

NATO sends 4,000 combat troops to Poland and Baltic states

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NATO will deploy an additional 4,000 soldiers in Poland and the Baltic states in May 2017, with some units sent to Eastern Europe in advance. This was confirmed by a NATO spokesman after the US-led military alliance held consultations in Split, Croatia at the weekend.

According to a *Wall Street Journal* report, about 1,000 American soldiers from the 2nd Cavalry Regiment are to be relocated to Poland in April from their German base in Vilseck. The German Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) will take command of a 1000-strong battalion in Lithuania. The UK and Canada will provide about 1,000 soldiers each in Estonia and Latvia.

The sending of additional NATO troops to Eastern Europe is part of preparations for war against Moscow laid out in early July at the NATO summit in Warsaw. This includes the establishment of a NATO missile defence system in Romania and Poland and the formation of a 5,000-strong rapid reaction force (Very High Readiness Joint Task Force—VJTF), agreed at the NATO summit in 2014.

As the imperialist powers escalate their intervention in the Middle East, and the US-led coalition bombs Syrian government troops, these measures increase the risk of a direct clash with nuclear-armed Russia. Leading NATO generals have left no doubt that the planned deployments are not a routine exercise, but part of a wider NATO military offensive against Russia.

The *Wall Street Journal* quoted the Czech General Petr Pavel, who said: “This force is to serve as a deterrent and if necessary as a fighting force.” The rules of engagement differ from those of other units in the region, since they are not “exclusively about a training presence”, he said.

Currently, the VJTF is preparing for possible war operations against Russia. Since the beginning of

September, 4,000 NATO troops from 14 nations are training for an “emergency situation” with around 500 vehicles on the military training area at Senne, near Paderborn, as part of the large-scale manoeuvre titled “Venerable Gauntlet.”

In a report titled “NATO manoeuvres in the Senne dust”, a local journalist from the *Lippe Zeitung* describes the exercise: “High-tech drones circle in the sky, snipers spy out the situation from the thickets, and in the middle of the Senne, a tank guards the area. The sun beats down on the parched grass, when suddenly hell breaks out on the Senne. Artillery fire breaks the silence, explosions hurl sand and pieces of grass several hundred feet into the air, and on the ground, tank tracks roll through the Senne dust.”

The units, operating under British command, had “half a million rounds of ammunition available.” From January 2017, “the NATO Rapid Reaction Force” is to “defend the territory of NATO members from any enemies’ military.”

One can only assess the full seriousness of the situation by reviewing the circumstances in which the NATO manoeuvres are taking place. At a visit to the Baltic at the end of August, American Vice President Joe Biden and German Chancellor Angela Merkel had promised to support the Baltic states in the event of conflict with Russia.

At a joint press conference on August 24 in Tallinn, with Estonian premier Taavi Rõivas, Merkel said, “We are pleased that we can offer mutual support in relation to Air Policing according to Article 5 of the NATO Treaty. We have jointly supported the decisions in Warsaw. Germany will be the framework nation in Lithuania. ... I think that means we are showing that in the NATO alliance we stand up for each other.”

Just a day before, following a meeting in the Latvian

capital Riga with the presidents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Biden had assured them, “We are committed absolutely, thoroughly, 100 percent to our NATO obligations, including and especially Article 5.”

The words of Merkel and Biden have far-reaching consequences. Article 5 of the NATO Treaty stipulates, “The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all,” and that “if such an armed attack occurs, each of them ... will assist the Party or Parties ... including the use of armed force.”

To put this plainly: If one of the extreme anti-Russian governments in the Baltics provokes a border conflict with Russia, Washington, Berlin and the other NATO powers are committed to go to war against Moscow.

When Biden vowed in Latvia to do this on the United States’ “sacred honour”, the WSWs asked: “What would a war between the United States and Russia look like? What is the likelihood that such a conflict would entail the use of nuclear arms, given the fact that the US maintains its right to the ‘first strike’ use of nuclear weapons, and Russia has stated it will respond to incursions into its territory by all means at its disposal, including the use of its nuclear arsenal? How many millions of people in Russia, the US, Europe and beyond will die in such a conflict?”

Although Western politicians and the military know well that their aggressive actions against the world’s second-largest nuclear power could trigger a nuclear World War III, they are advancing their war plans behind the backs of the population.

According to an official report by the Bundeswehr, 25 European army chiefs met last week with representatives of the United States and NATO at the invitation of the German Inspector of the Army, Lieutenant General Jörg Vollmer. They discussed “the decisions of the NATO summit in Warsaw and their impact on the various land forces”. Other topics discussed included “the presence of NATO in the Baltics and in Poland and contingency planning for the southern flank of the Alliance.”

What is meant by “contingency planning” can be read in the studies and papers produced by Western think tanks and governments. A study by the Institute for National Strategic Studies states that it believes “defence strategists need to refocus on a possible confrontation and a conflict with Moscow. ... This

applies to conventional, nuclear and missile forces of NATO.”

The “Civil Defense Guideline”, which German Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière presented at the end of August in Berlin, calls on the population to prepare for attacks using biological, chemical and nuclear weapons.



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