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Global Reserach

US-NATO "Strategic Concept": Global Warfare

Missile Shield And Nuclear Weapons

by Rick Rozoff

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The civilian chief of the world's only, and history's first self-proclaimed global, military bloc is having a busy month.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen delivered an address in Washington, DC on February 23 on the military alliance's new 21st century Strategic Concept along with U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, her predecessor twice-removed Madeleine Albright and National Security Adviser James Jones, the last-named a former Marine Corps general and NATO Supreme Allied Commander. [1]

At the seminar and on the preceding evening at Georgetown University in what is arguably NATO's true capital, Rasmussen sounded familiar themes: Highlighting the need to prevail in Afghanistan, NATO's first ground war and first armed conflict outside of Europe. Applauding the work of the bloc's new cyber warfare center in Estonia, ostensibly to protect the comparatively new member state against attacks emanating from Russia. Identifying Iran and North Korea for particular scrutiny.

He also spoke of “deepening our partnerships with countries from across the globe” and affirmed “NATO is a permanent Alliance...” [2]

The bloc’s chief announced the creation of “a new division at NATO Headquarters to deal with new threats and challenges.” [3]

Since then Rasmussen has visited Jordan, Bahrain, Finland, the Czech Republic and Poland to promote the broadening of worldwide military partnerships, the recruitment of more troops and other support for the Afghan war, and the expansion of an eventual global missile shield system within the context of NATO’s further transformation into an international and expeditionary security and military force. In Rasmussen’s words, the Alliance is to become a global security forum in addition to being the world’s only permanent military alliance.

The Strategic Concept meeting held in Finland on March 4 with the foreign ministers of that country and of Sweden, Alexander Stubb and Carl Bildt, respectively, as well as Finland’s defense minister – the first formal gathering on the Strategic Concept held in a non-member nation – focused on the two Scandinavian nations’ expanding role in Afghanistan and what was described as EU-NATO cooperation and Nordic cooperation.

Regarding supposed threats which within the current context could only be an allusion to Finland’s neighbor Russia, Rasmussen said that it was no longer sufficient to “line up soldiers and tanks and military equipment along the borders.” Instead the bloc’s members “really have to address the threat at its roots, and it might be in cyber space,” as the “enemy might appear everywhere in cyberspace.” [4]

He also reprised the demand he voiced at the Munich Security Conference on February 7 that NATO assume the function of a global security forum.

The previous day Rasmussen indicated the nature of that role in alluding to the currently longest and biggest war in the world: “Afghanistan will serve as a prototype for future civil-military cooperation in handling crises in other weak or failing nations,” as paraphrased by a major American news agency. [5]

On March 5 he met with the Czech prime, defense and foreign ministers in Prague where the four “discussed missile defence, which the Secretary General considers an important part of securing the Euro-Atlantic community against the threat of missiles” [6] and increased contributions to the Afghan war effort.

Rasmussen’s visit to Jordan on March 7 was in part designed to consolidate NATO’s Mediterranean Dialogue partnership with the host nation, Egypt, Israel, Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia and Algeria. His trip to Bahrain the following day was aimed at solidifying ties under the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative with the Gulf Cooperation Council states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in furtherance of NATO’s plans in Afghanistan and the Gulf of Aden and its agenda against Iran. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa “was briefed on NATO’s perception of the Gulf and international security conditions and invited to visit NATO Headquarters...” [7]

On March 12 the secretary general arrived in Warsaw to participate in the NATO's New Strategic Concept – Global, Transatlantic and Regional Challenges and Tasks Ahead conference at the nation's Royal Castle organized by the Warsaw Center for International Relations and the Polish Ministry of Defense.

His address reiterated the now standard demand that NATO combine Article 5 so-called collective defense for its members – in Poland's case that can only be a reference to Russia – with expeditionary deployments outside NATO's self-defined area of responsibility as exemplified by recent wars and other armed missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, the Gulf of Aden and the Horn of Africa, the Mediterranean Sea and the Darfur region of Sudan.

Rasmussen did not limit that role to the use of conventional weapons.

“NATO's core task was, is, and will remain, the defence of our territory and our populations. But we need, at the same time, to take a hard look at what deterrence means in the 21st century.

“For our deterrence to remain credible, I firmly believe it must continue to be based on a mix of conventional and nuclear capabilities. And our new Strategic Concept should affirm that.” [8]

As a warm-up exercise he had spoken the day before at the Transatlantic Forum 2010 at the University of Warsaw and earlier on the 12th he met with staff and students from the University of Warsaw's Institute of International Relations and the Institute of Strategic Studies in Krakow.

Reporting on his position regarding the use of nuclear weapons during his stay in the Polish capital, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported him advocating that “atomic weapons were still needed for deterrence reasons,” [9] and Deutsche Presse-Agentur quoted him as saying:

“Nuclear weapons will remain a major element of credible deterrence in the future. A world without atomic weapons would be wonderful, but as long as states and non-state structures exist which aim to gain atomic weapons, then we should also maintain our nuclear capacities.” [10]

Nine days earlier Rasmussen had advocated the same stance in announcing “the western military alliance will debate the bloc's nuclear policy in Estonia next month.” Responding to a recent call by the foreign ministers of Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway to debate the stationing of between 240-350 U.S. warheads at air bases in Europe, the NATO chief said the Alliance “will have to balance calls to remove outdated weapons with a need for a strategic nuclear ‘deterrent.’” [11]

“There are a lot of nuclear weapons in the world, and a number of countries that either have them, would like to have them, or could have them quickly if they decided they needed them. That is just the way it is. So whatever we do in support of arms control and disarmament should be balanced with deterrence.” [12]

In his main address in Poland he also stressed that “our new Strategic Concept will also need to reflect [the] need to reflect that the meaning of territorial defence is changing” and that another “challenge that we must tackle head-on is cyber security.” [13]

Reaffirming demands made earlier in the Czech Republic, he added:

“[W]e must develop an effective missile defence. In the coming years, we will probably face many more countries – and possibly even some non-state actors – armed with long-range missiles and nuclear capabilities. Therefore, I believe that NATO’s deterrent posture should include missile defence.

“That’s why deterrence and defence need to go together. And why we have the obligation to look into missile defence options.”

Two days before Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov issued another warning against U.S. interceptor missile deployments near his nation’s borders – including those planned in Poland – saying, “Russia cannot allow US plans to deploy elements of its missile system in Europe to threaten the effectiveness of its nuclear deterrent.”

“Military experts say the planned missile system could be able to hit Russia’s ballistic missiles in the next ten years.” [14]

As to the pretext that Washington and NATO are employing to ring Russia’s western flank with missile shield installations, Lavrov said:

“It is evident that Iran currently poses no threat to the U.S. and European countries... At the moment, Iran has no missiles capable of striking Europe, let alone the U.S., and is unlikely to develop [such missiles] in the foreseeable future.” [15]

While in Warsaw Rasmussen also elaborated on the global nature of 21st century expeditionary NATO.

“We need more flexible, mobile and deployable armed forces. If our military is stationary, if our armed forces can’t be moved beyond the borders of each individual member state, the defence of Allied territory will not be effective.”

He called for “overhaul[ing] our military command structure, to make it more flexible and deployable.”

“Today, NATO is engaged in Afghanistan, in the Balkans, in the Mediterranean Sea, and off the Horn of Africa. This broad spectrum of missions and operations is only natural. Today’s risks and threats are increasingly global in nature, and our Alliance must reflect this fact.”

In his address at the Royal Castle in Warsaw he twice employed a variation of the catch phrase first introduced by President George H.W. Bush in 1989: Europe whole, free and at peace. [16]

Europe, whole if not necessarily free and by no means at peace outside its borders, is to continue being NATO’s and the U.S.’s base for military interventions throughout much of the world.

“[O]ur first line of defence must be to complete the consolidation of Europe as a continent that is whole, free and at peace.

“What does this consolidation of Europe entail? For one, it means that NATO’s Open Door policy must continue.” Rasmussen was speaking in the immediate sense about candidate nations in the Balkans and in the former Soviet Union.

In relation to the Afghan war in particular, “NATO and the EU should cooperate and coordinate better.”

“NATO Headquarters must be less of a bureaucracy and more of a streamlined, operational headquarters. A headquarters where staff and resources are realigned to serve the Alliance’s new priorities, not outdated legacy activities and narrow national interests.”

In relation to where the true “first line of defense” should be, alluding to last year’s Belarusian-Russian military exercises near Poland’s borders Rasmussen added:

“If our military is stationary, if our armed forces can’t be moved beyond the borders of each individual member state, the defence of Allied territory will not be effective... We think Russia sends the wrong kind of signal by conducting military exercises that rehearse the invasion of a smaller NATO member.”

Russia is in fact larger than Poland, but Poland has a population almost four times that of Belarus and is a member, indeed a major outpost, of a U.S.-led global military bloc.

Moreover, the NATO chief stated that, in regards to Russia’s new military strategy which identifies NATO expansion along its frontiers and U.S. missile deployments in its neighborhood as the chief threats to its national security, “Russia’s new military doctrine does not reflect the real world.”

NATO has expanded military partnerships throughout almost all of Europe, in the Middle East, Africa, the Caucasus, Central and South and East Asia, and the South Pacific, but despite Rasmussen’s claim that Russia has “a very outdated notion about the nature and role of NATO,” a time traveller from the last century could be forgiven for thinking that in relation to post-Soviet Russia the only thing that has changed is NATO’s brazen drive to encircle it.

After delivering his speech at the Strategic Concept seminar, Rasmussen matched the deed to the word and “travelled from Warsaw to Bydgoszcz to visit the Joint Forces Training Centre (JFTC) – part of NATO’s Allied Command Transformation (ACT) military body. The JFTC prepares officers for deployment to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.” [17]

He addressed commanders of the Norfolk, Virginia-headquartered Allied Command Transformation, after which he inspected troops of NATO’s Third Signal Battalion stationed there.

Three days earlier NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, Admiral James Stavridis, spoke before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee and anticipated his civilian colleague’s comments in Poland to a remarkable degree.

“Stavridis noted that 100,000 NATO troops are involved in expeditionary operations on three continents, including operations in Afghanistan, off the coast of Africa, and in [the Balkans].”

“Stavridis called the new phased-in approach for European missile defense ‘timely and flexible,’ and said it will provide ‘capability that we can step up and be adaptive, as the Iranian capability to use ballistic missiles goes forward.’” The following day Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov

forcefully refuted the excuse Stavridis resorted to in order to justify American and NATO missile shield deployments, as seen earlier.

“The admiral said he is very confident in the first stage of the program, which is sea-based with the Aegis weapons system and ‘reasonably confident’ in the second phase, which is shore-based.” He also paralleled Rasmussen’s contentions that “The nature of threats in this 21st century [is] going to demand more than just sitting behind our borders” and that “Among the greatest concerns that impacts both military and civilian realms... is cybersecurity.” [18]

Both the ship- and land-based Standard Missile-3 deployments Stavridis alluded to are to be centered, among other locations, in the Baltic Sea and almost certainly on Polish soil. Next month the U.S. will begin the activation of a Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missile battery near the Baltic Sea city of Morag, thirty five miles from the Russian border, and base 100 soldiers there, the first American troops ever to be stationed in Poland and the first foreign ones in a generation.

“The missile battery will be equipped with elements allowing it to be integrated with the Polish defense system.” [19]

Earlier this month a Polish newspaper revealed that American missile plans in Poland are far more ambitious than just the construction of Patriot and Standard Missile-3 batteries: “The US is also interested in building longer-range missile silos near the Poland-Kaliningrad border. These would be capable of shooting down missiles from as far as 5,500 kilometers away...” [20]

On March 4 400 Polish troops and “scores of U.S. Army soldiers” [21] began military exercises at the Training Center for Peacekeeping Forces in Kielce in southeastern Poland.

From March 17 to 20 NATO will conduct air exercises over the Baltic Sea region in “a demonstration of NATO solidarity and commitment to its member countries in the Baltic Region” and “a show of solidarity with former Soviet republics concerned about Russia”, [22] that will include Polish, Lithuanian and French warplanes as well as U.S. tanker aircraft.

The NATO Joint Force Training Center in Bydgoszcz in northern Poland which Anders Fogh Rasmussen toured on March 12 “trained 2,186 personnel from 32 Allied and Partnership for Peace Nations prior to deployment to ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] during 11 training events. The 2010 training year will see an increase in the total number of personnel impacted by the Joint Force Training Center.”

It has a staff of 84 personnel from eighteen member nations consisting of officers, non-commissioned officers and NATO civilians.

“However, in the coming year the authorized strength of the organization will rise to 105.” [23]

While the NATO secretary was in Warsaw, Polish Defense Minister Bogdan Klich spoke at the same conference, which was timed to coincide with the eleventh anniversary of Poland’s full absorption into NATO, and advocated that NATO’s new Strategic Concept prepare “for the worst possible scenarios,” even if such scenarios were “not too probable.” [24]

Klich also said he wanted “to attract NATO infrastructure into Poland” and that “he is prepared to organize an exercise involving NATO rapid-reaction forces in Poland in 2013.” [25]

Poland and its Baltic neighbors represent the point at which NATO’s dual strategic objectives – “defending Europe whole and free,” including with nuclear weapons, and an expansion “increasingly global in nature” – converge.

Notes

1) 21st Century Strategy: Militarized Europe, Globalized NATO
Stop NATO, February 26, 2010

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2010/02/26/21st-century-strategy-militarized-europe-globalized-nato>

2) Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at Georgetown University
North Atlantic Treaty Organization, February 22, 2010

3) Remarks by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the fourth
Strategic Concept Seminar on Transformation and Capabilities, Washington DC
North Atlantic Treaty Organization, February 23, 2010

4) Agence France-Presse, March 4, 2010

5) Associated Press, March 4, 2010

6) North Atlantic Treaty Organization, March 5, 2010

7) Bahrain News Agency, March 8, 2010

8) Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at NATO’s New
Strategic Concept – Global, Transatlantic and Regional Challenges and Tasks Ahead
North Atlantic Treaty Organization, March 12, 2010

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_62143.htm?selectedLocale=en

9) Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, March 12, 2010

10) Deutsche Presse-Agentur, March 12, 2010

11) Agence France-Presse, March 3, 2010

12) Xinhua News Agency, March 4, 2010

13) Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at NATO’s New
Strategic Concept – Global, Transatlantic and Regional Challenges and Tasks Ahead

14) Press TV, March 10, 2010

15) Russian Information Agency Novosti, March 10, 2010

16) Berlin Wall: From Europe Whole And Free To New World Order
Stop NATO, November 9, 2009

<http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2009/11/09/berlin-wall-from-europe-whole-and-free-to-new-world-order>

17) North Atlantic Treaty Organization, March 12, 2010

18) United States Department of Defense, March 9, 2010

19) Polish Radio, February 28, 2010

20) Warsaw Business Journal, March 2, 2010

- 21) Xinhua News Agency, March 5, 2010
- 22) Reuters, March 2, 2010
- 23) North Atlantic Treaty Organization
Allied Command Transformation
March 5, 2010
- 24) Polish News Agency via Xinhua News Agency, March 13, 2010
- 25) Warsaw Business Journal, March 12, 2010