

European NATO powers escalate war on Russia, as Trump demands they fall into line with US conflict with China

Jordan Shilton
18 September 2025

The European imperialist powers have continued to escalate the war on Russia following last week's shooting down of drones over Polish territory. The European Union (EU) aims to adopt its 19th package of economic sanctions against Moscow by next week, while Germany and NATO seized on the brief incursion of a Russian drone into Romanian airspace over the weekend to issue yet another barrage of militarist threats.

The drone reportedly spent 50 minutes in Romanian airspace. It was tracked by two Romanian and two German fighter jets but did not immediately pose a risk to any population centre. Nonetheless, the Romanian Defence Ministry issued a statement denouncing Russia's violation of international law and declaring that Bucharest "strongly condemns the irresponsible actions of the Russian Federation and emphasizes that they represent a new challenge to regional security and stability in the Black Sea area." A statement from the Russian embassy in Bucharest blamed the incursion on Ukraine.

The incursion came just days after Poland claimed that 19 Russian drones entered its airspace, although the actual number may have been significantly lower. Poland invoked Article 4 of the NATO Treaty, which obliges member states to discuss joint defence measures and serves as a prelude to Article 5, the provision requiring member states to give military support to an ally in the event of war.

The European NATO members have seized on the drone incidents to expand military operations on the alliance's eastern flank. Poland sent 40,000 troops to its border with Belarus and closed the border until further notice, citing the long-planned Zapad military exercise involving Russian and Belarusian forces as a pretext. At the same time, some 30,000 NATO troops—including soldiers from the US, Canada and Poland—are

participating in Iron Defender-25, which encompasses land, air, and sea exercises across Polish territory throughout the month of September. Germany, France, and the Czech Republic have announced the deployment of further military equipment to Poland since last week. In neighbouring Lithuania, the German military is coordinating the "Grand Eagle 25" exercise, while NATO naval manoeuvres in the Baltic Sea are ongoing.

According to a report in *The Guardian*, which was given access to the main training ground in Belarus, the exercise consisted of just 1,000 Russian and 7,000 Belarusian soldiers. This is a fraction of the NATO forces aggressively deployed along the military alliance's frontier with Russia, from Norway and Finland in the Arctic to Bulgaria and Turkey on the Black Sea.

Even taking into account other operational areas for the Zapad drills, including military sites in Russia and manoeuvres in the Baltic and Barents Sea, a maximum of 30,000 personnel are expected to participate. This underscores that Russia's military capacities are largely consumed by its reactionary invasion of Ukraine, launched by President Vladimir Putin in 2022.

However, the propaganda about a looming Russian onslaught on NATO territory and Putin's "aggressive" plan to dominate Europe is essential for the ruling elites as they seek to destroy what remains of public spending and social programmes to fund their mad rearmament drive. Germany, France, Britain, and the smaller European powers are fully committed to equipping themselves to secure their share of the spoils in a rapidly expanding third world war. German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul, speaking in an interview with public broadcaster ZDF, emphasised Berlin's aggressive intent following the latest drone incidents, stating: "Russia must know: we will always respond. We won't allow ourselves

to be put under pressure militarily any longer, but we will roll out our forces, and the economic and political forces of the free world are strong.”

The push by the European imperialists to exploit the drone incidents in Poland and Romania and the Zapad military exercise to intensify the war with Russia has underscored the deepening rift between the erstwhile Transatlantic allies. US President Donald Trump held talks with Putin in Alaska last month aimed at securing a deal with Moscow at Europe’s expense, providing American business interests with access to Russian raw materials and cutting across a burgeoning Russia-China alliance to prepare the ground for war with Beijing. Trump was much more dismissive of the drone incursion into Poland than his European counterparts, saying Thursday that it “could have been a mistake.” *The Guardian’s* report on Zapad also noted that two American military officials were guests of honour at the exercise on Monday, where they met and shook hands with Belarus’ Defence Minister Viktor Krenin.

Over the weekend, Trump released a “letter to NATO members” asserting that he is “ready to do major sanctions on Russia,” but only if NATO members halted all purchases of Russian oil—a demand aimed above all at Turkey, Hungary, and Slovakia. His message followed a two-day visit to Brussels by US Energy Secretary Chris Wright to negotiate terms on the European powers’ pledge to purchase US oil, natural gas, and nuclear energy worth \$750 billion over the coming three years.

The would-be dictator demanded in his statement that the European imperialist powers support Washington’s preparations for an all-out military conflict with China by adopting tariffs of 50 to 100 percent on Beijing in retaliation for its large purchases of discounted Russian oil. Under conditions in which Trump has already slapped 15 percent across-the-board tariffs on European imports to the US, European industry—which is heavily dependent on trade with China for components and raw materials—could not follow his proposal without committing suicide.

These developments lay bare the complete breakdown of the Transatlantic relationship that existed throughout the post-war period. Amid the renewed scramble to redivide the world’s markets, raw materials, and labour among the major powers, the former American and European imperialist partners are not only setting their sights on Russia and China, but on each other. As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained following last month’s Alaska summit:

However the situation develops, certain fundamental issues must be stressed. First, Trump’s shift on Ukraine is not a “peace policy.” His support for the genocide in Gaza and the bombing of Iran make this clear. The divisions within the American ruling class center on tactical issues related to a shared project of global domination.

Second, Trump’s maneuver takes place within the framework of an escalating global war and intensifying conflicts between the United States and the European imperialist powers. The costs of this conflict will be imposed through a massive assault on the working class.

All of Europe’s major governments are fully committed to imposing this assault on the working class, which necessitates the elimination of the remaining public services, social programmes and worker rights conceded by the ruling elite to the working class following World War II. To raise the funds needed to reduce their continued military dependence on the US, the European imperialists must resort to the same dictatorial methods Trump is enforcing in the United States.

Opposition to the rapidly escalating world war and turn to dictatorship can only be led by the international working class. Workers entering into struggle in defence of their jobs and living standards must establish their political and organisational independence from the established parties and trade union bureaucracies, all of whom back militarism and war. This requires the building of rank-and-file committees in every workplace to coordinate the struggle against austerity and war, and a socialist and internationalist programme to put an end to the capitalist profit system—the root cause of imperialist war.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact