

NATO orders four additional battalions to Russian border

Thomas Gaist
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The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is sending 4,000 additional troops to Eastern Europe in the name of reassuring Poland and the Baltic states, the alliance's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg confirmed on Monday. "We will agree to deploy by rotation four robust multi-national battalions in the Baltic states and Poland," Stoltenberg told NATO officials.

The US, Germany and Britain will each contribute 1,000 soldiers, with Canada expected to confirm its own contingent of 1,000. The deployments are among the most provocative actions taken by the NATO high command in the course of its anti-Russian buildup, now well into its second year. With ever greater recklessness, the US and European ruling elites are sowing the seeds of war across the width and breadth of the Eurasian landmass.

The announcement of new troop deployments comes in the midst of Operation Anaconda 2016, involving more than 30,000 NATO forces in the biggest war drill held in Poland since the end of the Second World War. Some 12,500 of the 30,000 soldiers are American.

In Eastern Europe, under the guise of "rotational deployments," NATO has established a permanent military force. Put forth for public consumption as a response to Russian "meddling" in Ukraine and alleged provocations by Russia's military along the frontiers of NATO's eastern member states, the real purpose of NATO's spearhead force is to prepare for a ground invasion across Russia's western border.

Beginning with the February 2014 coup d'état in Kiev, the US-dominated imperialist alliance has relentlessly stoked confrontation with Moscow and laid the foundations for a continental-scale war aimed at breaking up and conquering the Russian Federation.

The continued massing of Western troops along

Russia's border makes good on US President Barack Obama's September 2014 promise that the US and NATO powers would provide "eternal" military assistance to the Baltic states. In effect, Obama committed the most powerful military alliance in the world to waging all-out war against Russia should one of the tiny Baltic states claim to be under attack from Moscow.

Such a war, which would immediately raise the prospect of a showdown between the world's two biggest nuclear powers, would ostensibly be launched to defend some of the smallest and least populated countries in Europe, which are ruled by far-right and rabidly anti-Russian regimes.

The Baltic governments are actively encouraging the deployments and calling for still more NATO military hardware over and above the vast stocks of tanks, artillery and heavy weapons pre-positioned throughout Eastern Europe by NATO since 2014. Backed by the Western alliance, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are placing their societies on a war footing. They are putting their armed forces on high alert and awaiting the call for mobilization against Russia.

On Monday, Lithuanian defense official Juozas Olekas told the UK's *Daily Express* that Russia "might exercise on the borders and then switch to invasion in hours." At stake in Lithuania is "the credibility of the whole alliance," said Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius.

NATO defense of Estonia's air space must be "first and foremost" on the alliance's agenda, Estonia's military chief said, before demanding a permanent presence of NATO troops in Estonia. "These forces are in Estonia to send a clear and unequivocal message to the adversary: do not quarrel with NATO," he said.

The charge of "Russian aggression" against Europe is

among the central lies employed by present-day imperialism. Seizing on the secession of Crimea from post-coup Ukraine and the enclave's integration into the Russian Federation, the NATO establishment has sought to justify its war preparations as a defensive precaution in the face of a Putin government supposedly primed to invade Central Europe.

While Russia's military saber-rattling, which alternates with attempts at compromise with the West, only adds to the war danger, it is essentially of a defensive character.

On Monday, citing unnamed NATO sources, British media accused Russia of "circumventing the Vienna accord and building up troop numbers in sensitive locations on Europe's doorstep." Announcing plans to boost military expenditures by \$3 billion annually, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg declared: "This will send a clear signal that NATO stands ready to defend any ally."

US and European imperialism are committed to defend the Baltics because it supplies them with a pretext and a staging area for covert and military operations along Russia's flanks.

In Washington and some European capitals, powerful elements within the imperialist bourgeoisie are actively conspiring to engineer further provocations and destabilization operations against Russia.

The integration of former Soviet republic Georgia into NATO is slated to be a core issue at next month's NATO summit in Warsaw. Russia and the pro-Western government of Georgia fought a brief war in 2008, and Moscow has vociferously opposed the country's joining the US-dominated military alliance.

The integration of Georgia would greatly facilitate the projection of US and NATO power against Russia's southern flank in the Caucasus and Caspian Sea Basin. Last week's announcement of intensified US military operations in Afghanistan is bound up with preparations to use that country as well to strike against Russia's "soft underbelly" in Central Asia, in particular against Russian interests in Kazakhstan.

The NATO buildup in Eastern Europe is producing levels of militarist frenzy not seen in Europe since the 1930s. During war drills in Lithuania this week, as the German and Danish militaries rehearsed marching on the Russian border, Danish Colonel Jakob Larsen told the media, "You see it differently when you live here.

We need to learn to fight total war again."



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