

# Obama's war summit in Europe

Bill Van Auken  
26 April 2016

President Barack Obama ended his six-day trip through Saudi Arabia, Britain and Germany Monday with what amounted to a mini-war summit in the northern German city of Hannover. The meeting was attended by himself, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, British Prime Minister David Cameron, French President Francois Hollande and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi.

Obama used the occasion to announce a significant escalation of the US intervention in the Middle East—the dispatch of 250 more special operations troops, a six-fold increase over the current deployment of 50. This follows on the heels of an escalation of troop numbers in Iraq and an authorization of the use of US Apache attack helicopters in combat there.

The Syrian escalation has been ordered under conditions where the White House has reportedly fashioned a “Plan B” to be put into effect once the shaky cessation of hostilities in the country is deemed to have failed. The plan calls for the CIA, operating in conjunction with Washington’s reactionary allies in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf oil monarchies, to funnel massive quantities of new arms, including surface-to-air missiles, to the Al Qaeda-linked Islamist militias that serve as Western proxies in the war for regime-change.

The American president’s message to his European counterparts was that they must stop being “complacent” and work to build up their own military forces for interventions in the Middle East, North Africa and against Russia to the east.

This appeal appeared to be in line with the policies already being pursued by Washington’s NATO allies. Britain, France and Italy are in the advanced stages of preparing another imperialist incursion into oil-rich Libya, having cobbled together a puppet regime that can formally request foreign intervention in a country already shattered by the US-NATO war begun five

years ago.

Obama’s host, Chancellor Merkel, proudly declared, “We are ready and willing to be militarily engaged,” citing the German military’s participation in ongoing interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Mali.

“We have to put in more equipment, more personnel,” Merkel said at a joint press conference with Obama. “We know the targets NATO has submitted to us. We think that the whole positioning of our federal armed forces reflects fully our sense that we need to shoulder this international responsibility.”

Seven decades after the fall of the Third Reich, German militarism, recklessly promoted by Washington, is back in business.

There was a certain valedictory quality to Obama’s public statements in Germany, with his administration coming to an end in barely nine months. He pretentiously titled a 49-minute speech he delivered Monday “An Address to the People of Europe.”

Ben Rhodes, Obama’s deputy national security adviser, described the Hannover speech to a group of businessmen as a “bookend” to a speech he delivered in Berlin in the summer of 2008 during his run for presidency. At that time, some 200,000 people poured into Berlin’s Tiergarten to cheer the Democratic candidate in the naive hope that he would put an end to the eight years of aggressive war, torture and criminality that characterized the Bush presidency.

This represented what was probably the high water mark of the phenomenon known as “Obamamania,” in which large numbers of people on both sides of the Atlantic were swept up in the cynical marketing of Obama, a junior senator and unknown political quantity, as the champion of “hope and change,” whose supposed sympathy for the oppressed and hostility to war would be assured by the color of his skin.

Playing a prominent role in this campaign were various elements of the pseudo-left both in the US and

Europe, including the International Socialist Organization in the US, which described his election as a “transformative event,” and Germany’s Left Party, which praised his 2008 speech in the Tiergarten. These forces worked to channel anti-war sentiment behind the Democratic candidate, whose election served as a vehicle for their own move to open support for imperialist war.

At the time, the *World Socialist Web Site* described the speech as “a reactionary affirmation of Cold War anti-communism and an attempt to promote the new framework for US imperialist militarism and aggression, the so-called ‘global war on terror.’”

The speech, the WSWWS continued, promised a more collaborative relationship with Europe’s capitalist powers and offered the prospect that “in return for their assistance in salvaging America’s neocolonial ventures in Afghanistan and elsewhere, they could anticipate a larger slice of the spoils.” To the American ruling elite, the speech signaled Obama’s “determination as president to prosecute US imperialism’s global hegemonic aims...”

Nearly eight years later, Obama addressed the “people of Europe” as a commander-in-chief who has overseen the continuation of the war in Afghanistan along with new military interventions in both Iraq and Syria. As president, he threw the US military into the war for regime-change that devastated Libya. He has provided military support to the Saudi assault that has driven the people of Yemen to the brink of starvation and personally directed a global campaign of drone murders and massacres that has killed thousands of innocent civilians.

The danger is growing of these various conflicts igniting a new world war, as the Pentagon executes its “pivot to Asia” with increasingly provocative military challenges to China, and the US and NATO carry out an aggressive buildup on Russia’s borders.

The election to choose Obama’s successor is notable for the virtual blackout by the two major parties, their candidates and the corporate media of the rising danger of world war.

Hillary Clinton, the Democratic frontrunner, is the favored candidate of the US military and intelligence complex, described glowingly by the *New York Times* last week as the “last true hawk left in the race.” The Republican frontrunner Donald Trump has called for a

major increase in military spending and the return of torture.

The “democratic socialism” and “political revolution” of Democratic challenger Bernie Sanders include no challenge to American militarism, and he has pledged to back Clinton should she win the nomination.

The Socialist Equality Party has launched its 2016 election campaign. Our candidates, Jerry White for US president and Niles Niemuth for vice president, are breaking through the conspiracy of silence of the capitalist parties and candidates and raising as the most critical issue confronting American working people the danger of war. Their campaign is focused centrally on the building of an international anti-war movement based on the working class and directed against the capitalist system, the source of militarism and war.

The lessons of Obama’s presidency are vital. Workers and young people can wage an effective struggle against war only to the extent that they organize their strength independently of and in opposition to the Democratic Party and the capitalist two-party system.

At the same time, this struggle must be international, uniting the working class across national boundaries in a common struggle against imperialism and for socialism.

To that vital end, the International Committee of the Fourth International is holding an International May Day Online Rally this coming Sunday, May 1, at 1:00 pm Eastern Daylight Time. We urge all readers and supporters of the *World Socialist Web Site* to register today to attend this rally and build it among co-workers and friends as well as on social media.

*For more information and to register, visit [internationalmayday.org](http://internationalmayday.org)*



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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