

Obama commits US to war against Russia in defense of Baltic states

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In a series of speeches and press conferences in connection with last week's NATO summit in Wales, President Barack Obama publicly declared that the United States military will maintain a permanent presence in the Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, which border Russia. He vowed that US air and ground forces will remain poised forevermore to respond to claims of Russian aggression by the governments of these countries by attacking Moscow.

In appearances in the Estonian capital of Tallinn and later in Wales, Obama announced a series of military moves against Russia by the United States and NATO as well as expanded economic sanctions and pledges to bolster the military forces of the former Soviet republics of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. He made clear in addition that Washington will push for all three countries to join the US-dominated NATO military alliance.

These statements represent an immense escalation of US and NATO military threats against Russia. Without any public discussion, and entirely over the heads of the American people, the Obama administration has committed the country to go to war with the second largest nuclear power in the world over three small countries in Eastern Europe.

At a joint press conference September 3 with Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Obama declared, "So I've come here, first and foremost, to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to the security of Estonia. As NATO allies, we have Article 5 duties to our collective defense. That is a commitment that is unbreakable. It is unwavering. It is eternal."

In a speech later that day "to the people of Estonia," Obama was, if anything, even more explicit about the commitment of US military forces in the Baltic states and their readiness to attack Russia. "Today, more NATO aircraft patrol the skies of the Baltics," he said. "More American forces are on the ground training and rotating

through each of the Baltic states. More NATO ships patrol the Black Sea... I believe our Alliance should extend these defensive measures for as long as necessary...

"Article 5 is crystal clear. An attack on one is an attack on all. So if, in such a moment, you ever ask again, 'who will come to help,' you'll know the answer—the NATO Alliance, *including the Armed Forces of the United States of America*, 'right here, present, now!' We'll be here for Estonia. We will be here for Latvia. We will be here for Lithuania..."

"Here in the Baltics... it would mean more US forces—including *American boots on the ground* continuously rotating through Estonia and Latvia and Lithuania." [Emphasis added]

He went on to declare, "We need to enhance NATO's Rapid Response Force so it can deploy even more quickly *and not just react to threats, but also deter them* ." [Emphasis added]. This last statement clearly implies the right of the US and NATO to militarily respond not only to actions, but also "preventively" to supposed threats.

At a press conference two days later, following the NATO summit, Obama reiterated the same belligerent line.

With the commitments announced last week, the US government is tying the fate of the American people and, indeed, the people of the world, to the actions of governments of three small countries whose combined population is 6.6 million. All three governments are rightwing, ultranationalist and rabidly anti-Russian. They represent a criminal layer of oligarchs who made their fortunes by plundering state property after secession from the Soviet Union and the launching of capitalist restoration.

All these governments are also led by individuals with close ties to American intelligence and the Pentagon. They are all imposing austerity programs that are impoverishing the working class, removing all social

protections, and opening up their respective economies to unfettered profit making by Western capital.

The President of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, with whom Obama shared the stage in the Estonian capital, was raised and educated in the United States. From 1984 until 1993 he worked for US-operated Radio Free Europe, heading its Estonian desk.

Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, often referred to as the Iron Lady and the Steel Magnolia, went to study in the Special Program for senior executives at Georgetown University in Washington DC soon after Lithuania broke away from the Soviet Union. In the 1990s she served as minister plenipotentiary at the Lithuanian embassy in Washington.

The prime minister of Latvia, Laimdota Straujuma, is a member of the rightwing Unity Party.

All three are US puppet governments. They are highly unstable and riven by internal conflicts. They preside over populations that are seething with anger over the destruction of working-class living standards and the corruption of the ruling oligarchies. They have been among the most belligerent advocates of aggressive action against Russia. Any one of them could, for domestic political reasons, incite or fabricate a military clash with Russia.

Washington is manufacturing a nonexistent threat to the Baltic states from Russia. More than 20 years ago, during the process of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these countries became independent, with the approval of Moscow. The claim that they now face an imminent threat from Russia is a pretext for violating previous agreements with Moscow not to expand NATO or station NATO military forces on former Soviet territory.

From a geostrategic standpoint, the fate of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia has virtually no significance for the United States. But for Russia, the positioning of US and NATO ground and air forces and military hardware just miles from its border is an existential threat.

How would Washington react if Russia announced that it was stationing troops in Mexico, Central America or the Caribbean? Fifty-two years ago, in the Cuban missile crisis, the Kennedy administration declared that Moscow's installation of missiles in Cuba constituted an intolerable threat to US national security. Kennedy threatened nuclear war unless Khrushchev removed them.

The Russian government and military can draw no conclusion from the current crisis other than the belief that Washington is preparing to attack Moscow. Russian officials have announced that in response to the NATO

summit, Moscow is revamping its military doctrine.

In the 1950s and 1960s, at the height of the Cold War, the term "brinkmanship" was used to denote willful recklessness in foreign policy. What the Obama administration is doing today goes far beyond anything carried out by a US administration in that period.

Then, the concern was frequently raised that a heightened level of mistrust and tension between Washington and Moscow could result in a relatively minor incident escalating out of control and precipitating a nuclear war. For that reason, the so-called "hot line" was set up between the two capitals to prevent either side from misinterpreting the aims of the other.

Today, the moves by the Obama administration and its NATO allies seem designed to generate in Russia the greatest possible level of apprehension and goad it into responding militarily. Its population is still haunted by the massive loss of life, which followed the surprise attack by Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union in June 1941. In the course of the next four years 27 million Soviet citizens lost their lives.

All of the stated reasons for US-NATO warmongering against Russia are lies. The aggressors in the Ukraine crisis from the outset have been Washington and Berlin. They orchestrated a coup led by neo-fascist forces that overthrew the elected government of President Viktor Yanukovych last February, following Yanukovych's decision not to enter into an Association Agreement with the European Union or accept an austerity program dictated by the International Monetary Fund.

They have since used the crisis in Ukraine to pursue a policy of isolating and weakening Russia. It is clear that the purpose of the military, political and economic moves against Russia is to compel it to submit to the dictates of US and German imperialism.

Unless the war provocations of US and European imperialism are stopped by the intervention of the international working class, it is only a matter of time before an incident involving NATO and Russian forces triggers a crisis that could escalate into a full-blown nuclear war.



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