

NATO convenes summit in Warsaw to make war preparations against Russia

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Today, a two-day NATO summit begins in Warsaw. The measures to be decided upon by the Western military alliance during its meeting in the Polish capital will further escalate the threat of war in Europe and serve ever more openly as preparations for a war against Russia, a nuclear power.

Below are just some of the plans soon to be implemented:

- Beginning in 2017, NATO will deploy four additional battalions of at least 1,000 soldiers each in the Baltic States and Poland. Germany is expected to lead the battalion in Lithuania, the US in Poland, Canada in Latvia and Britain in Estonia. The troops sent on these deployments are to be continuously replaced every six to nine months. In this way, the alliance will sidestep the provision in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act barring the “permanent stationing of substantial combat troops” in former member states of the Warsaw pact.

- The new 5,000-strong Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) launched at the 2014 NATO summit in Wales will be fully operational by the weekend and can be sent with arms and munitions into crisis areas within 48 hours. This so-called “spearhead” is part of the NATO Response Force (NRF), whose troop strength was tripled from 13,000 to 40,000 soldiers in the last year.

- In Eastern Europe, NATO will create the necessary infrastructure to ensure the operational capability of the VJTF. Six bases, so-called NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) to serve as “bridgeheads” for the “spearhead,” have already been built in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and the three Baltic States. Each is staffed with 40 logistics and leadership experts and is stocked with food and medical supplies. Additional NFIUs are currently being built in Slovakia and Hungary.

- In Warsaw, the preliminary operational readiness of the missile defence system that NATO is currently building in Poland and Romania will also be announced. While NATO is officially standing by the claim that the shield will serve first and foremost as a defence against medium-range missiles from Iran, it is justifiably considered by Russia as part of the NATO war preparations against Moscow, designed to make a nuclear first strike more feasible.

- NATO, which has systematically advanced toward Russia’s borders since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, plans to further isolate Moscow militarily. In May, General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg announced that in Warsaw “a new comprehensive NATO support package for Ukraine” would be decided.

Thursday, on the eve of the summit, US Secretary of State John Kerry staged a provocative visit to Kiev, announcing \$23 million in aid. It is supposedly to go to Ukrainians displaced by the military offensive launched by the government against populations in the east that refused to accept its legitimacy following the 2014 Western-backed coup that brought it to power. Speaking alongside Kerry, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said that the upcoming summit would further “the consolidation of our special partnership” with the Western military alliance.

Additionally, Montenegro will be present at the summit as the future 29th member state in the military alliance. Close collaboration with the former Soviet republics of Georgia and Moldova is likewise to be intensified.

NATO has also invited Finnish President Sauli Niinistö and Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven to Warsaw. Neither country is a member of NATO. At a press conference on Monday, Stoltenberg explained that they were invited because they “are two of our very few enhanced opportunity partners” and play a central role in the security and “stability of the Baltic Sea region.” He added that it is now “up to Finland and Sweden to decide whether they want more.”

Stoltenberg brusquely rejected Russian warnings over the possibility of Finland's admission into NATO. "It's up to the Finns to decide, whether they want to apply for membership," he declared. Last Friday Russian President Vladimir Putin had warned that Moscow could move its troops closer to the Finnish-Russian border if NATO were to appear "at the border of the Russian Federation overnight."

Above all, host country Poland and the Baltic States are urging decisions be taken at the summit that go well beyond earlier plans. Poland's national security advisor, Pawel Soloch, has called on NATO to station more troops in Eastern Europe. "The volume can still be increased if Russia's attitude does not change," said Soloch.

Separate from the concrete decisions of the summit, the right-wing Polish government wants to deploy a 35,000-strong voluntary militia against Russia through September, under the pretext of "national defence." Four hundred members of this right-wing paramilitary militia have already taken part in the NATO "Anaconda" exercise. The largest such military maneuvers in Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War, the exercise simulated a military confrontation with Russia.

In the meantime, at least a portion of the NATO establishment is openly discussing a possible war of aggression against Russia. In an article from the news agency UPI entitled "Is the US planning for a war with Russia?" American military strategist Harlan Ullman reports on a military conference in Britain at which a US general declared it was the top priority of the US Army "to deter and if necessary defeat Russia in a war."

The result of the Brexit referendum in Britain has made the American foreign policy hawks, who have long urged a harsher course against Russia, still more aggressive.

On Friday, Robert D. Kaplan published an article in the *Wall Street Journal* entitled "How to crash Putin's Brexit party," warning that Washington cannot allow the Brexit to weaken the NATO offensive against Russia. The US would have to develop its alliance with London against Russia and, if necessary, against Germany. "Great Britain should reinvigorate its alliance with America," writes Kaplan, one of the architects of the Iraq War. "Acting together, the two nations can still project power on the European mainland up to the gates of Russia."

In a policy statement in the Bundestag (German parliament) yesterday, Chancellor Angela Merkel defended the NATO military buildup in Eastern Europe. "We will supplement the adjustments the Alliance made in Wales. Elements will be added with which the Alliance's deterrence and defence capability will be consolidated and safeguarded on a permanent basis," Merkel stated. "That is important, because we in the Alliance have realised that it is

not enough to be able to deploy troops quickly, but that we need to have a sufficient presence on the ground as well."

However, at the same time Merkel paradoxically claimed the military buildup was "not directed against Russia and it does not affect the strategic balance between Russia and NATO and neither the German government nor the alliance have any intention of changing it." She added: "Deterrence and dialogue are not contradictions; no, they belong inextricably together." Merkel also stressed that "security in Europe can only be accomplished with Russia and not against it."

Within sections of the German bourgeoisie, including elements within the government itself, the United States' aggressive drive toward war is increasingly seen as a threat to the implementation of their own geostrategic and economic interests in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier recently warned NATO allies against "saber-rattling and war cries" directed toward Russia.

In a recent commentary entitled "The Russia paradox," Wolfgang Ischinger, the leader of the Munich Security Conference, considers Russia's actions "aggressive and threatening," but sees them as the "expression of the country's weakness rather than its strength." And if it seems like a "paradox," he writes, one must "shower Moscow with offers for dialogue" to assert one's own interests and values.

To the extent that Germany is attempting to pursue its foreign policy goals independently of the United States, leading politicians are also discussing the dangers that could come out of the Warsaw summit. In another interview with the Berlin newspaper *B.Z.*, Ischinger states: "The summit itself can, one fears, further strain the relationship [with Russia.] I'm worried that Moscow will take countermeasures, to which NATO would then have to respond. It is imperative that we prevent an arms race."

The threat of military escalation is "as before, very considerable," he warns. Since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, there have been "an increasing number of power plays," says Ischinger, "in which Russia and the West have come close to each other with combat planes or ships. If a single soldier were to press the wrong button, it could set into motion a dangerous chain reaction. We must not forget: 26 years after the end of the Cold War, both sides possess substantial arsenals of nuclear weapons."



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