

Trump and Polish President Duda agree on stationing 1,000 US troops in Poland

By Clara Weiss
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On Wednesday, US president Donald Trump and Polish president Andrzej Duda signed an agreement to station 1,000 US troops in Poland.

The meeting and the signed agreements marked a significant escalation of the US- and NATO-led military buildup against Russia.

In a calculated show of military might, a Marine Corps F-35 stealth fighter conducted a flyover of the White House while Duda stood on the White House lawn with Trump and their respective “first ladies.” While not entirely unprecedented, an Air Force spokesman said that the last such White House flyover had taken place in 1949.

During the meeting, Trump praised the Polish president, who is a member of the extreme right-wing Law and Justice Party (PiS), and dismissed moderately phrased questions about the undermining of democracy in Poland by the present government. In recent years, the PiS government, with the full backing of US imperialism, has enacted massive assaults on basic democratic rights. PiS has also spearheaded a campaign of xenophobia and anti-Semitism. This has been accompanied by wholesale right-wing historical falsifications, culminating in a ban on the mentioning of crimes by Polish anti-Semites against Jews during the Holocaust and a state-led vendetta against and persecution of leading Holocaust historians.

Trump and Duda signed a major declaration of military co-operation and two memoranda of understanding. Trump commented on the declaration of military cooperation, saying that, “As the declaration makes very clear, the United States and Poland are not only bound by a strategic partnership but deep common values, shared goals and a very strong and abiding friendship.”

The declaration provides for the stationing of 1,000

US troops in Poland, as well as a squadron of MQ-9 Reaper drones. This is in addition to almost 5,000 US troops that are already stationed there, on a rotational basis. The Polish government, which recently dismissed demands by over 300,000 striking Polish teachers for higher wages by arguing that there was “no money,” obliged itself to pay for all the infrastructure necessary to house the additional troops.

Poland is also taking steps toward purchasing several F-35 fighter jets, the products of the most expensive military program in history, and worth roughly \$100 million dollars apiece. The Polish government, which purchased a US patriot missile defense system worth \$4.7 billion in 2018, is planning to raise military spending to 2.5 percent of GDP by 2030.

The US has not yet agreed to the permanent stationing of US troops in Poland, which had been proposed by Polish president Duda last year, and would constitute an open and direct threat and provocation against Russia. However, Trump expressed himself favorably on the proposed “Fort Trump,” calling it a “world class base” which “would be a statement.”

NATO general secretary Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the stationing of additional US troops in Poland, tweeting: “I welcome today’s announcement that the United States will increase its military presence in Poland. This shows the strong commitment of the US to European security & the strength of the transatlantic bond.”

The Kremlin stated that the Russian military was closely following the US buildup in Poland. The spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Peskov, said that the Russian military was “doing what is necessary so that such steps in no way threaten the Russian Federation’s security.”

Indicating the significance that the White House

attaches to its strategic alliance with the right-wing Polish government, Duda's visit to Washington Wednesday was his second since Trump took office. In recent years, Poland has become an ever more significant ally of US imperialism in the war preparations against Russia and the conflict with Germany and the EU.

In a speech in Warsaw in June 2017, Trump endorsed the right-wing policies of the Polish government and praised the latter as an important ally against both Russia and Germany. Trump also made explicit US imperialism's support for the resurrection of the so-called Intermarium strategy of the inter-war period, which provides for the alliance of various far-right and fascist regimes in East and Central Europe to fight both Russia and Germany. Earlier this year, the PiS government hosted a war summit, which was attended by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and was directly aimed at preparing for war against Iran.

The close alliance between US imperialism and Poland in the war preparations against Russia and other foreign policy matters is a significant factor in the growing tensions between the US and the EU, and between American and German imperialism in particular. During the press conference after the meeting, Trump lashed out several times at Germany.

Trump criticized Berlin for not spending enough on its military. Asked about the Russian-German pipeline Nord Stream 2, which is now being constructed in spite of a year-long protest by Washington, as well as Poland and Ukraine, Trump described it as a "major blunder" on the part of Berlin, making Germany dependent on Russian gas. He stressed that Poland would have the necessary infrastructure for energy deliveries and that Poland was "our big friend." Trump said that his administration was "looking at" possible sanctions against Germany for Nord Stream 2.

He said: "We're protecting Germany from Russia and Russia is getting billions and billions of dollars from Germany." He added that Nord Stream 2 "really makes Germany a hostage of Russia if things ever happen that were bad," that is, in case of war.

One of the memoranda of agreement signed on Wednesday between Poland and the US provides for the Polish purchase of 2 billion cubic meters of LNG (liquid natural gas) from the US for \$8 billion. In the growing conflict over European energy supplies and

influence on the gas market, LNG has become a major weapon, especially in the hands of the US, to weaken the influence of Russian gas in Europe and Asia.

The conservative Polish newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* greeted the outcome of the meeting as a sign that Poland was "overtaking Russia." In another commentary, entitled "Into infinity together with America," the newspaper noted that the danger of war in Europe had become acute since the "Russian aggression in Ukraine" in 2014, and that the "security of Poland depends precisely on the United States." The European Union, and especially Germany, the newspaper argued, were not reliable military allies for Poland and had "false conceptions about Russia."

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