

G7 leaders escalate war threats against Russia

By Thomas Gaist
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During their second day of discussions in the resort town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen in the German Alps on Monday, the leaders of the major imperialist powers affirmed their commitment to a policy of escalating strategic and military pressure against Russia.

“We need to keep pushing Russia,” Obama said. “Russian forces continue to operate in eastern Ukraine, violating Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

“The G7 is making it clear that if necessary we stand ready to impose additional significant sanctions against Russia,” Obama declared.

An official communiqué released by the G7 powers—the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy, and Canada—reaffirmed Obama’s anti-Russia comments. It warned that the assembled powers would devise “further restrictive measures in order to increase cost on Russia.”

The hypocrisy and recklessness of Obama and his G7 counterparts is breathtaking. They are denouncing Russian “aggression” in Ukraine, which they plunged into civil war by backing a fascist-led putsch last year that toppled a pro-Russian government. Now, as US and NATO armed forces are conducting air, sea and ground exercises all along Russia’s borders. In Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Scandinavia, the Baltic Sea, and the Black Sea, the US and its allies are rehearsing the opening stages of an all-out war with Russia.

Last week, US defense officials testifying before the US House of Representatives indicated that the Pentagon is considering launching pre-emptive strikes against Russian targets, including with nuclear weapons (see: US officials consider nuclear strikes against Russia). These statements are no doubt now being carefully studied by the Russian military.

NATO’s recently-formed Rapid Response Force, which has been assembled to serve as the spearhead of a NATO ground war against Russian forces, is set to

conduct military exercises in Poland starting today. The so-called “Baltops” exercises are to involve thousands of US-NATO troops and will take place simultaneously in Sweden, Germany and the Baltic Sea.

A quarter century after the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the “Cold War,” Washington is preparing new forward-deployments of its nuclear arsenal to Europe. In an interview with the BBC given the preceding day, British Foreign Minister Philip Hammond made clear that plans for new US nuclear deployments to Europe are far advanced.

Hammond told the BBC Sunday that Britain may soon withdraw from the INF treaty, clearing the way for Britain to serve as a staging area for an American nuclear build-up against Russia, just as it did prior to 1991, when US nuclear weapons were stationed at the Royal Air Force’s Greenham Common base.

“There have been some worrying signs of stepping up levels of activity both by Russian forces and by Russian-controlled separatist forces,” Hammond said. “We have got to send a clear signal to Russia that we will not allow them to transgress our red lines.”

The US and European ruling elites’ strategy of endlessly bullying Russia by threatening it with war and nuclear strikes poses immense dangers to the world’s population. Even assuming that the ruling elites of the NATO powers are not immediately seeking to provoke outright war with Russia, the constant drumbeat of NATO threats and military exercises immensely heightens the danger of war breaking out accidentally.

With thousands of jet fighters, warships, and armored units on heightened alert throughout the region, the world is only a few miscalculations away from a clash between NATO and Russian forces that could rapidly escalate into war.

The immense dangers posed to the world’s population arising from the US and NATO war drive

against Russia are being hidden from masses of workers in the United States and worldwide. No one in the official media are asking how many people would die if the military maneuvers being practiced by Russian and NATO forces in their exercises turned into the real thing. Instead, much of the media coverage of the G7 summit focused on controversy over whether Obama was drinking alcohol-free beer yesterday.

The relentless military escalation at this G7 summit testifies to the breakdown and historic bankruptcy of capitalism. Without the unification and mobilization of the international working class in revolutionary struggle against imperialism and war, it is not only likely, but inevitable, that NATO war threats will at some point unleash all-out war.

Russian leaders have already warned that they are on alert for signs of an imminent first strike by NATO and are holding Russian nuclear forces ready to respond to such an attack, should it come (see: Russian President Putin says Ukraine crisis threatens nuclear war).

The second main priority of the assembled leaders was to coordinate the imposition of austerity measures that have already set in motion the collapse of large parts of the European economy.

Even as Obama denounced Putin for “wrecking his country’s economy,” the social cuts, mass layoffs and other “economic restructuring” measures dictated by the Western banks and financial institutions are pushing millions into poverty and ravaging key social infrastructure across Southern and Eastern Europe.

In its official communique, the G7 powers demanded that the Ukrainian government continue to implement austerity policies that, as in Greece, are pushing broad layers of the population into poverty. The Kiev regime must “decisively continue the necessary fundamental transformation in line with IMF and EU commitments,” the joint G7 communique demanded Monday.

In remarks after Monday’s G7 session, German Chancellor Angela Merkel threatened Greece, insisting that it “does not have much time left” to reach a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Union and European Central Bank (the “troika”). Such a deal would transfer a new loan of some €7 billion to Athens in exchange for new social cuts to the Greek economy, which has already been eviscerated by years of brutal austerity.

The precise makeup of the social cuts, which are to be directed largely against the salaries and pensions of government workers, were a major topic of discussion at the G7 talks, Merkel said. The German chancellor will reportedly meet for informal discussions with Greek Prime Minister Alex Tsipras during EU meetings with heads of state from Latin America scheduled for later in the week.

Despite criticizing the European Commission’s proposals for the Greek economy as “borderline insulting,” Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis nonetheless affirmed his determination to “come to an agreement” with the troika and the big banks.

“It is time to stop pointing fingers at one another and it is time that we do our job,” he said.

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