Asia-Pacific Research

# Trump's Pentagon and State Department Nominees Threaten to Wage War on Russia and China

## Disturbing Tillerson and Mattis Rhetoric

By Stephen Lendman

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*In his confirmation hearing, secretary of state designee Rex Tillerson provocatively told Senate Foreign Relations Committee members "(w)e are going to have to send China a clear signal that, first, the island-building stops and second, your access to those islands also is not going to be allowed."*

He accused China of "declaring control of territories ...not rightfully" its own. He called Russia "danger(ous)," saying "(o)ur allies are right to be alarmed at a resurgent Russia."

Asked if he thinks Putin is a war criminal, he said "(t)hose are very very serious charges to make, and I would want to have much more information before reaching a conclusion."

Commenting on NATO, he called its mandate to defend alliance members if attacked "inviolable." He urged "open and frank dialogue" with Russia on issues of mutual concern. He stopped short of indicating what US foreign policy will be under Trump.

Secretary of Defense designee James ("mad dog") Mattis told Senate Armed Services Committee members that Beijing's activities in the South China Sea threaten the global order. "The bottom line is that international waters are international waters, and we have got to figure out how do we deal with holding on to the kind of rules that we have made over many years that led to the prosperity for many nations, not just for ours," he said, adding:

> I think (the world order)is under the biggest attack since world war two...and that is from Russia, from terrorist groups, and with what China is doing in the South China Sea.

Blocking Chinese access to its own territory, along with its right to develop it and operate there as it wishes is a prescription for direct confrontation – disturbing talk hopefully Trump won't tolerate.

China's reaction was muted in light of Obama's tenure near ending, Trump's yet to begin, waiting to assess his geopolitical agenda once it becomes apparent.

Beijing's ambassador to America Cui Tiankai said his government looks forward to "more robust, stable and fruitful" ties with Washington. "I hope both sides will work together for...mutual respect and cooperation for win-win Sino-US relations. I also hope all people can work for it constructively."

Hopefully Trump will abandon irresponsible claims about “Russia aggression.” None exists – not now or earlier. Accusations otherwise are Big Lies.

Washington has no right to meddle in a part of the world not its own. China’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying earlier said America should avoid “risky and provocative approaches to maintain regional peace and stability.”

She stressed China will defend its territorial sovereignty if threatened. Unauthorized intrusions will be challenged.

On January 13, China’s state-owned Global Times said “(u)nless Washington plans to wage a large-scale war in the South China Sea, any other approaches to prevent Chinese access to the islands will be foolish.”

> The US has no absolute power to dominate the South China Sea. Tillerson (and Mattis) had better bone up on nuclear power strategies if (they want) to force a big nuclear power to withdraw from its own territories.

Trump is under enormous pressure to maintain adversarial relations with Russia along with advancing Obama’s Asia pivot confrontationally with China.

World peace depends on him going another way. Is he strong-willed enough to do it? We’ll begin learning his geopolitical policies once they begin to unfold.

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