

# NATO summit in Sweden exposes sharpening inter-imperialist antagonisms amid escalation of war on Russia

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Foreign ministers from NATO's 32 member states met in Helsingborg, Sweden, on Thursday and Friday to prepare this summer's NATO summit in Turkey. The meeting was dominated by sharpening antagonisms between the United States and its erstwhile European and Canadian allies under conditions of an ongoing war pursued by the imperialist powers to subordinate Russia to the status of a semi-colony.

The NATO meeting was the first at ministerial level held in Sweden, which joined the aggressive military alliance together with Finland following the US/NATO-provoked Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Over the past four years, the two traditionally neutral countries with Baltic Sea coasts—and a 1,300-kilometer-long border with Russia in the case of Finland—have been transformed into front line states in NATO's war on Russia.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio traveled to the meeting as Trump announced the deployment of an additional 5,000 troops to Poland, just one week after a separate deployment of 4,000 soldiers to the country was canceled. Earlier this month, the fascist occupant of the White House ordered the reduction of US troops deployed in Germany by 5,000 after Chancellor Friedrich Merz stated that Washington was waging war against Iran without a strategy.

Rubio told the media before the formal consultations began Friday morning that the Trump administration was “disappointed” with NATO members’ “response to our operations in the Middle East.” He added that this issue would have to be dealt with at the “leaders’ level” at the upcoming NATO summit in Ankara, which he described as “one of the more important” in “the history of NATO.”

Rubio's reference was to the European imperialists' reaction to the US/Israeli criminal war of aggression against Iran, which Trump launched in the dead of night on the 28th of February while negotiations with Tehran were still ongoing. The European powers Britain, France, and Germany endorsed the savage bombardment of the country with a population of over 93 million people because they support the revival of the colonial-style violence and plunder Washington is practicing in the Middle East. However, the European powers became increasingly concerned that the war on Iran would divert attention away from the war on Russia, which they view as far more important to their predatory ambitions. The Spanish government formally refused to allow the US to use Spanish military bases for operations in Iran.

Driving these disputes is the complete breakdown of the post-World War II equilibrium of world capitalism, upon which the Transatlantic relationship rested. As the World Socialist Web Site explained at its

recent International May Day Online Rally, the Iran war marked the culmination of a 35-year period in which US imperialism sought to use its overwhelming military force to reverse its precipitous economic decline. But far from achieving Washington's intended goal, the never-ending series of brutal wars has exacerbated the crisis of world capitalism, undermined US economic stability and military power still further, and unleashed the same inter-imperialist antagonisms that produced two world wars for the re-division of the world's resources and markets in the 20th century.

Led by Germany, the European imperialists have reacted to the deterioration in relations with Washington by launching a massive rearmament program. With the support of all parties in parliament, Germany's Christian Democrat/Social Democratic coalition government headed by Merz overrode the country's debt brake in order to authorize the spending of €1 trillion on war and military-related infrastructure over the coming decade. NATO's European members and Canada have committed to Trump's proposal to spend 5 percent of the GDP on the military and related infrastructure by 2035.

European imperialism is exploiting the breakup of the Transatlantic alliance to accelerate a brutal cost-cutting drive at home to pay for the construction of a European war machine capable of enforcing geostrategic and economic interests around the world independently of, and if necessary against Washington. However, the warmongers in power acknowledge that this agenda will take some time to impose, and they are therefore trying to maintain for as long as possible some kind of working arrangement with the US, upon which Germany, France, Britain, and the other European powers are heavily dependent for military equipment.

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul made a point at Friday's meeting of welcoming Trump's announced deployment of 5,000 troops to Poland, even though this coincides with a draw down of troops by the same number in Germany and the US' refusal to station long-range Tomahawk missiles in the country. At the same time, he appealed at the meeting for NATO members to increase financial support to the far-right regime in Kiev by “at least the same amount” as the €90 billion loan provided to Kiev by the EU earlier this year.

The mad rearmament plans being pursued by governments across the continent will require the complete destruction of the concessions made to the working class after the Second World War, setting the stage for a vast intensification of the class struggle as workers seek to defend jobs and public services. The austerity programs embraced by governments of all political stripes as military budgets explode are

justified with a hysterical anti-Russia campaign, replete with lurid claims that the Kremlin is preparing a major war against NATO by 2029.

The European powers have increased their military and financial support to Kiev, allowing the far-right Zelensky regime to strike targets deep inside Russia, including residential buildings in Moscow and energy infrastructure. Europe's major powers have continued to back and encourage such attacks after Russia threatened to bomb manufacturing sites on NATO territory. The fact that a growing number of Ukrainian drones have in the course of these imperialist-sponsored attacks strayed into the airspace of NATO members Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania was seized on by the ministers at Friday's meeting to denounce Russia once again for its "aggression," evidently because it had used electronic jamming to defend itself against the imperialist-funded Ukrainian strikes.

Divisions continue to grow between the US and Europe from Ukraine to the Arctic.

The US, Canada, and European powers acted in consort to orchestrate the Maidan coup of 2014 that brought a pro-Western regime to power in Kiev and initiated the civil war in the country's east. Even in 2022, when Putin launched his reactionary invasion, the competing imperialist interests in the war were at least on the surface covered over with joint denunciations of "Russian aggression" that conveniently forgot the thirty years of US and NATO aggression that went before it.

The divisions between the US and European capitals are today out in the open. Ukraine is now almost wholly dependent on financial assistance from the European powers and Canada, which not infrequently is used to purchase weaponry from the US after the Trump administration halted virtually all direct military aid. Trump is continuing his attempts to reach a deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the heads of the Europeans that would give US companies and investors access to Russian energy and critical minerals.

In the Nordic region, the United States is pursuing an expansion of its military presence outside of NATO's formal structures, first and foremost by concluding a series of bilateral defense cooperation agreements that give US military personnel unhindered access to dozens of military bases across Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Under the agreements, the US exercises full jurisdiction over the bases they operate at and soldiers accused of crimes are tried under US law.

Rubio took time out from his visit to the NATO foreign ministers meeting Friday to sign a bilateral technology partnership with Sweden. In her remarks at the signing ceremony, Sweden's Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard pointed to the security and economic interests at stake, commenting,

*"In just the past year, Sweden has joined NATO, opened consulates general in both Houston and San Francisco, signed a bilateral defense cooperation agreement, and joined the US flagship initiative Pax Silica.*

*"Today we are taking another step forward. This Technology Prosperity Deal will unlock new potential for our shared security and prosperity...Whether it's AI, connectivity, defense innovation, or space, we are stronger when we work together."*

Further to the west, the conflict between American imperialism and the European powers for control over Greenland, an autonomous Danish territory, flared up again this week. On Thursday, the US opened a new and much larger consulate office in Nuuk, the capital.

Danish and European officials, and even Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen were conspicuous by their absence. A large protest of up to 1,000 people took place Thursday against the consulate's opening, a huge demonstration considering Greenland's population of just 57,000.

Trump has repeatedly declared his intention to seize Greenland due to its rich deposits of raw materials and key strategic location in the midst of waterways opening up in the Arctic due to climate change. Trump's special envoy for Greenland, Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry, visited the island for close to a week, but no senior government official was prepared to meet him. Citing ongoing coalition talks following March's parliamentary election, the Danish government did not send a representative.

Danish, Greenlandic, and US officials are currently engaged in detailed talks on opening up the island to US military operations. According to the *New York Times*, Washington is demanding the right to permanently deploy troops and have veto power over all major economic investments. At the same time, the European NATO members are increasing their military presence and activity in the high north as part of Arctic Endurance, a new operation unveiled in January by NATO Secretary General Marc Rutte.

Military cooperation between what were arguably NATO's two closest allies, the US and Canada, is also no longer a given. At the beginning of this week, Undersecretary of War Elbridge Colby announced in a social media post that the US was suspending its participation in the Permanent Joint Board of Defense, a body used to coordinate continental defense between the US and Canada that has been in place since 1940. In a briefing to journalists Thursday, the Pentagon declared that it took the move because Canada's Liberal government has failed to present a persuasive plan for how it will spend 5 percent of its GDP on its military and delayed a final decision on the purchase of US-made F-35 fighter jets for over a year. The Canadian government put the F-35 purchase on review and has presented a Defense Industrial Strategy aimed at significantly reducing its reliance on the US following Trump's repeated threats to crash the country's economy and annex Canada as the 51st state.

Prime Minister Mark Carney has gone out of his way in recent months to move closer to the European imperialist powers. His government secured Canada a place as a partner in the Rearm Europe program for military production, while Carney became the first non-European leader to attend a European Political Community summit last month in Yerevan.

The conflicts tearing the NATO alliance apart and pitting the imperialist powers against each other in a new re-division of the world can only be halted by an independent political movement of the international working class fighting for the socialist transformation of society.



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