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The Obama Administration Has Just Recklessly Escalated Its Military Confrontation With Russia

The Pentagon's announcement that it will quadruple US-NATO military forces in countries on or near Russia's borders pushes the new Cold War toward actual war, possibly even a nuclear one.

By Stephen F. Cohen
February 3, 2016

Nation contributing editor Stephen F. Cohen and John Batchelor continue their weekly discussions of the new US-Russian Cold war. This installment focuses on the Pentagon's announcement that it will quickly quadruple the positioning of US-NATO heavy military weapons and troops near Russia's eastern borders. The result, Cohen argues, will further militarize the new Cold War, making it more confrontational and likely to lead to actual war with Russia.

The move is unprecedented in modern times. Except during Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, Western military power has never been positioned so close to Russia, making the new Cold War even more dangerous than was the preceding one. Russia will certainly react, probably by moving more of its own heavy weapons, including new missiles, to its Western borders, possibly along with a large number of its tactical nuclear weapons. The latter reminds us, Cohen points out, that a new and more dangerous US-Russian nuclear arms race has been

under way for several years, which the Obama Administration's decision can only intensify. The decision will also have other woeful consequences, undermining ongoing negotiations by Secretary of State Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov for cooperation on the Ukrainian and Syrian crises and further dividing Europe itself, which is far from united on Washington's increasingly hawkish approach to Moscow.

Cohen ends by expressing despair that these ongoing developments have been barely reported in the US media and publicly debated not at all, not even by current presidential candidates and the moderators of their "debates." Never before has such a dire international situation been so ignored in an American presidential campaign. The reason may be, Cohen adds, that everything that has happened since the Ukrainian crisis erupted in November 2013 has been blamed solely on the "aggression" of Russian President Putin—a highly questionable assertion and media-policy narrative.