

The opposition of the WPC to NATO derives from its founding days. Especially after 1991 and the dissolution of the USSR and the socialist camp in Europe, NATO's existence and expansion appears even more provocative. NATO's expansion towards the East, its aggression against the peoples of Yugoslavia in 1999 marked new qualitative and aggressive characteristics of it. The global peace movement was confronted with a situation where the consequent anti-war forces, the truly peace loving forces had to take sides, whether with the aggressor NATO or with the peoples under aggression. One of the results of the dirty bombardment of 78 days by NATO in Yugoslavia was also the creation of the biggest US Military Base in the world, the Camp Bondsteel, at the US/NATO protectorate of Kosovo, which was illegally separated from the sovereignty of Serbia.

The US and NATO has since then carried out invasions and wars in Afghanistan (from 2001 till today), in Iraq (from 2003 till today), in Syria (from 2011 till today), in Libya (from 2011 till today) and carries out still a war with huge humanitarian consequences together with Saudi Arabia in Yemen. In all the above cases new military bases have been installed. The USA and its NATO allies are currently involved in 36 military operations in North, West and East Africa. The US and NATO have openly supported a Coup d' Etat in Ukraine in 2014 where reactionary and pro-Nazi forces came to power. In all above mentioned cases NATO is cooperating with the European Union, which is building its Euro-army, the Permanent Structural Cooperation (PESCO), the Battle Groups and the European Interventions' Initiative composed by 9 member states. NATO has deployed bases and troops on a belt from the Baltic States till Bulgaria, encircling the Russian Federation, with "Missile Defense Shields" in Poland and Romania, in order to be able to threaten its "enemies" without the chance of retaliation. NATO has carried out last year in 2018 one of the biggest war drills in the Nordic countries (the Trident Juncture) aiming at the same time to affiliate Sweden and Finland into its ranks. The networks of cooperation (e.g. the Partnership for Peace -PfP) of NATO include countries in all continents. NATO has incorporated almost all Balkan countries and is planning to do so with Cyprus. Recently NATO has announced the affiliation of Colombia and its clear intention to affiliate also Brazil! Israel, the main aggressor and occupation force in Palestine and the Middle East, is already close partner of NATO. In a world dominated by imperialism NATO is the "world sheriff", is the finger on the trigger of the biggest war machine in human history.

All the above we were able to discuss and elaborate last November in Dublin at the International Conference against US/NATO Military Bases where Cuba was present with the President of MOVPAZ Silvio Platero, but also with a special keynote speaker and guest, our beloved Aleida Guevara. In Dublin but also in our own WPC meetings it was agreed to launch the 23<sup>rd</sup> February every year as a Global Day of action against Foreign Military bases, a date clearly inspired by the struggle of the Cuban people against the Guantanamo base, since this was the date the agreement was signed 116 years ago.

But what is really behind so many imperialist wars and aggression in the world, which are spreading death, destruction, misery and flow of refugees and displaced people? Sometimes the answer is too obvious, at least for the peace loving forces which are committed to the struggle for peace in the world. The answer is always related to the aims and plans of the imperialists to control energy and other natural resources, the pipelines and roads of transport, the markets and of course the geo-strategical control of spheres of influence. The imperialists have no scruple for any bloody adventure in order to achieve their goals. They often even compete between themselves about who will take the bigger share, but they are all united when it comes to confront the popular protests and uprisings.

The recent developments in the Region of Latin America with the revival of the "Monroe Doctrine" and the increasing aggressiveness of imperialism speak for itself. The US are openly targeting Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela sharpening the ideological confrontation and applying more and more economical and political sanctions.

The attempted Coup in Venezuela last January with a self-proclaimed puppet of the US as 'interim president', does not only constitute a clear violation of every sense of International Law and the UN Founding Charter, it reminds us also of the darkest times of US imperialist interventions, dictatorships and military aggressions in Latin America. The reactionary forces of the local oligarchy tried to overthrow the legitimately elected President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in close cooperation with the USA, the European Union and reactionary governments of the "Lima Group" in order to take over the rich mineral resources of Venezuela, they did not hesitate to attack the vital electricity system of the country, while the US commander of the "Commando Sur" declares standby waiting for orders to start military operations. The WPC witnessed with its International Solidarity Mission few

weeks ago to Venezuela the coordinated actions of the local oligarchy with the imperialists from US and EU, the economic war and the blockade, aiming at strangling the Venezuelan people so that it will revolt against its government.

We express our full-hearted solidarity with the people of Venezuela and in particular with the anti-imperialist forces and our member organization COSI, in the struggle to defend the sovereignty of the country, their achievements and their right to determine alone and without foreign interference the destiny of the country and its natural resources. The region around Venezuela is full of Military Bases of the USA and of NATO. Apart from Colombia, where the US has US troops, there are the Dutch Antilles with Aruba and Curacao where the F16s of the US air Force are permanently coming and going. The 4<sup>th</sup> Fleet of the US Navy is omnipresent in the sub-continent. As WPC we denounce these aggressive plans against the peoples of the region.

Dear friends

Allow me here to refer to one of the most important hot-spots in the World, the Middle East, an area with huge number of US/NATO military bases, with thousands of foreign troops and of course with rich reserves of mineral resources. The imperialist plan for the “Greater Middle East” endorsed by NATO includes military invasions, occupation, violent regime change, border changes etc. The imperialists did not hesitate to create, train and fund fundamentalist mercenaries recruited from 80 countries for their purpose. Syria was and is in the epicenter of their plans. It is the same scheme as we have seen before in other cases. To create through military interventions and destruction chaos and misery, then to claim a humanitarian crisis and blame the victims so that the imperialists and their allies can come to “safe” the victims and take their energy resources for their multinationals. In the case of the Syrian people and its army significant victories were marked the recent period, but the country is still under partial occupation. In the Northwest of Syria by Turkish troops and in the North East by the US and NATO forces.

In the middle of the crisis we are witnessing the ongoing slow genocide of the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, whereas the settlements and land robbing continue along with the Judaization of Jerusalem and the deprivation of political rights for Non-jewish citizens in Israel.

As WPC we reiterate our full support to the struggle of the Palestinian people to end the occupation and for their right to establish an independent and viable State within the borders of pre 4<sup>th</sup> June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital. We call upon and struggle for the recognition of such State by governments and the UN and reject the imperialist maneuvers and hypocrisy towards Palestine by equating victims and aggressors.

Allow me here to refer for short to the situation in Greece in regards to my country's closest ever cooperation with the USA, NATO and Israel. The extension of the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement between Greece and USA, which was signed on October of 2017 by the two governments, paved the way for Greece to become an enormous US – NATO base. Not only upgrades all the existing bases and headquarters such as the group of facilities in Crete (including the air base, the naval base, the firing range) that plays a special role in all imperialist wars and interventions, but also creates new ones all over the Greece (with a base for helicopters, a new naval base and a base for drones) and discuss even the possibility of transferring nuclear weapons to an old US base. Greece currently is spending 2,4% of its GDP for military expenses guided by the NATO principles and is therefore is being congratulated by US president Trump. The cooperation with Israel has never been “better”, common cabinet meetings, common military exercises and exchanges on all levels, while the Greek government does not recognize the independent State of Palestine.

Dear friends

NATO, the biggest war machinery of history and armed wing of the US- and EU-imperialism, has marked its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2019 with a summit in Washington D.C. Based on our campaign “Yes to Peace-No to NATO” the WPC has organized its own Anti-NATO conference on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Washington together with the USPC, for the first time in our history on US soil. Likewise we supported and participated in the anti-NATO protest Rally on 30<sup>th</sup> March, organized by a broad coalition of US movements amongst which the USPC the and United Anti-War Coalition (UNAC) just few hundred meters away from the White House. It is very important to tell you that the WPC was invited and spoke in this historical rally. In our speech in Washington we reiterated and underlined amongst others the WPC position and demand of the closure of the US base of Guantanamo and the return of the territory to Cuba. The Rally was also dedicated to the solidarity with the people of Venezuela and against the imperialist threats towards it.

Dear Friends and Comrades

The people of Cuba and in particular the people here in Guantanamo are not only brave. They also represent the dignity of the Cuban people, the commitment to their Revolution and their determination not to give up till the final victory and the return of the sovereign territory to its owners, the Cuban people. Cuba serves since 60 years as source of inspiration for the peoples of Latin America, for the peoples of the world.

The WPC in its 70 years of history did never surrender to the theories of so-called “neutrality” when it came to the just cause of the peoples struggling for their right to become the masters in their land and decide over their wealth. The WPC stood always firm on the side of the Poor and the Oppressed, always guided by its desire to struggle for a world free from imperialist exploitation and wars, for a world of peace and social justice!

## U.S. AND NATO BUILDUP IN EASTERN EUROPE AND SCANDINAVIA

**By Colonel Ann Wright**

The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was held in Washington, DC April 3 and 4. Many organizations came to Washington to challenge the antagonistic approach to Russia that has made Europe another crisis area after more than 25 years of the Cold War having faded into history.

Over the last decade, the U.S. and NATO have been actively securing military bases in the Baltic, Scandinavian and Eastern European countries along the border of Russia.

In Estonia, there is a NATO battalion lead by the UK and composed of 800 troops from Denmark and France with 4 German Typhoon jets performing Baltic “Air Policing” missions.

In Latvia, there is a 1,200-person battalion led by Canada and composed of military personnel from Albania, Italy, Poland, Spain and Slovenia.



In Lithuania, a 1,200-person battalion is led by Germany with military personnel from Belgium, Croatia, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Norway with 4 Dutch F-16 jet performing Baltic “Air Policing” missions.

In Poland, there is a U.S. Aegis land-based missile system and a 4,000 U.S. lead battalion with heavy armor, including 250 tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Paladin howitzers.

In Romania, the U.S. has placed an Aegis land-based missile system, the first in Europe since the Cold War.

In the north of Europe in Scandinavia, NATO’s biggest military exercises since the end of the Cold War, named Trident Juncture 18, took place in Norway from October 25 to November 7, 2018 in what was a massive display of strength intended to intimidate Russia.

Around 50,000 troops from 31 countries -- NATO's 29-member states plus Sweden and Finland -- took part in the maneuvers organized in central Norway for the land exercises, in the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea for the maritime operations, and in Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish airspace.



That is about 10,000 more soldiers than in the Strong Resolve exercises in Poland in 2002, which brought together Alliance members and 11 partner states.

10,000 vehicles took part in the military exercises and when lined up end-to-end, the convoy would be 92 kilometers or 57 miles long. 250 aircraft and 60 ships took part, including the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman.

More than 20,000 land forces, as well as 24,000 navy personnel including US Marines, 3,500 air force personnel, around 1,000 logistics specialists and 1,300 personnel from a range of NATO Commands participated.

The top five contributing nations were the United States, Germany, Norway, Britain and Sweden, in that order.



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In 2017, despite strong protests from Russia, 330 US Marines deployed on rotation to the Norwegian training base at Væernes in the center of Norway. The US wants to increase the number of US military to 700 and station them further north at Setermoen, 420 kilometers from Russia. The US deployment agreement would also be extended from the current six-month renewable periods to five years.

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 is the rationale NATO used to increase US/NATO personnel in central and eastern Europe. The Russian government has repeatedly and strongly criticized the deployment of U.S. forces in Norway.

Since Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014, Poland has been an key element of the increased U.S. presence in Eastern Europe, including repeat deployments of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team to show the rapid mobilization U.S. and NATO forces could provide in the case of another incursion. In August the Air Force deployed five F-22 Raptors and 40 airmen to Poland to take part in joint exercises there.

The U.S. also announced last week that U.S. Army Europe was expanding its troop presence by adding 1,500 soldiers to its forces in Germany.

## NATO's military buildup in Eastern Europe



## Defence budgets are surging in the Baltic States

Total defence budget in Lithuania, Latvia & Estonia (in million U.S. dollars)



There are 33,000 U.S. troops in Germany and a total of 64,112 U.S. military in Europe.

The Polish defense ministry proposal lists the country's regions of Bydgoszcz and Toruń as possible locations for the hypothetical U.S. armored division. Additionally, NATO's Joint Force Training Center is already headquartered in Bydgoszcz.

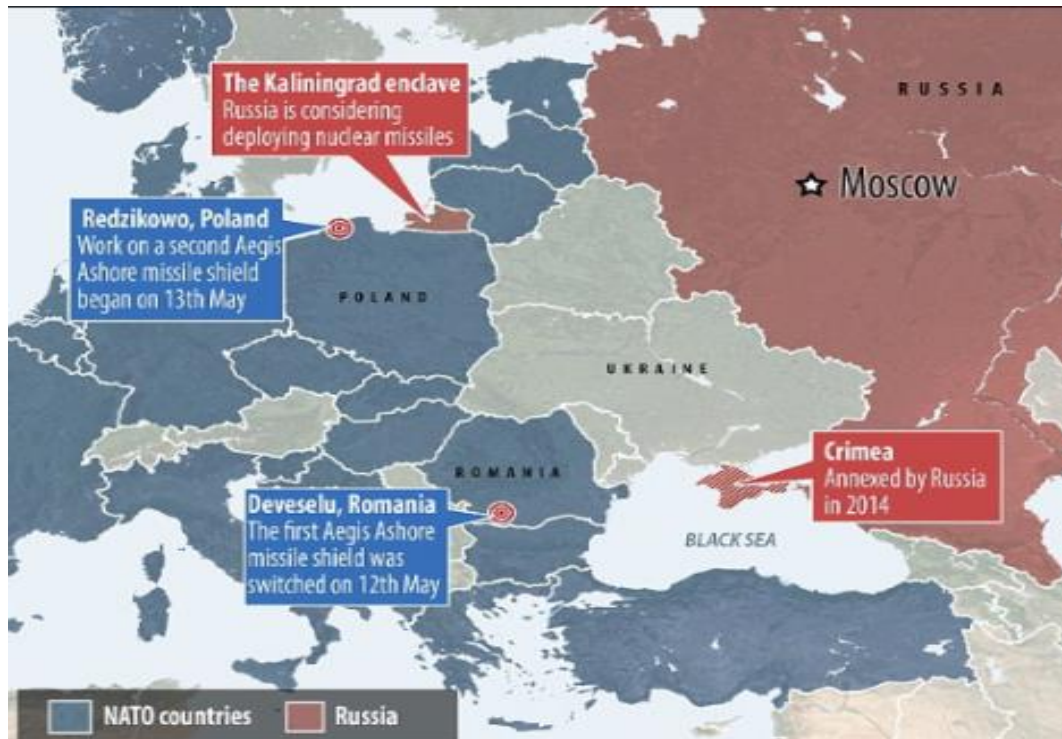
US military presence in Europe reached its peak in the fifties with more than 450,000 troops operating on more than 1,200 sites. After the end of the Cold War the US military presence in Europe rapidly decreased to 213,000 servicemen, and later in 1993 it decreased even further to 112,000 servicemen. Today there are 33,000 American troops permanently stationed across Europe. Military infrastructure and the US military in Europe (EUCOM) can be classified in sections.

### Military Infrastructure:

- **Main operating bases** are large installations able to accommodate relatively large number of permanently stationed troops with well-established infrastructure.
- **Forward-operating sites** are primarily used by rotating forces. These installations are capable for adaptation depending on the circumstances.
- **Cooperative security locations** usually have no permanently stationed troops and are maintained by contractor or host-nation support.

EUCOM is responsible for military operations, partnering, general security enhancement as part of United States forward defensive posture. EUCOM has five components: US Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR), US Army Europe (USAREUR), US Air Force in Europe (USAFE), US Marine Force Europe (MARFOREUR), US Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR).

- **US Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR)** provides overall command, control and coordination for all US maritime assets currently deployed in Europe
- **US Army Europe (USAREUR)** is located in Wiesbaden, Germany. At the peak of the Cold War the US Army had almost 300,000 troops deployed in Europe, today the core of USAREUR is formed by two brigade combat teams and an aviation brigade located in Germany and Italy.





["Number of Military and DoD Appropriated Fund \(APF\) Civilian Personnel Permanently Assigned By Duty Location and Service/Component \(as of December 31, 2018\)". Defense Manpower Data Center.](#) February 11, 2018.

Jurisdiction	Total	Army	Navy	USMC	USAF	USCG
 Germany	35,220	20,898	391	1,216	12,703	12
 Italy	12,991	4,067	4,031	436	4,455	2
 United Kingdom	9,119	306	204	16	8,570	23
 Spain	3,346	27	2,488	469	362	0
 Belgium	1,074	661	40	9	363	1
 Norway	619	27	5	549	37	1
 Netherlands	411	136	29	2	213	31
 Greece	410	9	378	1	22	0
 Portugal	230	3	45	1	181	0
 Hungary	205	5	141	0	59	0
 Poland	158	45	82	4	27	0
 Romania	111	5	90	4	12	0
other	218	91	31	23	70	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>64,112</b>	<b>26,280</b>	<b>7,955</b>	<b>2,730</b>	<b>27,074</b>	<b>73</b>

- **US Air Force in Europe (USAFE)** has eight main bases in Europe with approximately 39,000 active, reserve and civilian personnel. USAFE supports ongoing missions in Europe and was particularly active during the crisis in Libya.
- **US Marine Force Europe (MARFOREUR)** was formed in the eighties with less than 200 marines, today the command is set in Böblingen, Germany with approximately 1,500 marines assigned to support EUCOM and NATO missions. MARFOREUR was active in the Balkans, and has regular military exercises especially with the Norwegian forces.
- **US Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR)** provides peace time planning and operation control of special operation forces during unconventional warfare in EUCOMs area of responsibility. SOCEUR participated in various capacity-building missions and evacuation missions especially in Africa, it had an active role in the Balkans during the nineties and supported combat operations during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Beside French and British nuclear capabilities the US has also maintained a significant number of nuclear warheads across Europe. During the Cold War era US had more than 2,500 nuclear warheads in Europe, however after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union that number rapidly decreased. Today according to some unofficial estimates, the US has around 150 to 250 warheads deployed in Italy, Turkey, Germany, Netherlands and Belgium. It should be noted that most of these weapons are free fall gravity bombs delivered by aircrafts.

Though most of the nuclear weapons are in Western Europe total disarmament and removal of these warheads is highly unlikely, considering the situation in Ukraine and in the Middle East. There are two types of bases currently used to hold nuclear weapons in Europe: Nuclear Air Bases and Air Bases with Nuclear vaults in caretaker status.

Nuclear Air Bases are Lakenheath (UK), Volkel (Netherlands), KleineBroggelle (Belgium), Buchel (Germany), Ramstein (Germany), Ghadei Torre (Italy), Aviano (Italy) and Incirlik(Turkey).

Air Bases with Nuclear vaults in caretaker status are in Norvenich (Germany), Araxos (Greece), Balikesir (Turkey), Akinci (Turkey). Germany has the most U.S. nuclear weapons with the potential storage of more than 150 bombs. All these weapons can be moved and shifted to other bases or other countries if desired.

- U.S. Bases located in the United Kingdom

- Menwith Hill Air Base
- Mildenhall Air Base
- Alcon Bury Air Base
- Croughton Air Base
- Fairford Air Base

- U.S. Bases located in Germany

- USAG Hohenfels
- USAG Weisbaden
- USAG Hessen
- USAG Schweinfurt
- USAG Bamberg
- USAG Grafenwoehr
- USAG Ansbach
- USAG Darmstadt
- USAG Heidelberg
- USAG Stuttgart
- USAG Kaiserslautern
- USAG Baumholder

- Spangdahlem Air Base
- Ramstein Air Base
- Panzer Kaserne (U.S. Marine base)

- U.S. Bases located in Belgium

- USAG Benelux
- USAG Brussels

- U.S. Bases located in Netherlands

- USAG Schinnen
- Joint Force Command

- U.S. Bases located in Italy

- Aviano Air Base
- Caserma Ederle
- Camp Darby
- NSA La Maddalena
- NSA Gaeta
- NSA Naples
- NSA Sigonella

- Bases located in Serbia/Kosovo

- Camp Bondsteel

- U.S. Bases located in Bulgaria
  - Graf Ignatievo Air Base
  - Bezmer Air Base
  - Aitos Logistics Center
  - Novo Selo Range
- U.S. Bases located in Greece
  - NSA Souda Bay
- U.S. Bases located in Turkey
  - Izmir Air Base
  - Incirlik Air Base

Conclusion:

Tragically, the Russian annexation of Crimea has given war-hawks in both the U.S. and NATO the rationale they feel they need to dramatically increase the number and strength of aggressive military exercises in Scandinavia and the Baltic countries.

Additionally, the confrontation of U.S. and Russian military and foreign policies in Syria and in Venezuela have been the justification of an increase in the U.S. military budget, while the Russian government has a budget of only one-tenth of the U.S. budget and is very small when compared to the combined military budgets of all 29-NATO countries.

