

# Danger mounts of US/NATO war with Russia

Patrick Martin  
13 August 2015

A newly issued report by the European Leadership Network (ELN), a think tank comprised of former top officials of European governments and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, finds that the military exercises conducted by NATO and Russia this year have made the outbreak of war between the two sides more likely.

Under the title “Preparing for the Worst,” the report warns that the rapid pace and increasing scale of military exercises along the borders between Russia and NATO member states have gone well beyond the point of “signaling” deterrence and become an independent factor in increasing the danger of a military conflagration.

“Russia is preparing for a conflict with NATO, and NATO is preparing for a possible confrontation with Russia,” the report declares. “We do not suggest that the leadership of either side has made a decision to go to war or that a military conflict between the two is inevitable, but that the changed profile of exercises is a fact and it does play a role in sustaining the current climate of tensions in Europe.”

The report consists of an analysis of the two largest military exercises conducted by Russia and NATO respectively this year: a Russian “snap exercise” in March involving 80,000 troops, launched in northern Russia and extending southward; and NATO’s Allied Shield exercises in June, which involved 15,000 troops divided among naval vessels in the Baltic Sea, ground troops operating in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland, and warplanes active over the whole region.

The contrast is intrinsically unbalanced, since the ELN compares Russian military exercises, which take place on Russia’s own territory, to military exercises involving US, Canadian and other troops deployed thousands of miles from home (and only a few miles from the Russian border). There is no consideration of the constant and massive US military exercises in

North America. Moreover, the ELN does not factor in the worldwide operations of the Pentagon, which dwarf those conducted by any other country, including Russia.

The ELN study does concede that the Russian exercise was much larger mainly because it involved conscripts drafted for one-year terms of service and carrying out relatively simple operations. In terms of highly specialized troops such as Marines and airborne paratroopers, the numbers deployed by NATO and Russia were roughly equal.

The study notes the rapid pace of escalation by the US-NATO forces, with 162 exercises in 2014, double the number originally planned, together with an additional 40 exercises by NATO member states in Europe conducted on their own. It notes the particularly provocative character of the February 24 NATO action in Narva, a town on the Estonian-Russian border, which involved “the presence of armored vehicles from the US Army’s Second Cavalry Regiment, as well as British, Dutch, Spanish, Lithuanian and Latvian troops at a military parade commemorating Estonia’s Independence Day.”

The ELN is an imperialist think tank that blames the rising tensions along the NATO-Russia interface on “dangerous brinkmanship” on the part of Moscow, while expressing concern that the tempo of military operations on both sides can produce unintended consequences. “History is full of examples of leaders who think they can keep control of events, and events have a habit of taking on a momentum and dynamic of their own,” the group’s chairman Ian Kearns said.

A report by the same group last November noted the large number of close-encounter incidents involving NATO and Russian warplanes and naval vessels, any of which could have produced a major international incident or even triggered a military exchange.

NATO spokesperson Carmen Romero flatly rejected

any suggestion that the imperialist alliance should curb its activities along the Russian border. “NATO military exercises are not, as the reports suggest, making war in Europe more likely,” she said. “They are intended precisely to have the opposite effect: to enhance security and stability in Europe in response to growing Russian aggression.”

The ELN report reinforces the warnings the *World Socialist Web Site* has been making since the crisis in Ukraine erupted in February 2014 with the US-backed political coup in Kiev, ousting the pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovych, and installing a far-right, ultranationalist regime subservient to Washington and the European Union. The objective logic of this crisis leads inexorably to a military confrontation between the two main nuclear-armed powers, the United States and Russia, with catastrophic implications for all humanity.

In this crisis, American imperialism plays the most aggressive and reckless role. It was the United States, with State Department neoconservative official Victoria Nuland playing the main role, which organized and promoted the fascist-led campaign to bring down Yanukovych and replace him with political stooges selected by Washington: Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk (“Yats” to Nuland), and President Petro Poroshenko, the chocolate billionaire and longtime oligarch.

Since then it has become apparent that the US and EU are manipulating the Ukraine crisis to create the conditions where Russia itself can be dismembered and its people, territory and resources parceled out among the imperialist powers. This is the long-term strategic purpose of the imperialist campaign of economic sanctions and diplomatic provocations, backed by military force.

The campaign against Russia is only one component of the increasingly militaristic perspective of American imperialism. As President Obama himself admitted last week, there is a powerful faction in Washington that is vociferously pushing for war with Iran. Obama has only tactical differences, preferring to test whether the Iranian regime can be brought over to the US side in the coming global conflicts with Russia and China.

In the final analysis, as the International Committee of the Fourth International declared last year in its statement *Socialism and the Fight against Imperialist*

War, “The danger of a new world war arises out of the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist system—between the development of a global economy and its division into antagonistic nation states, in which the private ownership of the means of production is rooted. This finds its most acute expression in the drive of US imperialism to dominate the Eurasian landmass, above all those areas from which it was excluded for decades by the Russian and Chinese revolutions.”

As the ICFI explained, the historical and geopolitical roots of the US drive for world domination mean that imperialist world war is inevitable without the intervention of the international working class in a revolutionary struggle to put an end to the capitalist system and establish socialism. The same contradictions that are the driving force for war provide the objective impulse for socialist revolution. That makes the building of the Fourth International as the revolutionary leadership of the world working class the central political task.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**