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## US-NATO officials unveil Romania-based missile system

By Thomas Gaist

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At a ceremony on Thursday, presided over by officials representing the United States and European imperialist powers, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) announced the activation of a new missile system, based in Romania.

"The United States' Aegis ashore system is declared certified for operations," NATO General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg declared during the inauguration.

The new missile network is stationed around military infrastructure based at Romania's Deveselu air base, as well as a new US base located in Poland. It will operate under the direct command of US Department of Defense (DOD) personnel.

At least 130 US soldiers will man the installation, which comes with an initial price tag of \$800 million, and is positioned less than 400 miles from Russia's main Black Sea naval base at Sevastopol, Crimea.

The Aegis Ashore is modeled on the Aegis missile systems embedded onboard the US Navy's most advanced destroyers, and is designed to fire an array of short and medium-range missiles.

In its report Thursday, the *New York Times* frankly acknowledged, “[T]he launchpad violates a 1987 treaty intended to take the superpowers off their hair-trigger nuclear alter, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, by banning land-based cruise and medium-range missiles with a range from 300 to 3,400 miles.”

Russian officials have responded by denouncing the new system as a major escalation and accusing NATO of ratcheting up the threat of nuclear war in Eastern Europe.

“Our experts are convinced that the deployment of the ABM system poses a certain threat to the Russian Federation,” Russian government spokesman Dmitri Peskov told the media. “Measures are being taken to ensure the necessary level of security for Russia.”

Russian foreign affairs representative Maria Zakharova condemned “the destructive actions of the United States and its allies in the area of missile defense,” calling the new system a “direct threat to global and regional security” and “a violation of this [IRNF] treaty.”

US and NATO officials have defended the system by claiming that it is directed against Iran and other small states viewed by Washington as “rogue states,” and poses no threat to Russia’s nuclear deterrent.

In his remarks Thursday, Romanian President Klaus Ioannis made clear that the new installation is part of broader plans to use his country as a staging area for NATO activities throughout Eastern Europe and the Black Sea.

Clearly implying that the real target of these measures is the Russian Federation, Klaus called on NATO leaders to maintain a “permanent naval presence” in the Black Sea, as part of a systematic buildup aimed at upholding a “credible and predictable presence of Allied forces on the eastern flank.”

Western generals and strategists are posing NATO-Russian war scenarios as if the war has already begun.

During his inauguration last week, US Army General and Supreme Allied Commander in Europe Curtis Scaparrotti warned that Russia “is striving to project itself as a world power” and demanded that US forces in Europe must “enhance our levels of readiness and our agility in the spirit of being able to fight tonight if deterrence fails.”

In an assessment of the NATO buildup against Russia, “How NATO Can Defend the Baltics from Conventional and Hybrid Attacks,” the Atlantic Council outlined a detailed program aimed at insuring the defeat of Moscow’s forces in an armed struggle over the Baltics and Eastern Europe.

The elite US think tank recommends the formation of a new NATO intelligence apparatus modeled on South Korea’s 501st Military Intelligence Brigade, the formation by Germany, the United Kingdom and Poland of “heavy brigades” capable of deploying to the Russian border on two weeks notice, the “bulking up” of NATO’s air capabilities, including expanded air bases in

Sweden in Finland, and the creation a unified drill schedule to coordinate continuous NATO war exercises in the Baltics.

Warning of the threat posed by Russian “anti-access/area-denial” (A2/AD) systems, the Council notes that such systems pose a “wartime issue.”

“Such efforts will necessarily take place in the context of high-intensity conventional warfare,” the Council wrote, calling for the NATO alliance to counter Russian A2/AD capabilities through additional bases, weapons and reinforcements in and around the Baltics, along with new “interoperability” frameworks to integrate the alliance’s naval, air and space-based forces.

“Russia’s actions, geopolitical rhetoric, and geographic proximity to the Baltics have generated the requirement for a significant defense capability,” the Council wrote.

In another report, “Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO’s Eastern Flank,” the RAND Corporation warned that a Russian offensive in Eastern Europe could rapidly overwhelm NATO defense and seize hold of major population centers in the Baltics, including Tallinn, Estonia and Riga, Latvia.

Since organizing the February 2014 overthrow of the Russian-backed government in Kiev, Ukraine, the Obama administration and US military-intelligence apparatus have spearheaded an armed buildup all along Russia’s frontiers.

Far from responding defensively, Washington and its allies have carried out relentless preparations for offensive warfare against Russia over the past two-and-a-half years, including the formation from January 2015 of command-and-control centers throughout the former Soviet sphere, including forward basing arrangements throughout Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Poland and Bulgaria.

While adopting the posture of “defense of democracy” and of the “rules-based world order,” US imperialism is preparing to unleash a third world war.