

Moscow ends decades-long NATO diplomatic mission, as alliance continues anti-Russian provocations

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In a sign of worsening relations between the West and Russia, Moscow ended its decades-long diplomatic mission to NATO, stripped the trans-Atlantic alliance's military mission of its accreditation and shuttered its information office in the capital city. The move was in response to NATO's expulsion of eight members of Russia's diplomatic team on allegations of spying, an accusation that the Kremlin denies.

In explaining his country's actions, which are taking effect on Monday, November 1, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that NATO is uninterested in an "equitable dialogue and joint work." The Kremlin, he stated, does not "see the need to keep pretending that changes in the foreseeable future are possible." NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu had declared earlier that its expulsions were driven by the need to strengthen "our deterrence and defense in response to Russia's aggressive actions."

Speaking to the newspaper outlet *Kommersant* on October 18 about the latest developments, Andrei Kortunov, general director of the Russian Council on International Affairs, a Moscow think tank, described his country's "partnership with NATO" as "exhausted."

The US has recently said it may halt virtually all consular activity in Russia in January. It has largely stopped issuing American visas at its embassy and consulates in the country and on Thursday labeled Russian citizens "homeless nationalities," a status usually reserved for states where the US has no diplomatic presence. Russians are now being directed to apply for entry papers in Poland.

An early October visit to Russia by US Under Secretary for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland for

discussions with high-level government officials failed to yield any concrete results, and Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov warned at the time that there was a "risk of a further sharpening of tensions." Nuland, who famously declared in 2014 that the US had spent \$5 billion on "democracy building" efforts in the Ukraine prior to the overthrow of a government in Kiev with ties to Moscow, had previously been barred from entering the country, and sanctions had to be lifted in order for her to come for the discussions.

Despite Moscow's continual efforts to use olive branches and displays of military might to cope with the geopolitical crisis it has confronted ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, it has been unable to stop the relentless war threats coming from Washington and Brussels for years. A June 2021 summit between US President Joseph Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin, which seemed designed to ease tensions between the two countries as part of the US war drive against China, has not halted the provocations from the US and NATO.

In the middle of this year, NATO carried out its largest-ever war games along the entire span of Russia's borders. In response, the Kremlin conducted major military exercises—Zapad-2021 (West-2021)—through the late summer and into the early fall. In 2021, the US, Canada and its European NATO countries collectively spent more than one trillion dollars on defense, compared to 61 billion dollars by Russia.

Last week, coming out of a meeting with Ukrainian Defense Minister Andriy Taran and President Volodymyr Zelensky, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin affirmed Washington's commitment to

Ukraine's eventual entrance into NATO. Austin's statements were intended to alleviate the fears of the Kiev government, which was thrown into near hysteria over the American pullout from Afghanistan, with Zelensky having realized that it too could be abandoned by its patrons in Washington.

Notwithstanding Western claims that the new Ukrainian state is some sort of icon of democracy, the government in Kiev rests on very little and has a narrow social base. It presides over a deeply impoverished population, currently being ravaged by COVID-19, and relies upon repression and far-right forces to prop itself up.

The ultimate entry of yet another American stooge regime into the trans-Atlantic alliance is ardently opposed by the Kremlin. President Putin reiterated earlier last week that the deployment of NATO military forces to Ukraine is "a threat to the Russian Federation." A few days later, America's Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia, Laura Cooper, called on NATO allies to end their limits on arms sales to Kiev. Shortly thereafter, Germany's incumbent defense minister, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, threatened Russia with the use of nuclear weapons.

Simultaneous to these events, the Kremlin warned NATO member Turkey against the sale of arms to Ukraine's military, as a Turkish-made drone was recently used to attack Russian-allied forces fighting in Ukraine's east. The American Congress, meanwhile, is discussing means to limit Russia's global arms sales, as it objects to the fact that Moscow is using its position as the world's second leader in the trade of military materiel for "advancing its foreign policy interests" in a manner that could "undermine" those of the US.

Geopolitical turmoil around the globe is amplifying the conflict between Russia and the US-NATO. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called on Wednesday for all of Afghanistan's neighboring states to reject the deployment of either American or NATO forces on their territory. Moscow is in ongoing talks with the Taliban, deeply concerned that the fall of the Afghan government will bring about an explosion of Islamist jihadism in Central Asia and Russia itself, where such movements have been used to destabilize Moscow.

On Thursday, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff General John Hyten identified Russia as America's "most immediate threat," emphasizing, however, that Beijing would soon eclipse Moscow in terms of the size of its nuclear arsenal.

An overriding question that has occupied the minds of American military planners for years is whether the US is equipped to fight a two-front war against both Russia and China simultaneously. Writing in *Defense One* on October 28, three associates of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a leading neoconservative think tank in Washington, appealed to the government to prepare for just such a probability.

"If the Biden administration is to develop an effective 2022 National Defense Strategy and build the U.S. defense capacity and capability that American interests require, the administration must jettison outdated assumptions and recognize that the United States could confront Chinese and Russian military forces simultaneously," they wrote. "Any plans that assume the United States will confront only one great power adversary at a time should be revised and updated without delay. Any additional capacity and forward basing requirements identified should inform ongoing program and budget discussions."

According to recent official documents published as part of the US-Russia NEW START treaty, Washington has 1,389 nuclear warheads deployed and Moscow 1,458. Adding China into the mix, there is enough atomic firepower readily available to destroy all of humanity.

However mad these policies and visions, they are absolutely real. Those who will pay the ultimate price for them—the working class of every country—can only stop them by building a mass movement against war and capitalism. The governments of Russia and China—one whose wealth comes from feeding off the carcass of the Soviet Union and the other which survives by having made Chinese workers the globe's cheap labor platform—cannot stop, much less defend anyone against the violent eruption of American imperialism.



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