

Poking the Bear: Obama Sending US Troops to Confront Russia

Whether Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his government to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election remains up for debate, but his aspirations of reunifying all of the former Soviet territories into a grand Russian empire is not.

While past “aggression” by Russia has focused on Ukraine, Georgia and the Black Sea region, NATO members have been equally concerned about Putin’s goals as they pertain to the Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—as well as Belarus and Poland. This situation is particularly dangerous because Russia retains control of the Kaliningrad region, sandwiched between Lithuania and Poland along the Baltic Sea.

According to a report published Wednesday by *The Sun* newspaper in the United Kingdom, Putin has placed nuclear-capable missiles in the Kaliningrad region. In response, NATO is mobilizing units in Poland, and the U.S. is sending Special Forces operatives to the Lithuanian border with Kaliningrad.

The report states:

Lithuanian Defense Ministry spokeswoman Asta Galdikaite confirmed America has offered additional military support following Russia invasion of Crimea.

She said: “The United States was the first to offer additional safety assurance measures to the Baltic countries following the deterioration of the security situation in the region after the annexation of the Crimea.”

She added: “U.S. Special Operations Forces’ presence in

Lithuania is one of the deterrents” against military threats by Putin’s aggressive regime. ...

U.S. military chief, Gen. Raymond T. Thomas, revealed that America has a “persistent’ presence in the Baltic states bordering Russia.

He added that many former Eastern Bloc countries are “scared to death” of Russia and that the vulnerable states are “desperate” for America’s leadership.

The U.S. and its NATO allies will send battalions of up to 1,200 to each of the three Baltic states—Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia—and Poland by spring this year.

Observers have been concerned that President Barack Obama is “poisoning the well” for President-elect Donald Trump. This new development, while unlikely tied to any political games by the White House, highlights the difficult and dangerous situation the new administration will inherit in a little more than two weeks. {eo}