NATO Deploys
Ever Closer to Russia

by Carl Osgood

April 7—NATO has supplemented its verbal attacks on Russia by accelerating the pace of its operations in countries that were formerly part of the U.S.S.R. or the Warsaw Pact, allegedly in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea and the threat it supposedly represents to Ukraine and Eastern Europe. A summary of these deployments since early March follows.

Air Force Deployments

March 6: Six F-15C interceptors, based in Lakenheath, England, were deployed to Siauliai Air Base, Lithuania, to join four F-15s that had been there since January, to reinforce NATO's air-policing mission in the Baltic states. They were accompanied by a single KC-135 air-refueling tanker. On March 10, NATO headquarters in Brussels announced that two E-3 AWACS radar aircraft would be deployed, one to Poland, and the other to Romania, to "enhance the alliance's situational awareness. . . ." They began flying their missions soon after their arrival.

March 13-14: A dozen U.S. F-16s based at Aviano, Italy, arrived at the Lask Air Base in central Poland for exercises that were enlarged at the request of the Polish government.

March 18: British Defence Secretary Phillip Hammond told the House of Commons that Britain will send Typhoon fighters to the Baltics to "bolster" the NATO air-policing mission when Poland takes it over in May. "We are doing all we can to reassure our NATO allies about the protection we offer," he said. Hammond's offer was followed by similar offers from France, Denmark, and Germany.

April 1: An air exercise in the Baltics included Swedish Gripen fighters as well as the U.S. F-15s in Lithuania.

April 8: The Pentagon announced that six F-16 jets will arrive in Romania on April 10, for joint exercises with the Romanian airforce.

Naval Deployments

March 6: The U.S. Navy announced that the destroyer *U.S.S. Truxtun*, part of the *George H.W. Bush*

U.S. Army Photo/Staff Sgt. Brendan Stephens

NATO's Rapid Trident exercise in Ukraine, 2011. The purpose is to achieve interoperability with NATO forces.

carrier battle group, would be going into the Black Sea for exercises and port visits "with allies and partners in the region." The Navy said that the exercises were planned long before the current crisis over Ukraine. The *Truxtun* began exercises with the Bulgarian and Romanian navies on March 12, and left the Black Sea on March 21 after several more days of exercises.

March 14: The Pentagon announced that the aircraft carrier *U.S.S. George H.W. Bush*, on its way to a deployment in the Arabian Sea, would remain in the Mediterranean for "a few more days to do additional training and to enhance maritime capabilities," and "to reassure our allies," according to Pentagon spokesman Col. Steve Warren. The carrier left the Mediterranean on March 20, passing through the Suez Canal and into the Red Sea.

April 2: Two days after a senior defense official traveling with Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel indicated that the U.S. was considering sending another ship into the Black Sea, NBC reported that that ship would be the *U.S.S. Donald Cook*, the first of four U.S. ballistic-missile-equipped destroyers to be homeported in Rota, Spain. No details on the timing of its deployment were announced.

April 7: Pentagon spokesman Col. Warren confirmed the deployment, though he refused to name the ship that would be going. "The purpose of sending the ship into the Black Sea is primarily to reassure our allies and partners in the region that we're committed to the region," he said. "While in the Black Sea … we're still planning out all of the details of our operations in the Black Sea but we expect port calls and exercises with other Black Sea nations."

April 2: CBS/AP reported that the U.S. plans to add 175 Marines to the contingent of 265 Marines already stationed in Romania, a decision that was reportedly made last year. The additional Marines would be a forward element of the quick-reaction force deployed to Morón, Spain, in the aftermath of the September 2012 attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya. Washington has asked permission from the Romanian government to base as many as 600 Marines in the country. The U.S. already uses the Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base, where the 265 Marines that make up the Black Sea Rotational Force are based, as a staging base for troops going to and from Afghanistan.

More Actions Being Considered

March 26: White House Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes said that the United States plans to join its NATO allies in increasing ground and naval forces in Europe, though plans have yet to be worked out. He said NATO was aiming to provide "a continuous presence to reassure our allies."

March 31: A senior defense official traveling to Asia with Secretary of Defense Hagel told reporters that the United States may send another warship into the Black Sea and take other military measures to "reassure anxious allies in Eastern Europe," according to AFP. A team of U.S. Army officers would also be departing soon for Europe to plan for larger exercises. NATO has asked Commander Gen. Philip Breedlove to develop a list of options that the alliance can take to demonstrate "the alliance's commitment to Eastern European members, including joint exercises, training, and other steps."

April 1: NATO announced that it would be taking steps to strengthen its relationship with former Soviet republics on Russia's southern flank, to include Arme-

nia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova. A confidential seven-page paper leaked to the German news weekly *Der Spiegel* proposed joint exercises and training between NATO and the three countries, increasing the "interoperability" of their militaries with NATO, and their participation in NATO "smart defense" operations.

April 4: Secretary Hagel told Bloomberg in an interview that stationing a third Army brigade in Europe was among the possibilities that NATO should consider. NATO military planners are to come up with a list of options by April 15.

April 5: Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk told Polish TV that "The strengthening of NATO's presence [in Poland], also military presence, has become a fact and will be visible in the coming days, weeks. The discussion is not about if, but rather about the scale, pace and some technical aspects of strengthening Poland's security." Tusk had complained that NATO was not moving into Poland fast enough. The Polish govermnent had asked NATO to station 10,000 troops on its territory "as a visible demonstration of the alliance's resolve to defend all its members after Russia's seizure of Crimea," reported the London *Independent* on April 2.

April 6: Czech President Milos Zeman said, during an interview on Czech public radio, that NATO should be prepared to send troops into Ukraine if Russia moves to annex more of the country. "The moment Russia decides to widen its territorial expansion to the eastern part of Ukraine, that is where the fun ends," he said. "There I would plead not only for the strictest EU sanctions, but even for military readiness of the North Atlantic Alliance, like for example NATO forces entering Ukrainian territory."

Definitely on the agenda for July is a NATO military exercise on Ukrainian soil with Ukrainian participation, called Rapid Trident. It will bring together some 1,300 international forces in Ukraine. NATO is providing no further specifics, but according to Rapid Trident's Facebook page, last year's exercises involved more than "800 pieces of weaponry and about 170 military and combat vehicles.... In addition, 4 Mi-8 helicopters, a military transport aircraft An-26 of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and a German transport aircraft C-160 were involved to work out airborne operations and elements of evacuation of the wounded from the field of battle."

In addition to U.S. and U.K. troops, Rapid Trident 2014 will include units from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Canada, Georgia, Germany, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine.

A Global Outcry

Obama/NATO Policy Leading to WWIII

The following statements are among the most direct condemnations by qualified Western sources of the Obama/NATO policy—shaped by the British Empire—that is leading to World War III.

Germany

Gen. Harald Kujat (ret.), former German chairman of the NATO military committee, March 4:

In an interview on Germany's state-run DLF radio, General Kujat said that Russia wants to protect Russian nationals in the "Near Abroad," and if need be, even by military force. If Ukraine or Georgia became members of NATO, that would cross a red line for Moscow. Furthermore, the Black Sea Fleet base in Crimea is a crucial issue for Russia. NATO cannot and should not intervene militarily, since Ukraine is not an Alliance member, Kujat said.

A further escalation, potentially into a war between Ukraine and Russia, would be "a catastrophe for Europe and for the world," Kujat warned.

Carlo Masala, professor at the German Army College in Munich, March 4:

In an interview with the Munich tabloid *Abendzeitung München*, Masala warned, "If NATO entered into a military conflict with Russia, we would instantly be standing at the brink of potential nuclear war. No human being can have an interest in that."

Sahra Wagenknecht, deputy chair of the Left Party in the Bundestag, March 13:

In a press conference attacking the German government for its unholy alliance with a Kiev government that is illegal and includes Nazis and anti-Semites, Wagenknecht charged the West and NATO with having a confrontationist approach, warning that any military intervention would escalate into a "Third World War."

Alexander Rahr, German-Russian Forum, March 19:

Speaking with journalists in Berlin, Rahr said a "conflict of unimaginable dimensions over the future