

Pentagon provocation on Russia's border

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US armored vehicles flying American flags were paraded Tuesday through the Estonian city of Narva, just a few hundred yards from the Russian border.

The provocative action, coming on the heels of the first anniversary of the US-orchestrated coup in Kiev, underscores the transformation of the entire region into a zone of military confrontation, with potentially catastrophic implications for the peoples of not only Eastern Europe, but the entire planet.

Spearheaded by the fascistic Right Sector militia, the coup that toppled the government of President Viktor Yanukovich on February 22 of last year was carried out with the direct support and intimate involvement of the US government. Washington's execrable representative on the scene, the State Department's Victoria Nuland, went so far as to name those to be allowed into a post-coup regime.

The installation of this right-wing nationalist, anti-Russian regime in Kiev provoked mass popular opposition in the largely Russian-speaking eastern Donbass region. The Kiev government, with Washington's support, sought to drown the rebellion in blood.

After ten months of fighting and the deaths of at least 5,000 people, this repressive campaign has proven a disaster for the Kiev regime and its American patrons. The Ukrainian military, dominated by fascistic militias, has virtually disintegrated after being forced into a headlong retreat. The country is on the brink of bankruptcy, with its currency, the hryvnia, in free-fall, having lost half its value since the beginning of this year.

The regime's response consists of political repression, a largely unsuccessful attempt to forcibly draft youth into the army, and drastic austerity measures against the working class.

By any objective measure, last year's US-orchestrated coup has yielded yet another foreign

policy debacle. Far from seeking to quell the crisis it unleashed in the region, however, Washington has responded by moving to escalate and spread it.

This is because the central target of the US regime-change operation was not Yanukovich, but Russia. Its aim was to draw Ukraine tightly into the US sphere of influence and position NATO on Russia's western border. Ultimately, the havoc unleashed in Kiev was directed at destabilizing the regime in Moscow and paving the way for the dismemberment of the Russian federation and transformation of its parts into semi-colonies of US imperialism.

In the wake of the rout of Ukrainian forces in the Donbass, the US is moving ahead with plans to arm the Kiev regime, bringing the US and Russia closer to military conflict. Thus, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko was dispatched to Abu Dhabi this week for the annual International Defense Exhibition, where he claimed to have signed nearly 20 contracts for weapons. The United Arab Emirates, which served as the conduit for arming the US-backed Islamist "rebels" in Syria, is apparently providing the same service in relation to Ukraine.

One of Poroshenko's top security advisors, Anton Gerashchenko, posted a giddy comment on Facebook, asserting that "unlike Europeans and Americans, the Arabs aren't afraid of Putin's threats that a third world war may start if weapons and military equipment are provided to Ukraine."

Now we have the US armored column parading on the Estonian-Russian border. This is only one of the more inflammatory manifestations of an ongoing US military buildup in the three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—that have all been brought into NATO.

Last September, speaking in the Estonian capital, Tallinn, Obama vowed that the US commitment to defend these former Soviet republics was

“unbreakable.” Obama added that Washington’s pledge to use American military power to protect the three tiny countries was “unwavering” and “eternal.” He boasted that in all three countries there would be more “American boots on the ground.”

This was reiterated Wednesday in testimony delivered to the House Armed Services Committee by Gen. Philip Breedlove, the head of the US European Command and NATO’s supreme allied commander. He told the congressional panel that his “top concern is a resurgent Russia.”

He enumerated a long list of US military exercises and deployments that constituted a “near-continuous air, land and sea presence” on Russia’s borders, while arguing that such a “rotational presence” was no substitute for the “fielding of credible and persistent deterrent capabilities” that would allow the US to “respond within hours...as crises emerge.”

This has begun, he said, with the establishment of a “NATO command and control presence” in the Baltic states. The US European Command, he added, had conducted 67 “significant military-to-military engagements” with the Baltic states and Poland between April and October of 2014 alone.

Gen. Strangelove...or rather, Breedlove...also stressed the role of the US “theater nuclear deterrent in support of NATO and enduring US security commitments” in the region. The US military, he said, “stands side-by-side with our NATO allies to provide safe, secure, reliable and effective nuclear forces to deter aggression,” adding that STRATCOM (successor to the Strategic Air Command—SAC) had been integrated into NATO’s “regional exercises.”

In other words, behind the backs of the American people and the population of the entire planet and with virtually no notice in the media, not to mention any public debate, Washington has turned three small Baltic states on Russia’s border into the trip wire for a nuclear Third World War.

It could not have picked more unstable allies—in reality, puppets—upon which to risk nuclear annihilation. All three Baltic states are headed by right-wing, ultranationalist and rabidly anti-Russian regimes. The Estonian independence celebration in which the US military participated was dominated by the slogan “Estonia for the Estonians,” a reactionary chauvinist demand for the expulsion of Russians, who comprise

fully a quarter of the population. The town of Narva, where the US column joined the parade, is a stronghold of Russian speakers, making the demonstration an implicit threat against the local population.

In Estonia, as in the other two Baltic states, there are regular public rallies featuring swastikas and celebrating the Waffen SS, which carried out the mass murder of Jews and other minorities in these countries during World War II.

There has not been any Russian threat against these states since they established their independence from Moscow in the course of the Stalinist bureaucracy’s dissolution of the Soviet Union nearly a quarter of a century ago, and there is no such threat now.

The claim that the corrupt regime of capitalist oligarchs in Moscow is “resurgent” is a pretext for Washington to scrap the assurances it provided 25 years ago that NATO would not deploy its military on Russia’s borders, and to embark upon a policy of military provocation and aggression that threatens to ignite a war between the world’s two largest nuclear powers.

Without the intervention of the working class to put an end to the profit system, the root cause of war, Washington’s attempt to offset the economic decline of American capitalism through the use of military force confronts humanity with the prospect of nuclear annihilation.



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