

Canada quick to try to cash in on its leading role in war on Libya

Laurent Lafrance
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Recently published documents reveal that Canada was plotting an all-out commercial offensive in Libya even before the end of the 2011 war, hoping to cash in on its prominent role in the U.S.-led aggression against the oil-rich North African country.

This revelation underscores the cynical and hypocritical character of the Canadian Armed Forces' participation in the war, which was supported and dressed up as a "humanitarian" intervention by the Conservative government and all the parties in Canada's parliament including the social-democratic NDP, the pro-Quebec independence Bloc Quebecois, and the Green Party.

According to documents obtained by Postmedia News, a plan to support Canadian companies interested in doing business in Libya was approved by cabinet on Sept. 7, 2011. By that time— thanks to a bombing campaign, covert operations, and arms and logistical support from the U.S., France, Britain, Canada and other NATO powers—the imperialist-sponsored National Transitional Council of Libya had taken control of the capital of Tripoli. Nevertheless, forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi still controlled much of the country.

The documents, which were prepared for Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird before a trip to Libya in Oct. 2011, state that, "Canadians will want to see a return on our engagement and investment." The documents argue "aggressive international competition" makes "early engagement with the new Libyan leadership on commercial matters...of interest to both countries," while adding that, "a new Libya presents numerous business opportunities for new investments in different sectors of the economy."

This information confirms the analysis made by the *World Socialist Web Site* at the beginning of the Libyan war. "Canada's participation in the military attack on Libya, alongside US imperialism and the region's old dominant colonial powers, France and Great Britain, has

nothing to do with aiding the Libyan people," declared the WSWWS in an article published March 22, 2011. "Rather it is aimed at securing control over the country's oil resources and reasserting the hegemony of the US and its allies over a region that has been convulsed by popular uprisings against a reactionary and autocratic US-imposed social and political order." (See: "Canada joins imperialist assault on Libya")

Baird was told that his visit to Tripoli would "cement Canada's role as a key player in Libya going forward based on our role over the past seven months."

"It would reinforce our position among a small group of NATO allies and regional actors that led the Operation Unified Protector," add the Conservative cabinet briefing notes.

"A ministerial visit would reinforce in the minds of the Libyans that Canada is among this elite group of New Libya supporters and sets the foundation for the active promotion of Canadian interests going forward."

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) did indeed play a significant role in the assault on Libya. By the end of May 2011, the seven CF-18 fighter jets that Canada had deployed to the Libyan theatre had flown 324 attack missions and dropped 240 laser-guided bombs. Only the US, French, and British militaries mounted more air sorties over, and bombing raids on, Libya.

Several weeks before parliament unanimously declared its support for the CAF's deployment to Libya, the Conservatives had dispatched a naval frigate to patrol off of Tripoli and Canadian Special Operations Forces had been deployed inside Libya. When NATO took charge of the air war against Libya, a Canadian general, Lieutenant-General Charles Bouchard, was given responsibility for directing the campaign to overthrow the regime of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and replace it with one even more subservient to western interests.

While the cabinet documents show that the

Conservative government was eager to seek out new opportunities for Canadian business in the “new Libya,” they also reveal that it was intent on getting the new Libyan authorities to honour existing contracts between the government and Canadian firms. They also wanted to ensure that the dozen or so Canadian companies active in Libya when the war erupted were paid for any work they had done. These companies included Montreal-based engineering firm SNC Lavalin, Petro-Tech, Canadian Petroleum Processing Equipment, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Pure Technologies, Air Richelieu and Calgary-based energy giant Suncor.

Like its Liberal predecessor, the Harper Conservative was more than willing to do business with Gaddafi once his regime had renounced its anti-imperialist pretensions, reopened the country’s oil industry to foreign investment, and agreed to cooperate with the CIA.

But after US-backed authoritarian regimes were toppled by revolutions in Libya’s eastern and north-western neighbours, respectively Egypt and Tunisia, the western powers, including Canada, rediscovered that Gaddafi was an oppressive dictator, so as to provide a smokescreen for the installation of an even more subservient government in Tripoli. Of course this did not stop them from continuing to sustain in power a string of autocratic regimes in North Africa and the Middle East, from Morocco to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, while supporting Israel in its dispossession and repression of the Palestinian people.

Canada’s participation in the imperialist attack on Libya was the outcome of a major shift in the Canadian elite’s foreign and geo-political posture that began in the 1990s and has accelerated in this century, involving the CAF’s repeated deployment in imperialist interventions and a massive rearmament campaign. In 2011, Canada was fighting wars in Libya and Afghanistan and in real, inflation-adjusted, dollars spending more on its military than any time since the Cold War. Under successive Liberal and Conservative governments, Canada has participated in numerous US-led wars and imperialist interventions over the past two decades including the first Gulf War, Somalia, Afghanistan, and the 2004 ousting of Haiti’s elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Today, more than eleven years after Canadian troops were first deployed to Afghanistan, a thousand-strong CAF force remains in the country providing training to the army of the corrupt, US-installed regime of Hamid Karzai.

And in the name of the “war on terror,” the CAF is now

participating in the French imperialist intervention in Mali, an intervention that Paris and Ottawa justify on the grounds that they need to suppress Islamist forces—forces that they previously armed and supported as part of their efforts to overthrow the Gaddafi regimes.

Much of the Canadian population is opposed to the country’s participation in imperialist war. If the Canadian bourgeoisie is able to continue sending its army to pillage semi-colonial countries overseas while implementing savage austerity policies measures at home, it is because the trade unions and the NDP work to defuse, dissipate and smother the resistance of the working class.

While the NDP postures on occasion as an anti-war party, it has lent support to all of the Canada’s military interventions over the past two decades. (See: “Canada: How the NDP facilitates imperialist war”) In June 2011, in one of its first acts upon becoming the Official Opposition, the NDP voted in favor of a government motion extending and expanding Canada’s leading role in the NATO war on Libya. In an act of duplicity that raised eyebrows even among the press corps, the NDP justified this vote by claiming that it had secured “concessions” from the Harper government that reaffirmed that the CAF was deployed in a “humanitarian” mission, not a war for regime change.

The supposedly left, pro-Quebec independence Québec Solidaire played a similar role. In March 2011, its then lone member of the Quebec National Assembly and co-party leader, Amir Khadir, publicly supported Canada’s participation in the war on Libya. Khadir, who in the past had denounced the US invasion of Iraq, said that, “if the West truly wants to help, that will require some risks.” He then went on to give his support to the National Transitional Council of Libya, an imperialist-created body comprised of defectors from the Gaddafi regime, Islamists, and CIA “assets,” and justified his support for the war the western powers were waging on Libya on the grounds it had the Council’s support.



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