

Canada providing military aid to Ukrainian regime as it wages war

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In a significant escalation of Canada's involvement in the US-led campaign of aggression against Russia, the Conservative government of Stephen Harper announced last week that it is sending \$5-million worth of “non-lethal” military gear to Ukraine, including helmets, ballistic eyewear and protective vests.

Standing Thursday before a Canadian Hercules aircraft set to take off from a Trenton, Ontario military base with the first installment of military aid to Ukraine, Defence Minister Rob Nicholson attacked the Putin government. He called its support for pro-Russian opponents of the fascist-backed Ukrainian government “a real threat to international peace and security” and vowed that “Canada will not stand by in the face of this threat.”

The announcement came barely a day after Russia imposed a 12-month ban on food imports from the US, the European Union and Canada in retaliation for economic sanctions taken against Russia by the Western powers. The ban will hit Canada's pork industry hard, closing a market worth more than \$500 million annually.

A press release by the Prime Minister's office made clear that the dispatch of military aid to Ukraine—aid that will assist the putsch-installed government in Kiev in bloodily suppressing opposition in the majority Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine—is part of an ever-expanding program of provocative actions by Canada's government. “Canada's response to Russian expansionism and militarism in eastern Ukraine,” it boasted, “has been swift, targeted and unequivocal.” It cited measures such as “imposing a broad range of sanctions,” “helping train the Ukrainian military,” and “isolating Russia at the G-7.”

Pointing to the European Union's recent lifting of a ban on the sale of military equipment to Ukraine, the

Canadian government made no secret of its desire to expand its own arms exports. Canada, declared the communiqué, has “no ban in place on the sale of military technology and hardware to Ukraine.”

The Harper government recently announced that six CF-18 fighter jets, dispatched last May to join NATO patrols in Romania, will be relocated in September to the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania bordering Russia. Moreover, unlike at present, the CF-18s will be armed when they patrol over the Baltic states. Canada has also committed the HMCS Regina warship to the NATO Standing Maritime Forces that is deploying warships in the Black Sea off the Ukrainian and Russian coasts.

The Canadian government was among the first to insist that the Putin government is responsible for the downing of a Malaysia Airlines passenger aircraft over Ukrainian territory, with Harper baldly stating that the actual circumstances of the aircraft's downing have no bearing on Russia's culpability.

The US, German, Canadian and other Western governments have seized upon the tragic loss of life in the crash of flight MH 17 as the pretext to intensify their backing for Kiev's ultra-nationalist government and its war in eastern Ukraine. This campaign is aimed not just at breaking Russian influence over Ukraine, but at transforming Ukraine into a base of operations against Russia, with the ultimate objective of dismembering the Russian Federation into a series of semi-colonies whose vast natural resources could be plundered by the western imperialist powers at will.

The reckless character of this campaign is underscored by the fact that it is targeting a country with a nuclear arsenal second only to that of the US. Far from showing any sense of caution, Canada has been enthusiastically stoking confrontation with

Moscow. Repeatedly over the past eight months, Ottawa has joined with Washington to press Germany and other European powers to take a still harder line against Russia.

At the end of July, Prime Minister Harper wrote an op-ed for the *Globe and Mail* under the title, “Our duty is to stand firm in the face of Russian aggression.”

Similar incendiary statements are being made by the so-called opposition parties, underlying the fact that the entire Canadian ruling class stands firmly behind the profound shift taking place in the country’s foreign policy, with military aggression taking center stage.

The social-democratic NDP criticized Canada’s latest economic sanctions against Russia for having shielded “three Russian tycoons with reportedly significant business ties with Canada.” Its foreign affairs critic, Paul Dewar, attacked the Conservatives from the right, saying, “With these Conservatives, rhetoric is limitless, but actions are weak.”

The Liberals, for their part, have trumpeted their support for the putsch-installed government in Kiev and Harper’s provocative campaign against Russia. The Liberals have taken a “very strong line in support of Ukraine,” the party’s new “star” MP and former Thomson Reuters executive, Chrystia Freeland, recently told the *Globe and Mail*. “For us as a party, we think Canada is stronger in supporting Ukraine if we don’t play politics with this issue.”

The opposition parties’ endorsement of provocations, bullying and military mobilization against Russia echoes their full support for Canada’s vocal and shameful defense of Israeli war crimes against the Palestinian people of Gaza.

The ruling class consensus behind Canada’s turn to an aggressive foreign policy was underscored last week by a *Globe and Mail* comment authored by Derek Burney, a former top aide to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Canada’s ambassador to the US from 1989-1993, and Fen Hampson, director of Global Security at the Centre for International Governance Innovation, a think-tank devoted to strategic issues confronting the Canadian bourgeoisie.

In their comment, Burney and Hampson criticized the economic sanctions levelled against Russia by the European Union, the US, and Canada as inadequate. They lament in particular the “sale of those \$1.6-billion French warships” to Russia, the failure “to include

Russia’s natural gas companies” as targets, and the fact that banking restrictions “leave out Russia’s biggest and most influential lender.” Bemoaning that “there is still no tangible military assistance from the West for Ukraine,” they call on Canada to “move beyond strong rhetoric and take the lead” in developing a “coherent strategy to secure the [NATO] Alliance’s energy future.”

Burney and Hampson are also the authors of a recent book titled *Brave New Canada: Meeting the Challenge of a Changing World*. Taking note of the relative economic decline of the US and warning that it imperils North America’s global dominance, *Brave New Canada* argues for Canada to take on a more visible and assertive role on the world stage so as to secure its own independent “national” interests—i.e., the claims of its ruling class for a share in the violent and predatory redivision of the planet’s markets and resources.



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