

Canada joins NATO build-up against Russia

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Canada is deploying six CF-18 fighter jets to Eastern Europe in support of the war threats against Russia made by the US, Germany and NATO, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced Thursday.

Harper also said that Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) will strengthen their participation in NATO's command structure by sending a score of additional CAF officers to work at NATO's European headquarters in Mons, Belgium.

And he suggested that further CAF deployments may be announced in the near future and additional sanctions imposed on Russian businesses and officials in coordination with the US and the European Union.

Harper and his Conservative government, to enthusiastic applause from the opposition parties and Canada's corporate media, have been making bellicose anti-Russian statements for weeks.

Turning reality on its head, they have lauded the US- and German-instigated, fascist-spearheaded coup that overthrew Ukraine's elected president as a "democratic revolution," and they have accused Russia of "aggression" and "imperialism," when it is the western powers that have aggressively intervened in the Ukraine to install a pro-western client regime, knowing full that the Ukraine's subordination to US and German imperialism constitutes an existential threat to Russia.

The CAF fighters, pilots and support staff will be based in Lask, Poland. They will participate in the stepped-up NATO patrols over the Baltic Sea and Eastern Europe that were a key element in the expanded NATO presence in Eastern Europe announced Wednesday by NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

Dressed up as a "reassurance package" for the states bordering Russia that have been incorporated into NATO over the past two decades, the NATO deployment to Eastern Europe is an act of aggression, meant to shore up the coup-installed ultra-rightwing

government in Kyiv and threaten and prepare for war with Russia.

Flanked by CAF head General Tom Lawson, Harper indicated the deployment is open ended and is only the first salvo in a major shift in Canada's military-strategic posture

Russian "expansionism" and "militarism" are, claimed Harper, "a long-term, serious threat to global peace and security."

Media reports indicate that the Harper government is now considering overturning the 2005 decision of its Liberal predecessor not to participate in the US's anti-ballistic missile shield. While presented as a defensive measure, the US's anti-ballistic missile defence program is aimed at enabling Washington to wage "winnable" nuclear war.

Canada's government may also now give a green light to an increased NATO presence in the Arctic.

Within the G-7 and NATO, Harper and his Conservative government have been working side-by-side with the US in pressing the European powers to take an even more aggressive stance against Russia.

Last Monday, Harper appeared alongside the ambassadors to Canada of the Ukraine, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia and the Czech Republic to promote fresh lies about the events in the Ukraine. He denounced the opposition in the majority Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine to the coup-installed, ultra-nationalist government in Kyiv as "strictly the work of Russian provocateurs sent by the Putin regime."

He then cynically and hypocritically invoked international law. "It should be a great concern to all of us," declared Harper, "when a major power acts in a way that is so clearly aggressive, militaristic and imperialistic."

This from a prime minister who pressed for Canada to participate in the illegal 2003 US invasion of Iraq on trumped-up claims of weapons of mass destruction, has

boasted that Canada is Israel's staunchest ally and will "go through fire and water" to support the Zionist state, has deployed the CAF in support of US wars of aggression in Afghanistan and Libya, and has vehemently defended the Communications Security Establishment Canada's (CSEC) leading role in the US National Security Agency's global spying operations.

At his Monday press conference, Harper announced that Foreign Minister John Baird will visit the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Latvia and Estonia next week. While in Warsaw, Baird and his Polish interlocutors are to announce further steps in support of Ukraine's pro-western government. Canada is strongly supportive of an IMF restructuring program that will further impoverish the Ukraine population, shut down large parts of the country's Russian-oriented manufacturing and heavy industry sectors, and pave the way for Germany and its EU partners to profitably exploit Ukraine's plentiful natural resources and large low-wage workforce.

On Tuesday, Ottawa further announced that Canada would boycott this week's Arctic Council meeting in Moscow. This action was of more than symbolic significance. Canada and Russia have competing territorial claims over the resource-rich Arctic seabed—claims Harper has aggressively asserted. Last year, he rejected the Arctic seabed claim that Canadian diplomats and scientific experts had drafted for submission to the UN as too modest and ordered it be rewritten.

The Canadian media explains the Harper government's obtrusive intervention in the Ukraine crisis by referring to the large Ukrainian-Canadian population.

This is poppycock.

To be sure, over the past two decades Canada's government, under the Liberals and Conservatives alike, has sought to leverage the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and its large network of ultranationalist organizations—many of them open admirers of Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera and his Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists. Canada has lavished aid on pro-western "civil society groups" in the Ukraine with the aim of detaching it from Russian economic and geopolitical influence—long a key strategic objective of US imperialism.

Driving Ottawa's intervention in the Ukraine and

aggressive anti-Russian stance are the predatory interests of Canada's ruling elite.

Fearing both its own relative economic decline—Canada's share of world trade has fallen to some 2.5 percent—and that of its longtime strategic partner to the south, the Canadian bourgeoisie calculates that it can best assert its global interests by tightening its partnership with Washington and Wall Street. This includes Canadian imperialism supporting and participating in the US's attempt to use its military might as a means of offsetting its loss of economic dominance.

Since 1999, when Canada played a leading role in the US-led NATO war on Yugoslavia, the Canadian Armed Forces have participated in a series of US-led wars and regime-change operations. These include the twelve-year-long invasion and counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan, during the course of which 40,000 Canadian troops were deployed to Afghanistan, the 2004 ouster of Haiti's elected president, and the 2011 war on Libya.

By the beginning of this decade, Canada's military spending in real, not just nominal, terms was higher than at any time since the end of the Second World War.

And last week the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that the Canadian military has developed multiple scenarios for military operations in Syria.

Canada has also signaled its strong support for the US "pivot to Asia," Washington's drive to isolate and militarily encircle China. Like the US-German intervention in the Ukraine, the "pivot to Asia" is a highly destabilizing campaign of aggression that threatens to trigger a military conflagration with incalculable consequences for humanity.



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