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Biden's blank check to the Baltic states: US will wage war on Russia in your defense

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On Tuesday, US Vice President Joseph Biden traveled to Latvia to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to go to war with Russia in the event of a conflict between Moscow and the Baltic states.

“I want to make it absolutely clear to all the people in the Baltic states: we have pledged our sacred honor, the United States of America... to the NATO treaty and Article 5,” Biden said, after meeting with Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė and other Baltic leaders.

The plain meaning of Biden's words is this: Should any one of these tiny states, headed by fanatically anti-Russian regimes, stage a provocation against Russia leading to a border clash, the “sacred honor” of the United States requires that the American people be plunged into war against the world's second largest nuclear power.

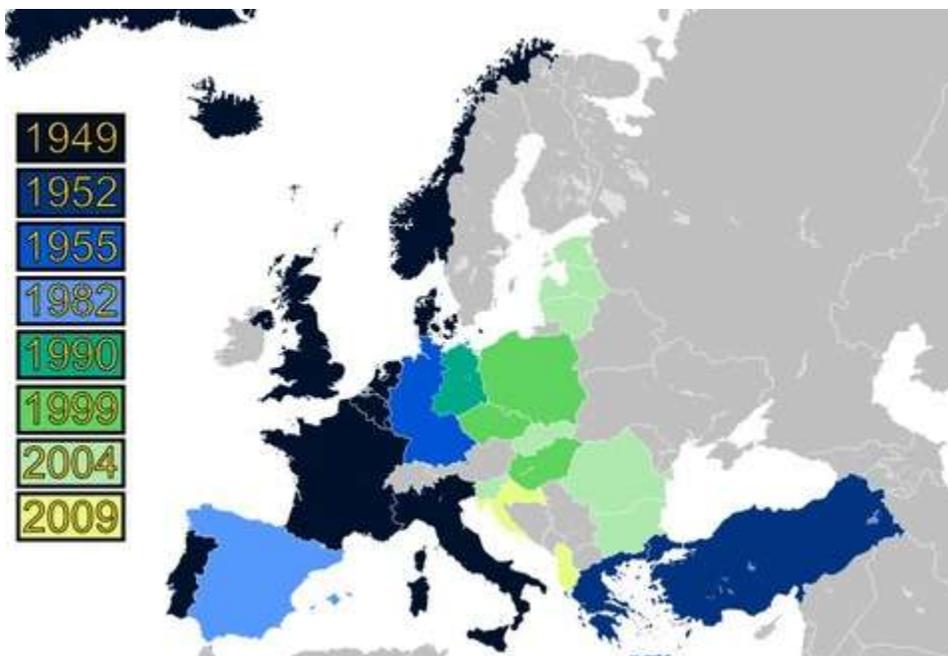
What is this “sacred honor” invoked by Mr. Biden? Is it the same “honor” that has led the US to illegally invade Iraq and Afghanistan and turn them into infernos of death and destruction? Is it the high-mindedness demonstrated by the fomenting of proxy wars that have destroyed Libya and Syria? Or did the vice president have in mind the incineration of a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, the obliteration of women and children in drone strikes, the sadistic torture carried out at CIA black sites and the gulags of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay?

The war criminal Biden calls it a matter of “honor” to prepare the greatest of all war crimes: hurling the world’s population into a war between countries whose nuclear arsenals are capable of wiping out human civilization many times over.

To the extent that there is any discussion in the media or political establishment of a military conflict with Russia, it is presented from the fraudulent standpoint of defending “human rights” or upholding the sovereignty of US allies. No examination of the real causes of war or its consequences is permitted.

What would a war between the United States and Russia look like? What is the likelihood that such a conflict would entail the use of nuclear arms, given the fact that the US maintains its right to the “first strike” use of nuclear weapons, and Russia has stated it will respond to incursions into its territory by all means at its disposal, including the use of its nuclear arsenal? How many millions of people in Russia, the US, Europe and beyond will die in such a conflict?

None of this is even mentioned in the 2016 election campaign. Such is the degree of control exercised by the American military and the US financial oligarchy over the press and political life in the United States, and the lack of genuine democratic content in the electoral process.



The expansion of NATO

As for the collective defense provision of the NATO charter (Article 5), the Baltic states are part of the military alliance only due to the relentless eastward extension of NATO’s borders since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, carried out with the specific aim of encircling Russia. The three states in question—Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia—have a combined population of some six million people, roughly equivalent to the US state of Missouri. They were part of the Russian empire prior to the 1917 Russian Revolution and were incorporated into the USSR after the 1939 Stalin-Hitler Pact, before declaring independence from the Soviet Union in 1990.

NATO was expanded to include the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in 1999; the Baltic states, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia in 2004; and Albania and Croatia in 2009. Most of these countries were members of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact.

These expansions have shifted the borders of NATO by over 800 miles, bringing its military forces to within 100 miles of St. Petersburg—less than five minutes travel time by supersonic jet.

Backed by the US, the Baltic countries are arming themselves at a breakneck pace. Between 2014 and 2015, Estonia increased its defense budget by 6.6 percent, Latvia by 13.7 percent, and Lithuania by 32.7 percent. The day before Biden's visit, Lithuania made the largest arms purchase in its history, spending a half billion dollars to buy 88 armored fighting vehicles.

The pro-US puppet governments of these highly unstable countries, riven by social and ethnic tensions, are characterized by their embrace of anti-Russian jingoism and militarism.

Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, referred to as the “Lithuanian Iron Lady,” has called Russia a “terrorist state” and compared Russian President Vladimir Putin to Adolf Hitler. Grybauskaitė studied in Washington DC and served as the plenipotentiary minister in the Lithuanian embassy there.

Latvian President Raimonds Vejonis, previously the minister of defense, has been a vociferous advocate of militarizing the Russian border, declaring last year: “If something happens, we can't wait days or weeks for more equipment. We need to react immediately.”

In perhaps the most significant section of his remarks on Tuesday, Biden declared that the outcome of the 2016 presidential election will not affect US policy with regard to the Baltics.

Biden was referring to statements by Republican candidate Donald Trump questioning Washington's commitment to go to war in defense of the Baltic states. This is unacceptable to Biden and the military/intelligence apparatus for which he speaks. The vice president declared on Tuesday that Trump's comments are “nothing that should be taken seriously.” The Republican candidate “knows not of what he speaks,” Biden said, adding, “I don't even think he understands what Article 5 is.”

While Biden's statements were nominally directed against Trump, their real content is the assertion that regardless the outcome of the election, it is the intelligence agencies that will dictate policy.

These statements shed further light on the attempts by the media and the political establishment to cast Trump as the “Siberian candidate” of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The aim is to frame popular hostility to the fascistic Trump as a mandate for war. This sets the stage for a major escalation of Washington's conflict with Moscow.