

NATO summit plans escalation against Russia in Eastern Europe, Middle East

Alex Lantier
11 July 2016

On Saturday, the second and final day of the NATO summit in Warsaw, NATO officials and heads of state approved a major military escalation in Eastern Europe and continuing deployments to Afghanistan. These initiatives, together with expanded NATO military cooperation with former Soviet republics, including Georgia and Ukraine, are all aimed at encircling and preparing for war against Russia.

The summit came in the aftermath of the June 23 British vote to exit the European Union and the eruption of sharp conflicts within the EU over financial and military policy, particularly over the war drive led by Washington and the Eastern European states against Russia.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg hailed the agreement to send a large force of NATO troops to Poland and the Baltic Republics as “historic.” His remarks were echoed by US and European officials, but strongly condemned by top Russian officials.

Speaking in Warsaw on the NATO plans, US President Barack Obama declared that “the United States will be the lead nation here in Poland, deploying a battalion of American soldiers.” He continued: “The United Kingdom will take the lead in Estonia, Germany in Lithuania, and Canada in Latvia. This will mean some 4,000 additional NATO troops, on a rotational basis, in this region. Moreover, the additional US Armored Brigade will rotate through Europe, including an additional 4,000 US troops. Meanwhile, to the south, we agreed on new deterrence measures in Romania and Bulgaria.”

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russian Affairs Mike Carpenter summed up the tenor of NATO relations with Russia by saying that the US military’s European Command had to dedicate significant resources in order to become a “war-

fighting” headquarters.

Obama also announced a major escalation of NATO operations in Central Asia and the Middle East. He reported pledges of \$900 million and the deployment of 12,000 more troops by a 39-nation coalition to continue NATO operations in Afghanistan, as well as stepped-up air reconnaissance operations over Iraq and Syria.

Obama also joined UK Prime Minister David Cameron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President François Hollande and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi in a meeting with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. The Ukrainian leader, who heads the far-right nationalist regime that emerged from the NATO-backed putsch in Kiev in February 2014, received promises of further military aid conditioned on his imposition of more of the free-market economic “reforms” that have already devastated the country’s economy.

Leading Russian officials condemned the NATO summit. Even former Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev, whose policies set the stage for the dissolution of the USSR and the restoration of capitalism, and who played the key role in facilitating NATO’s rampage across the Middle East and Europe, felt obliged to criticize the summit.

NATO leaders “only talk about defense, but actually they are preparing for offensive operations,” he said, adding, “All of the rhetoric in Warsaw simply clamors for all but declaring war on Russia.”

Russian government spokesmen said it was “absurd to speak of a threat from Russia” to NATO, and parliamentarian Konstantin Kosachyov likened NATO’s deployment plans to “building a dam in the desert.”

The inescapable conclusion of Obama’s presentation is that NATO policy is to lock the populations of North

America and Europe into perpetual wars of occupation. This policy, which is stoking up strategic tensions and ethnic conflicts across Eurasia, threatens to erupt into all-out war with Russia, a nuclear-armed power.

Obama spent much of his press conference answering questions about the escalating political crisis in the United States over deadly police violence and the mass shooting of policemen by a gunman in Dallas. Nonetheless, he took one question from *New York Times* journalist Mark Landler on the implications of the war policies being prepared by the NATO planning staffs.

Landler noted that “if you complete your presidency, as you will, with troops in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, you will be the only two-term president in American history to have served with the country at war... should the American people simply resign themselves to living in a state of perpetual war?”

Obama’s response amounted to an acknowledgement that the American people, and the populations of all the NATO countries, would indeed have to get used to perpetual war. Taking the example of the Afghan war, he concluded that it would be impossible to ever sign a peace treaty in the Middle East that would put an end to war in the way the Allied powers concluded the war with Imperial Japan at the end of World War II. Instead, NATO would have to “partner with,” that is, militarily occupy, Middle Eastern countries indefinitely.

Obama said, “We have an option of going in, taking out Al Qaeda, pulling out, potentially then seeing a country crumble under the strains of continued terrorist activity or insurgency, and then going back in. Or we can try to maintain a limited partnership that allows them to continue to build their capacity over time, and selectively take our own actions against those organizations that we know are trying to attack us or our allies. Because they’re non-state actors, it’s very hard for us ever to get the satisfaction of [US General Douglas] MacArthur and the [Japanese] Emperor meeting and a war officially being over.”

The picture that emerges from the NATO summit is of a terminal and extremely dangerous crisis of US and European imperialism. The inescapable conclusion of Obama’s remarks is that the foreign policy pursued by the United States and its NATO allies over an extended historic period has been a bloody failure. In the quarter-

century since the dissolution of the USSR, Iraq, a Soviet ally, has been the target of NATO military action, as has the former Soviet ally Afghanistan, the Serbian-led remnant of the Yugoslav state, and now Syria, both of which were also Soviet allies.

The balance sheet of these wars is disastrous. Having spent trillions of dollars, lost tens of thousands of soldiers, and caused the deaths of millions of people, the NATO powers see no other option than to continue wars that have accomplished nothing and are hated by masses of working people in Europe and North America.

One major purpose of the war strategy, as laid out by its supporters, is to suppress the sharpening divisions among the imperialist powers themselves. Some hope it will limit the political fallout from the Brexit vote, including growing calls for a foreign and military policy led by Germany, with the assistance of France, Italy and other Western European powers, that is more aggressive and more independent from Washington and its British ally.

Judy Dempsey, a senior associate at the Carnegie Europe think tank, wrote that the pact could provide a “boost for the [pro-US] Atlanticist wing in the EU” and “make it more difficult for Russia to divide Europe and to weaken the transatlantic relationship.”

NATO leaders at the summit snubbed EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, whose staff had worked with Berlin to prepare a report calling for an independent EU foreign policy. They refused to let her join in signing documents on closer NATO-EU collaboration.

Nonetheless, top European officials who see the US-led war drive against Russia as cutting across their own imperialist interests continued to stress their differences with Washington. French President François Hollande declared, “NATO has no role at all to be saying what Europe’s relations with Russia should be. For France, Russia is not an adversary, not a threat.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact