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Atlantic Council proposes to develop Poland as a stronghold for war with Russia

By Clara Weiss
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On July 19, the Atlantic Council, an American think tank, published a 25-page strategy paper titled “Arming for Deterrence” calling for a massive NATO military build-up against Russia. Poland in particular is to be made into a stronghold for a war with Russia.

The paper is a kind of postscript to the [NATO summit](#) held in Warsaw in July. It calls for measures that go even further than the summit resolutions.

The authors of the paper, General Sir Richard Shirreff, a former high-ranking NATO General, and Maciej Oleks-Szczytowski, a Polish banker, describe Russia as “the most serious geopolitical and military threat to NATO.”

They claim Russia has the military capability to rapidly attack the Baltic states and Poland with the Russian army’s Baltic fleet reputedly in a position to cut communications and connecting routes between the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, Poland and other NATO countries. At the same time they argue that NATO is insufficiently prepared for war when it comes to command structures and military equipment.

While Russia does not appear willing to attack NATO for the moment, this could change unexpectedly should a crisis break out in Russia itself or—as a reaction to US foreign policy—in another part of the world, they say.

Although the authors claim the danger comes from Russia, their arguments show that in reality it is they who advocate a war of aggression against Russia, whose defence capabilities would be disabled as quickly as possible with the help of Poland and the Baltic states.

At least half of the paper consists of concrete proposals for a fast and comprehensive armament of Poland that already plays a leading role in war preparations against Russia. Poland's Civic Platform (PO) government raised the military budget to 2 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2014. The current right-wing nationalist government of the Law and Justice Party (PiS) has since raised it to 3 percent of GDP (around 14.2 billion US dollars).

The Atlantic Council supports this course, but calls for it to be implemented more rapidly and resolutely, and for greater participation from the private defence sector. In addition to concrete measures regarding the modernization of the Polish army and the acquisition of fighter jets and other military technologies, the authors propose a number of steps for the Polish government that can only be seen as active preparations for a war.

They include:

- A declaration by the Polish government stating that it will come to the aid of the Baltic states and Romania in the event of a Russian attack;
- The publication of a list of potential targets for military strikes by Poland, especially Kaliningrad;
- That the Polish government reserves the right to attack targets in Kaliningrad and other areas with conventional weapons should Moscow threaten nuclear war;
- The nuclear armament of Poland, in particular its F-16 fighter jets;
- A declaration by Poland that it will attack targets deep inside Russia with cruise missiles and rockets should it be attacked itself;
- A declaration by Poland that it will launch cyber-attacks against Russia, with targets including the Moscow subway system, the St. Petersburg power supply and the broadcaster RT;
- A declaration by Poland that in the event of a Russian attack, it will send special forces into Russian territory to assist NATO and destroy missile defence systems;
- That Poland "demonstrate its ability" to deploy its military and quickly send troops into the Baltics and Romania.

The authors also call for a "credible" joint defence plan under the leadership of NATO headquarters and for the unification of Polish armed forces with those of the Baltic states and other willing NATO forces. While this has implications for national sovereignty, they write, "Political issues aside, Poland is well-placed, by virtue of the size of its armed forces, to act as lead nation for a 'Baltic' division under command of NATO's Multinational Corps Northeast."

Poland itself should expand its regular armed forces and increase its active troop strength from the current 100,000 troops to 150,000. To this end, the Polish government should prevent many Polish citizens capable of military service from migrating to other EU countries.

At the same time, the paramilitary units under state control should be expanded, a policy that the PiS government has already made a key component of its efforts to build up the military in recent months.

The authors of the paper hope that the strength of these units will be increased from the current 35,000 to as much as 90,000. According to the authors, in order to raise these numbers, the government can draw on the roughly 400,000 men now active in various paramilitary organizations.

The authors fail to mention that these paramilitary organizations are made up of militant right-wing nationalists. Significantly, however, they name the “Forest Brothers” as an example to follow.

The Forest Brothers were right-wing partisans in the Baltics who collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War. After the war, they waged a guerrilla war against the Soviet Union with the support of Western intelligence services until the mid-1950s.

The authors are clear that not all NATO members will support their proposals. Without naming names, they repeatedly warn of insufficient agreement within the alliance. In the past, the German government in particular has been against permanently stationing NATO troops in Eastern Europe. France and Italy also criticize the aggressive position toward Russia and advocate the easing of Western sanctions.

The Atlantic Council paper calls on Poland to take a stand within the EU against plans for a common European army. It does not elaborate on this point, but its meaning is clear: Within the EU, Poland should take a more offensive position than Berlin, which calls for an EU army and, following a Brexit (British exit), work to push the EU in the direction of developing a military union. The authors of the Atlantic Council, however, insist that an EU army would weaken NATO, especially if Britain were no longer part of the EU.

Notably, both authors of the paper maintain close ties to the weapons industry and the military.

Shirreff was, until 2014, a high-ranking NATO general. This year he published the book *2017: War with Russia*, which predicts imminent war with the world’s second-largest nuclear-armed power. Furthermore, he recently founded the consulting firm Strategia Worldwide Ltd., which employs numerous ex-military officers who until recently occupied high-ranking posts in the British military and NATO. Among them is Rob Weighill, who boasts on the firm’s website that in 2011, he planned the attack of NATO forces against Libya.

More than anyone else, Olex-Szczytowski embodies the close connection between finance capital and militarism in Poland. Since the late 1970s, he was active in important international banks. From 1983 to 1986, he was a member of the Polish government-in-exile in London, which based itself on the Polish constitution of 1935 that legitimized the dictatorial regime of General Józef Piłsudski.

In the 1990s, he played an important role in mass privatizations and the Polish government's business with Western banks. In the 2000s, he led the Military Property Agency and in 2012-14 was an economic advisor to then Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski.