

US Continues Military Encirclement Of Russia

Recent Words Aside

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

American Vice-President Joseph Biden at the Munich Security Conference in early February pledged to “press the reset button” with Russia.

Since then prominent Washington officials have repeated their intention to reset, reboot and so forth relations with Russia but have, starting with Biden at Munich, not relented in any substantive manner on any of the behaviors and projects that have antagonized Moscow.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently and American President Obama is to meet with his Russian counterpart Dmitri Medvedev in London early next month.

Russia has permitted the US and its NATO allies transit rights for non-military goods to assist the West’s expanding war in South Asia, though in the process is abetting the extension of the NATO military nexus from the Baltic to the Black to the Caspian Seas and hence tightening the noose around its own neck.

How are the US and NATO demonstrating their supposed resolve to mend ties with Russia, not in words but in deeds?

Starting at Russia’s northwestern most border and proceeding counter-clockwise, in the following manner:

In nine days NATO will commence a ten-day military exercise, Cold Response 2009, consisting of 7,000 troops from thirteen nations in northern Norway, off the coast of the Norwegian Sea, adjoining the Barents Sea and the Russian coast.

It will be a full spectrum exercise with land, naval and air forces simulating an ‘emergency’ military intervention.

The Barents Observer reports:

“This year, about 700 of the participants are special forces. The [imaginary] conflict increased in 2008 when Northland attacked and occupied Midland. After a cease-fire Northland withdraws its forces and a power vacuum which NATO has to fill, occurred.”

Moving slightly southwest, NATO has just completed the four-day Baltic Host 2009 exercise in Estonia, which Russia’s Novosti described as involving “a series of scenarios simulating the arrival and deployment of NATO troops in a member country.”

Participating in the war games were forces from the United States, Britain, Poland, Estonia,

Latvia and Lithuania in “the first exercise of this type in the Baltic region, which could become a regular event in the future to improve interoperability between NATO troops.”

Continuing southward, nine days ago Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski met with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and insisted that American Patriot missiles would be deployed in his country.

The new US Patriot PAC-3 missile covers seven times the area of the original model and has double the range, enabling such missiles in Poland to hit Russian territory in the Kaliningrad region.

Two weeks ago US Defense Secretary Robert Gates signed a pact with his Polish opposite number Defense Minister Bogdan Klich “to bolster Poland’s special forces and enhance how it operates within the NATO military command structure” as the US armed forces newspaper Stars and Stripes reported.

This was two days after Poland’s Deputy Defense Minister Stanislaw Komorowski said, as quoted by Interfax-Ukraine, “that there is much more of a discussion right now within the alliance [NATO], to a large extent because many partners realize that the enemy unfortunately can be much closer to our borders” and “We have to take this into account when we plan the future of the alliance.”

At the same time NATO announced that it was going to establish a permanent military force in Eastern Europe which would draw troops from the NATO Response Force (NRF).

Further pursuing the path south and east along the Russian border, the Chief Commander of the Ukrainian Navy, Ihor Tenyukh, announced that the annual US-led Sea Breeze NATO military exercises in Crimea would “be of a larger scale regarding the strength and number of military personnel” than any of its predecessors.

His claim was made within weeks of the signing of the US-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership.

At the Krakow, Poland meeting of NATO defense chiefs on February 20 the Alliance’s Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer pledged that “NATO remains ready to assist Ukraine in undertaking comprehensive reforms in its defence and security structures. We are determined to continue to develop this strategic partnership.”

Down the Black Sea coast, NATO’s annual Cooperative Longbow/ Cooperative Lancer month-long Caucasus military exercises are to be held in Georgia starting on May 3 and as the Georgian Times reported “Georgia’s participation in NATO trainings is seen as the first serious step NATO has taken after the August conflict and the subsequent creation of the NATO-Georgian Commission in September.”

900 troops from 23 nations will participate in the exercises.

Two weeks ago US defense chief Gates reiterated that the Pentagon has a “continuing security relationship with Georgia both bilaterally and through NATO-Georgia Commission” and according to Civil Georgia “We’re involved in training. We are involved in military reform in Georgia.”

On the western end of the Black Sea directly across from Georgia – and Russia – the US has begun the two-week Thracian Spring 2009 joint air and infantry exercises with the Bulgarian armed forces, starting at the US's newly acquired Bezmer airbase.

Two weeks ago the US European Command spoke of its expanding military presence in Bulgaria and its Black Sea neighbor Romania: "It is larger in scale than it has been in previous years and we think that is an important consideration. If our current plans hold, we'll cycle a number of U.S. companies through both Romania and Bulgaria under battalion-level leadership to partner with the Bulgarians and the Romanians for the training that will occur roughly from July through October. So a larger presence and for a longer period of time...."

Southeast of Georgia and on Russia's southern flank, US Central Command chief David Petraeus announced that Azerbaijan would be used as a transit route for NATO arms headed to the Afghan war theater. The US has also ordered more Azerbaijani troops deployed there to serve under NATO command and the US Missile Defense Agency is considering expanding its global missile shield program to include what is now a Russian surveillance base in Garbala, Azerbaijan.

Indeed, in late February former US National Security Adviser and arch-Russophobe Zbigniew Brzezinski stated, "We should work so that Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan do not become victims of the US-Russia dialogue....We should do everything to defend these countries."

Proceeding steadily toward the east, the Pentagon and NATO have recently secured transit rights for the Afghan war with Kazakhstan, which borders both Russia and China.

A year ago the US Defense Department signed a military treaty with Kazakhstan, and as US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence Mitchell Shivers vowed, "As a member of NATO, the U.S. is committed to helping Kazakhstan in improving its inter-operability with equipment and training to U.S. and NATO standards."

In 2006 the Pentagon held a military exercise in Mongolia, Khaan Quest 2006, which also borders Russia and China.

At the far opposite end of Russia from where this survey began, the Barents Sea, the US has begun ICEX-2009 by deploying nuclear submarines for simulated warfare exercises off the coast of Alaska and into the Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean. The last such exercise, in 2007, included US and British nuclear submarines maneuvering under the polar ice cap.

Several days earlier the chief of the Russian general staff, General Nikolai Makarov, warned that "Russia will respond to any attempts to militarize the Arctic," as Reuters reported.

A news dispatch of two days ago mentioned a recent poll that demonstrated half of all Russian adults fear military aggression from foreign nations. Small wonder, notwithstanding ingenuous blandishments from the likes of Joseph Biden, Hillary Clinton and Robert Gates.

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