

NATO summit escalates preparation for war with Russia

Alex Lantier**10 November 2017**

On Wednesday and Thursday, the defense ministers of the NATO countries met in Brussels to discuss plans for a major military escalation in Europe. As the Trump administration stokes conflict with Russia and China in the Pacific with threats of US nuclear attack against North Korea, NATO planned a major upgrade of its military facilities in Europe to wage war with Russia, as well as a renewed intervention in Afghanistan.

NATO is planning two major new military command centers in Europe. One, likely in France or Portugal, would coordinate large-scale naval operations to transport US troops to Europe and destroy Russian warships in the Atlantic. The other, likely in Germany or Poland, would coordinate ground transport of NATO forces across Europe to attack Russia—including ensuring that internal borders in Europe did not halt rapid transit of NATO strike forces to the east.

In its article reviewing these plans prior to the summit, the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* bluntly wrote, “In plain language: NATO is preparing for a possible war with Russia.”

In his press conference in Brussels, NATO General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg tried to blame this situation on Russia. “We reduced the command structure at the end of the Cold War, because tensions went down,” said Stoltenberg, “[but] we have seen a Russia which has over many years invested heavily in their military capabilities, modernized their military capabilities, which are exercising not only conventional forces but also nuclear forces, and which has been willing to use military force against a neighbor: Ukraine ... NATO has to be able to respond to that.”

Claims that the NATO buildup is a response to Russian aggression are political lies. Russia is carrying out military exercises on its own soil. It is NATO that, after a quarter century of Middle East wars and toppling a pro-Russian Ukrainian government with a coup in Kiev in

2014, is sending its troops up to Russia’s borders. Trump’s threats to annihilate North Korea with “fire and fury like the world has never seen” on the anniversary of the US atom bombing of Nagasaki this year, was an unmistakable sign of the aggressive and frankly insane role of the NATO imperialist powers.

At the Brussels summit, NATO officials made clear they are planning a major land war in Europe against Russia, which fields the world’s second-largest nuclear arsenal after the United States. Lithuanian Defense Minister Raimondas Karoblis said building the new bases was key, as delay in transporting troops and weapons across Europe to fight the Russian army “means more casualties, additional risks and losses ... Time is very important here.”

Explaining the comments of Karoblis, the *Washington Post* claimed that “the speed with which NATO can respond to any Russian aggression could make the difference between fighting to defend NATO borders and a much more grinding effort to retake territory that has already been lost.”

Such discussions of NATO war planning hide from the public that what NATO is planning is a war that would rapidly escalate towards a devastating nuclear exchange between NATO and Russia that would leave hundreds of millions or even billions of people dead.

This is widely recognized by government officials and foreign policy analysts. Mike Kofman of the US Center for Naval Analyses wrote that the “problem with the fixation on conventional deterrence in the Baltic fight is that, just as in the old standoff between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, this battle is fraught with opportunities for nuclear escalation. Most Russian experts I know in the military analysis community, including those in Russia, don’t see much of a chance for conventional battle with NATO to stay conventional.”

Reviewing the risk of a NATO-Russia war breaking out

in the Baltics, the US web site the *National Interest* commented, “Such a war will almost certainly escalate into a full-up nuclear war between the planet’s only two nuclear superpowers—which means everyone loses.”

Nonetheless, the Brussels summit aggressively pushed a NATO buildup in the Baltic states and Scandinavia against Russia. Finland joined 11 other countries in a program to acquire large stockpiles of US air-to-ground precision-guided weaponry. This came after Sweden held its largest military exercise in 23 years in September, with 19,000 Swedish personnel and US, French, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, Estonian and Lithuanian forces. In March, Sweden brought back the draft in a policy that defense officials said was aimed to prepare the country for war with Russia.

More broadly, the NATO summit discussed war plans around the world. The EU powers made a commitment to send 3,000 more troops to participate in the US-led occupation of Afghanistan. Amid escalating tensions between Turkey and its principal NATO allies, the United States and Germany, a deal was reportedly struck between Turkey, France, Italy and Spain to collaborate on developing missile systems for Turkey.

This drive to war is objectively rooted in policies pursued by the NATO powers, led by the United States, for over a quarter century since the Stalinist dissolution of the USSR in 1991. Washington waged wars with the support of various European powers in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and beyond. While Washington aimed to use its military might to cement its world hegemony as the dominant power in the NATO alliance and dominate the Eurasian landmass, these wars proved to be horrific, bloody and costly debacles that altogether claimed millions of lives.

While Washington is threatening a major war in East Asia, aimed in the final analysis at blunting the growing challenge to US imperialist interests posed by China, conflicts are also surging inside the NATO alliance itself. Especially after Germany’s 2014 decision to re-militarize its foreign policy, the election of Trump, and Britain’s vote to exit the European Union (EU) in 2016, which removed America’s closest European military ally from the EU, tensions among the major NATO powers have exploded.

These tensions came to the fore shortly after Trump’s election, when Trump threatened to impose tariffs in an attempt to cut off German car exports to the United States.

In a planning document consulted by *Der Spiegel*, “Strategic Perspectives 2040,” the German army foresaw

the possibility of a “disintegration of the EU” and the eruption of wars across Europe. After “decades of instability,” it wrote, one could have a situation where “EU enlargement is largely abandoned, other states have left the EU, and Europe has lost its global competitiveness in many areas. The increasingly disordered, sometimes chaotic and conflicting world has dramatically changed the German and European security environment.”

Under these conditions, NATO officials stressed their plans for continued collaboration with the EU even as EU countries, led by Germany and France, announced plans for a joint military pact. The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), to be signed in Brussels on November 13, is reportedly designed to pool resources to create joint EU weapons systems, set up an EU military command structure, and facilitate joint operations by EU troops of different nationalities. However, this pact would exclude not only the United States but also Britain, which is leaving the EU.

NATO officials, aware of broad opposition to war with Russia in the European population, proposed that the EU help coordinate the broader political efforts for promoting the war drive. NATO will be in close talks with governments, banks, police and intelligence services across Europe which are tasked with trying to impose war plans on the European population.

Stoltenberg said, “Of course, military mobility is not just about the military. It requires a whole-of-government approach. So it’s important that our defense ministers make our interior, finance and transport ministers aware of military requirements.”

The main danger in this situation is that broad masses of the working class in Europe and around the world are not aware of the how pressing the possibility of a catastrophic global war truly is, and how devastating the casualties from such a conflict would be. This is why the WSWS stresses the urgency of building an international anti-war movement based on the working class and a socialist and anti-imperialist perspective, and asks for its readers’ active support in spreading its materials opposing war.



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