NATO, G7 threaten military escalation against Russia and beyond

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The NATO alliance is preparing a vast escalation of its proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and of imperialist wars and intrigue around the globe. This emerged from two summits this weekend in Germany by the foreign ministers of NATO and of the G7 group of the world's wealthiest countries: the United States, Germany, Britain, Japan, France, Italy and Canada.

Yesterday, Finland and Sweden confirmed that they would join NATO against Russia. Sweden's ruling Social-Democrats said they will apply to join NATO, after Finland declared it would do so this week. "Today the Swedish Social Democratic Party took a historic decision to say yes to apply for a membership in NATO," Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde tweeted, as Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson pledged to "assure that there is broad parliamentary support in the Riksdag for a Swedish membership application."

At the same time, NATO military exercises unfolded all along Russia's western border. "Defender Europe" exercises involve 18,000 NATO troops in Poland and other Eastern European countries; "Hedgehog" exercises, 15,000 NATO troops in Estonia; "Wettiner Heide" exercises, 7,500 in Germany; and "Iron Wolf" exercises, 3,000 in Lithuania. In Finland, the Arrow 22 exercise involves Finland's Armored Brigade and tanks from the United States, Britain, Latvia and Estonia.

The official fairy tale that NATO is helping innocent Ukraine against an unprovoked invasion by Russia is dissolving, as NATO uses Ukraine to justify a drastic reshaping of global geopolitics. Indeed, the remarks of NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg closing the NATO summit made clear that, long before Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an invasion of Ukraine this February, NATO was arming Ukraine as a proxy against Russia.

"NATO is stronger than ever. Europe and North America are solidly united. Ukraine can win this war," Stoltenberg claimed. He added that NATO "Allies have committed and delivered security assistance to Ukraine worth billions of dollars, and over the years, NATO and Allies have trained tens of thousands of Ukrainian forces. All of this is making a real difference on the battlefield every day."

Stoltenberg was echoing former US Army-Europe commander Ben Hodges, who has said Washington should declare that in Ukraine, "We want to win." Hodges also called for "breaking the back of Russia."

Stoltenberg said this was part of a global expansion of NATO operations: "Ministers also discussed our upcoming Madrid Summit. We will make important decisions to reinforce NATO's deterrence and defense to reflect the new security reality in Europe; to further support and engage with like-minded partners, near and far; and to adopt our next Strategic Concept, NATO's blueprint for an age of strategic competition."

Beyond current NATO member states, Japan, South Korea, Finland, Sweden, Ukraine and Georgia are also expected to attend the June 28-30 NATO summit in Madrid. Spain's Socialist Party (PSOE)-Podemos government will respond to mass protests that are expected by deploying 25,000 riot police to lock down Spain's capital.

A preview of the new NATO strategic concept came in the G7 foreign ministers' communiqué on Saturday. This gigantic 30-page document is not in fact a summary of summit discussions, but a sprawling list of demands from the most powerful imperialist countries to virtually the entire globe. It addresses Russia, ex-Yugoslavia, the Indo-Pacific area, China and the East and South China Seas, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Yemen, the Horn of Africa, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, the Sahel, Gulf of Guinea countries, Venezuela, Haiti, Iran and North Korea.

On the Ukraine war, the G7 communiqué especially targets, beyond Russia itself, China and Belarus. It denounces Belarus as "complicit" in the war by "enabling Russia's aggression" and warns that Belarus has failed "to abide by its international obligations."

The G7 demands China cut off trade with Russia, which faces sweeping US financial sanctions, and abandon its claims in the South China Sea. It orders China "not to

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undermine sanctions imposed on Russia" and to "desist from engaging in information manipulation, disinformation and other means to legitimize Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine." It also tells China to give "immediate, meaningful and unfettered access to Xinjiang and Tibet," two strategic regions of western China, to UN officials and other observers.

On Russia, the G7 declares: "Russia has violated the UN Charter ... and will have to face consequences for its actions. We reject any notion of spheres of influence and any use of force that is not in compliance with international law. We will never recognize borders Russia has attempted to change by military aggression, and will uphold our engagement in the support of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea, and all states."

What NATO is proposing is a global eruption of imperialist militarism. In the 30 years since the Stalinist bureaucracy's 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union eliminated the main military counterweight to NATO, it has gone on a neo-colonial rampage. It has bombed, organized coups against, invaded or militarily occupied the territory or officials of virtually every country listed in the G7 communiqué. NATO wars like those that shattered Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Mali altogether cost several million lives.

Putin's decision to respond to NATO's arming of Ukraine by a pre-emptive invasion is reactionary, but one must make one obvious point: NATO's condemnations of Russia for violating international law reek of hypocrisy. From the illegal US-UK invasion of Iraq in 2003 to its unilateral bombing of Syria in 2017, NATO has dispensed with the pretense that its wars are governed by international law.

Workers must take NATO's military escalation against nuclear-armed Russia and the megalomania of its geopolitical ambitions as an urgent warning. As the war in Ukraine drags on, and the Russian army consolidates its military hold over largely Russian-speaking areas in the south and east of Ukraine, the danger of an uncontrolled military escalation between NATO and Russia, ending in all-out nuclear war, is mounting by the day.

It is ever clearer that for NATO to "win" the Russia-Ukraine war, as Stoltenberg and Hodges demand, it will have to attack Russia directly. The integration into NATO of Finland, with its large army and 1,300-km border with Russia, and the constant drumbeat of NATO war games along Russia's borders show that preparations for such a suicidally reckless policy are well advanced.

The force that must be mobilized against the mounting danger of a nuclear Third World War is the international working class. This includes, in particular, the Russian and Ukrainian working class, mobilized on the basis of the Bolshevik revolutionary traditions that led to their unification, a century ago, in the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of the Soviet Union.

The massive hardship and suffering caused by the NATO war on Russia is preparing revolutionary eruptions of the class struggle internationally. The G7 foreign ministers called to build a "Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance," declaring, "The geopolitical landscape has fundamentally changed. Russia's unprovoked and pre-meditated war of aggression has exacerbated the global economic outlook with sharply rising food, fuel and energy prices."

Around the world, strikes and anti-government protests like the mass movement in Sri Lanka demanding the toppling of President Gotabhaya Rajapakse are mounting. The G7 statement on the food crisis is, however, another political fraud: it blames Russia for the food crisis, threatening hundreds millions of lives, which NATO played a central role in creating.

The central banks of the United States, Japan, Britain and the European Union are freezing hundreds of billions of dollars of Russia's foreign exchange reserves, making it impossible to pay Russia in dollars for its products on world markets. While the Russian invasion keeps much of Ukrainian grain from reaching world markets, draconian NATO sanctions have thus made it impossible to export Russian grain and fertilizer inputs. Lithuania, a NATO and EU member state, has likewise blocked the export of potash from Belarus through its ports.

NATO's mounting war threats against Russia and its reckless undermining of world food supplies underscore that the survival of billions of people depends on the political mobilization and unification of workers internationally against imperialist war in a struggle for socialism.

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