

War Provocations Mount Against Russia, China

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Dec. 14—In words and deeds, the Obama Administration and leading European NATO allies continue to drive towards global confrontation. The targeting of Russia has escalated over the past week, since the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Ukrainian Freedom Support Act, calling for new sanctions against Russia, the arming of Ukraine, and other actions driving NATO right up to the border with Russia.

On Dec. 7, *Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the New York Council on Foreign Relations, published an anti-Putin diatribe under the headline “Rage Comes to Russia.” The article gloated over the recent sophisticated terrorist attack in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, and warned President Putin that the Islamic State (IS) is gunning for him and has aligned with Chechen terrorists, who are preparing to open a new battlefield inside Russia.

The Obama Administration has also recently launched a new campaign against Russia, based on the claim that Moscow is in violation of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty. In a hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee last week, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Brian McKean told lawmakers that the Administration was preparing specific actions against the alleged Russian violations that will “make Russia less secure.”

The United States has already announced the deployment next year of two more Aegis ballistic missile defense system-equipped guided missile destroyers, the *USS Carney* and the *USS Porter*, to the Spanish port of Rota, bringing to four the number of Aegis-equipped

ships deployed to Spain. The U.S. is also in the process of installing land-based Aegis missile defense systems in Romania as part of the U.S. unilateral BMD deployment to Europe.

And last week, NATO concluded Trident Lance maneuvers in Germany. Gen. Philip Breedlove, the Commander of NATO, told reporters at the end of the maneuvers that these were part of an expanded series of military actions by the Alliance, in response to what he called “Russian aggression in Ukraine.” Breedlove said that the Alliance is working to build up capabilities to act against Russia on “short notice.”

Warnings of a ‘Hot War’

These actions have prompted growing warnings from Russian circles about general war. On Dec. 11, *Time* magazine published an interview it did in November, with former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov, in which he warned that the West was provoking a “hot war by belittling Russia,” adding that we have entered “times of great trouble.” He noted that his own experience was that you can “listen to the Americans but you can’t trust them.”

Harsher responses came from Russian military commanders, including Chief of Staff Gen. Valeriy Gerasimov, who addressed a Moscow audience of 70 military attachés from 50 countries last week, and warned that the United States is taking “steps to weaken Russia’s strategic nuclear force,” including by building a global BMD system. “In defiance of our repeated pro-

posals,” he said, “neither the United States, nor the European countries, nor NATO in general wish to guarantee its non-use against Russia.”

On Dec. 10, General Gerasimov gave an interview to *Sputnik News*, in which he further detailed NATO’s expanding operations in the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea. He assailed the Western destabilizations, using the “color revolution format,” to “overthrow” governments.

Two other close allies of President Putin took up the “regime change” issue in widely circulated comments last week as well. On Dec. 8, Sergei Ryabkov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, addressed the State Duma and warned that Western “sanctions aim to create the social and economic conditions for regime change,” noting that these actions aim to “tear the CIS countries away from Russia.” He added that Western powers have backed “radical nationalists” in these color revolutions.

Also in an address to the Duma, Konstantin Dolgov, the Russian Human Rights Commissioner, charged that the United States is supporting “national radicals and neo-Nazis” in Ukraine.

As if to prove Dolgov’s point, on Dec. 10, the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy sponsored a Washington, D.C., event, “Maidan One Year Later,” which was chaired by NED Vice President Nadia Diuk, a longstanding Ukrainian-American promoter of the radical Banderist forces in Ukraine [see *Counterintelligence* section in this issue].

There is, fortunately, growing opposition internationally to the madness of the provocations against Russia.

On Dec. 8, a group of 120 prominent political figures from 46 countries sent a letter to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, warning that the current danger of thermonuclear war is being dangerously underestimated. Among the signers were former U.S. Senators Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Richard Lugar (R-Ind.); Gen. James Cartwright, former Deputy Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff; former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard; former German Defense Minister Volker Ruhe; and former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser. Separate letters to the same event from Pope Francis and former International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) director Dr. Mohammed ElBaradei invoked similar warnings.



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A NATO press conference in Grafenwoehr, Germany Dec. 10, during the Trident Lance maneuvers. Their purpose was to build capabilities to deploy against Russia on “short notice.”

In a clear understanding of the links between the growing war danger and the economic warfare being directed against Russia via sanctions, Andrey Kostin, the head of the Russian Foreign Trade Bank (VTB), declared, in a Dec. 3 interview with Germany’s *Handelsblatt*, that if Russia is excluded from the SWIFT inter-bank settlements system, as some are threatening, this would be crossing “a bright red line.” “In my personal opinion it would mean war, if this type of sanction were introduced,” he said. Kostin is a close friend of President Putin.

China, for its part, has also taken a major step towards preparation for war. For the first time, China has deployed a new generation stealth submarines armed with nuclear weapons capable of reaching U.S. territory. For the first time, China has a secure second-strike capability.

Both Beijing and Moscow know that Washington is updating war plans through a newly released plan called “Third Offset.” On Dec. 9, the author of the proposal, former Navy Department official Robert Martinage, testified before the House sea-power subcommittee and spelled out his proposal for a new generation of stealth drone fighters, expanded submarine deployments, and other new systems aimed at “offsetting” Russian and Chinese advances in weaponry that jeopardize the U.S. global military edge.