

What does NATO want in the Pacific?

by Colonel (Ret) Ann Wright,* Hawaii



Ann Wright. (Picture wikipedia/Thomas Altfather Good)

As the United States increases its military confrontation with China through new military bases on Guam and the Philippines and more land, sea and air exercises with countries in the Asia-Pacific, the world's largest naval war exercises are going to be held in the mid-Pacific from June 26 to August 2, 2024-and NATO is in the middle of it.

29 countries are participating in the 2024 *Rim of the Pacific* (RIMPAC) naval war practice that will bring 40 ships, 3 submarines, over 150 aircraft, 14 national land forces and 25,000 personnel to the island of Oahu and the waters off Hawaii.

One-third are not from the region but are from NATO-Europe

Incredibly, one-third of the countries bringing ships, submarines and aircraft to the middle of the Pacific are not from Asia and the Pacific, but are from Europe – all members of the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO).

European NATO members *Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands* and the *United Kingdom* are joining the *United States* and *Canada* as the full NATO members in RIMPAC.

Along with the full members of NATO, five countries in the Pacific are NATO “partners” – *Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea* and *Colombia*. Each will be participating with ships, aircraft and personnel in RIMPAC.

Israel participates, despite genocide – which is perfectly acceptable to the U.S.

Because it tested US and NATO countries' weapons on Palestinians in Gaza and the West

Bank, Israel has been given special status by NATO and keeps an office in NATO headquarters. The U.S. has continued its invitation to Israel to have a ship and personnel in Hawaii in RIMPAC despite the continuing Israeli genocide of Gaza with over 36,000 Palestinians killed, thousands dead in the rubble of destroyed buildings and over 100,000 injured.

Israeli impunity in its war on Palestinians is a harmful influence on militaries participating in RIMPAC and U.S. complicity in the genocide sends a signal to other countries that violation of international laws and norms is perfectly acceptable in the U.S. “rules-based dis-order”.

Other countries sending ships, aircraft and military personnel to RIMPAC are *Brazil, Brunei, Chile, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, the Republic of the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand* and *Tonga*.

NATO countries send ships on «Freedom of the Seas» navigation operations

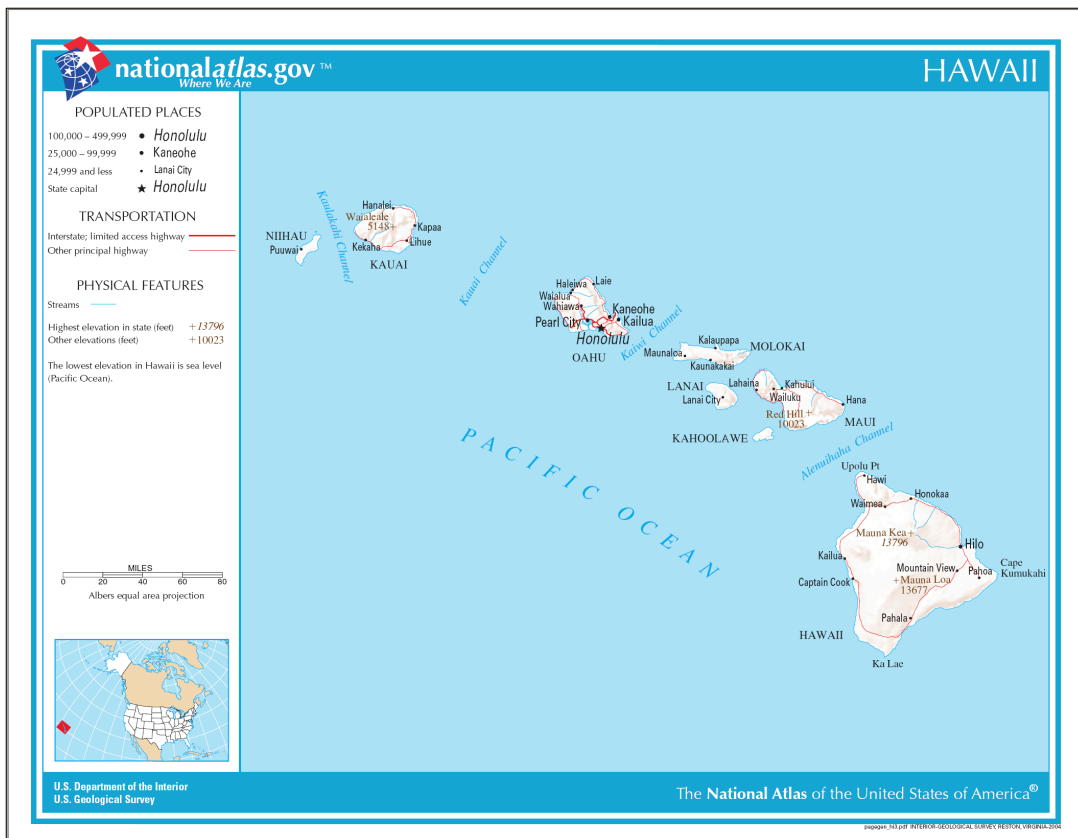
Over the past two years, NATO countries have sent ships to the Western Pacific in tandem with the U.S. *Freedom of the Seas navigation operations* in the South China Sea. In 2021, the British *HMS Queen Elizabeth* aircraft carrier strike group and an American surface action group had exercises in the South China Sea. Britain's Ministry of Defense described the strike group as the largest concentration of maritime and air power to *leave the UK in a generation*.¹

In May 2024, *Germany sent two warships*² to the Indo-Pacific on freedom of navigation and free passage missions as tensions were raised with China over the status of Taiwan and disputed South China Sea islands.

RIMPAC destroys on the land as well as the sea

RIMPAC war exercises harm marine life in the Hawaiian waters. Whales, dolphins and fish are harmed by the ships and their weapons. Ships are sunk by bombs, missiles and torpedoes. On-shore animals are killed during military beach assault landings. Pohakuloa Training Area on Hawaii Island, the largest U.S. military training

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area in the Pacific, is bombed by aircraft some of which fly thousands of miles to drop their bombs, artillery shelling, and troop training. Human rights advocates are very concerned about human trafficking with military troops in tourist areas in Hawaii when thousands of military arrive from around the world for RIMPAC.

Protests against militarisation and contamination of the Pacific

Citizens in most of the countries in the Pacific challenge the need for the hugely expensive and destructive RIMPAC war practice. Webinars, social media, conferences/town hall meetings³ and protests are held from San Diego, California in the eastern Pacific, through Hawaii and Guam to the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

In Hawaii, thousands of residents of Oahu are still dealing with the 2021 effects of fuel pollution from the giant underground Red Hill fuel tanks that *leaked 19,000 gallons of toxic fuel*⁴ into the drinking water and the 2014 leak of 27,000 gallons of fuel. Several lawsuits against the U.S. military for the long-term damage to the health of those who ingested the contaminated water are in federal courts with the *military arguing that the contamination did NOT cause widespread harm*⁵ as military family members

were hospitalized for severe reactions to the fuel-laced drinking water.

Additionally, residents of Hawaii are *demanding the return of 29,000 acres*⁶ of state land that was leased to the U.S. military 65 years ago for ... \$1!!! The lease of these areas on Oahu and Big Island ends in 2029.

Communities around U.S. military bases all over the Pacific are finding that their water sources have been contaminated by the U.S. military use of fire-fighting foam that contains PFAS, the “forever chemical.” Bases on *Okinawa, Japan*⁷ and South Korea where the U.S. has had military bases since World War II and the Korean War have found high levels of contamination from PFAS.

Why not diplomacy instead of military confrontation?

Instead of using diplomacy to resolve security and economic issues, RIMPAC is one of hundreds of U.S.-sponsored military war exercises that fuel dangerous confrontations in Asia and the Pacific.

It’s time for U.S. citizens to demand that elected officials/politicians use nonviolent methods to resolve conflicts – but we know we face great opposition to nonviolence from the manufacturers of violence, the weapons manufacturers

who fuel the campaign coffers of politicians. Until we elect those who stand for peaceful resolution of issues instead of using war, we will continue to face an ever increasingly dangerous world.

Source: <https://www.codepink.org/natopacific>, 4 June 2024

- ¹ <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/07/30/asia/south-china-sea-military-activity-hms-queen-elizabeth-intl-hnk-ml/index.html>
- ² <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/germany-sends-two-warships-indo-pacific-amid-china-taiwan-tensions-2024-05-07/>
- ³ <https://www.instagram.com/ykreboren/reel/C7ZHTsBRNmri/> und <https://airtable.com/app00xWxJitoKQ1lr/pagThK7QyTxd4VsZN/form>
- ⁴ <https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/local-news/navy-red-hill-fuel-timeline>
- ⁵ https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2024-04-29/redhill-trial-civil-suit-13702676.html
- ⁶ <https://www.civilbeat.org/2024/04/the-days-of-the-army-leasing-land-in-hawaii-for-1-are-likely-over-but-whats-next/>

KNO TO NATO: YES TO PEACE conference July 6-7, 2024, Washington, DC

The No to NATO: Yes to Peace coalition⁸ will be in Washington, DC July 5–11, 2024 as a counterweight to the 75th Anniversary celebrations of the founding of NATO in Washington, DC. The heads of state of the 32 NATO member states and “partner” and “wanna-be” states will convene at the Washington Convention Center July 9–11.



Preceding the arrival of the heads of state, “No to NATO: YES to Peace” will hold a one-day conference on July 6 with *speakers from around the world*.⁹ July 7 will be a rally at Lafayette Square in front of the White House. July 9–11 concerned citizens will be at the Washington Convention Center.

- ⁷ <https://www.militarypoisons.org/latest-news/us-military-contaminates-okinawa-with-pfas>
- ⁸ <https://www.codepink.org/nonatosummit>
- ⁹ <https://nonatoyespeace.org/agenda/>