to ethnic nationalist regimes, aligning themselves with Russia—Transnistria in the case of Moldova, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the case of Georgia.

Pouring US military aid into these regions can only serve to provoke a confrontation with Russia, which, it is becoming increasingly apparent, is Washington's aim.

Dubbed the European Reassurance Initiative, this stepped-up aid is to be accompanied, according to a White House statement, with a review of US "force

presence in Europe in the light of the new security challenges on the continent.” The statement further vowed that a military buildup in eastern Europe would “not come at the expense of other defense priorities, such as our commitment to the Asia Pacific rebalance.”

In other words, the Obama administration is embarking on a reckless drive to encircle and militarily intimidate Russia and China simultaneously.

Speaking in Warsaw’s Belweder Palace Tuesday, Obama also said that the \$1 billion program would be used by the US to “preposition more equipment in Europe” in preparation for military conflict.

Parallel to Obama’s European tour, NATO defense ministers began a two-day conference in Brussels on Tuesday to discuss military measures aimed against Russia. US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel used the meeting to pressure European NATO members to launch a major buildup of their own military forces. Most NATO member countries have failed to meet an agreed target of spending 2 percent of their economic output on their military forces, and a number have cut spending in response to the economic crisis that has gripped Europe since 2008-2009.

Inadequate military spending, Hagel warned the European ministers, posed “as much of a threat to the alliance as any potential adversary.”

Russia’s envoy to NATO, Alexander Grushko, warned that if it is “additional deployment of substantial NATO combat forces in central and eastern Europe that’s on the agenda—and we can hear calls to that effect—we will struggle to view such deployments, even if they are based on rotation, as anything other than a direct departure from commitments in the fundamental Russia-NATO documents.”

In a joint statement, Grushko and Sergei Shoigu, Russia’s defense minister, called NATO’s ongoing buildup near Russia’s borders “unprecedented and excessive.” They warned, “NATO should realize that, if it embarks on that path, it can hardly expect Russia to reciprocate with ‘restraint’ in deployments of force.”

In the context of the escalating tensions provoked by Washington in both eastern Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, the Reuters news agency published an ominous article Tuesday entitled “West ponders how to stop—or fight—a new Great War.”

“After more than a decade focused on combating Islamist militancy, Western military planners are once

again contemplating potential war between major powers,” the article began.

It cites Obama’s warning in his foreign policy speech at West Point last week that “Regional aggression that goes unchecked, whether in southern Ukraine or the South China Sea or anywhere else in the world, will ultimately impact our allies and could draw in our military.”

The article adds, “One hundred years after the start of World War One, books on the period have become increasingly popular in Washington, Whitehall and NATO headquarters in Brussels, current and former officials say, and not purely for their historical interest.”

It continues: “As in 1914, no one really knows what a modern great war would be like. While much military thinking assumes conflict would remain conventional, nuclear powers have kept their atomic war planning up to date, maintaining target lists for mutually assured destruction, current and former officials say.”

It quotes an unnamed senior Western official as stating: “We are in uncharted territory. It means...reconstituting high end fighting skills and properly thought out doctrine for both conventional and nuclear deterrence.”



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