

Australia to provide military backing for Ukraine regime

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Following his commitment to deploy Australian forces in Iraq, Prime Minister Tony Abbott has pledged military assistance to the Ukrainian government as it escalates tensions with Russia. The decision was announced amid claims by Kiev that Europe is on the verge of a “great war,” the like of which has not been seen since World War II.

Making the new commitment in parliament yesterday, Abbott said that together with “our European partners and allies,” Australia was considering “humanitarian assistance and non-lethal military assistance to Ukraine,” as well as “civil and military capacity building assistance to that country.”

The Orwellian doublespeak concept of “non-lethal military assistance” was of a piece with Abbott’s claim that Ukraine was “subject to active destabilisation and indeed outright invasion from Russia, a country that it has never sought to harm.”

In fact, the oligarchic Kiev regime has been at the centre of growing provocations by the major Western imperialist powers against Russia since February’s Western-backed coup in Ukraine, spearheaded by fascist forces.

The Australian government eagerly seized on the crash of Malaysian Airlines MH17 on July 17 to join the push against Russia. Abbott initially sought to have Australian military and police forces placed in the Ukraine under the pretext of safeguarding investigations into the disaster.

The announcement of military involvement in Ukraine was accompanied by revelations that Australian collaboration in renewed US operations in Iraq could go well beyond the running of guns to Kurdish peshmerga forces in the north of the country and the deployment of the SAS.

Abbott confirmed that Washington had made a

“general request” for more military support in Iraq. Exploiting the latest Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) atrocity, Abbott said the beheading of a second American journalist “abundantly justifies” military intervention. He said that while there was no specific request yet to join military action, “we are considering what we may be able to make available.”

Abbott’s announcements set the stage for Australian involvement in military action in both the Middle East and Eastern Europe to be organised at the NATO summit meeting in Wales today and tomorrow. The summit, attended by Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, is expected to designate Australia as an “enhanced NATO partner,” giving the Australian military access to plans regarding NATO military action and a voice in its top bodies.

Besides opening the way for closer military involvement, Bishop is expected to step up the anti-Russia push on the political front. She is set to use the NATO meeting to seek support for the exclusion of Russian President Vladimir Putin from the G20 economic summit meeting to be held in Brisbane during November.

The significance of the latest announcements can be seen when viewed against the backdrop of the accelerating pace of events over the past three months.

In June, the Australian government hosted the first overseas visit by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe since the “reinterpretation” of Japan’s constitution to allow its military forces to undertake overseas military action in support of its allies. Abbott made clear Australia was fully committed to back Japan in its territorial disputes with China.

Then came the MH17 disaster. Within hours, the Australian government, without any evidence, blamed Russia for bringing the plane down.

Now Australian forces have returned to Iraq and are to intervene to back the Kiev regime in its confrontation with Russia.

While each intervention is accompanied by large dollops of “humanitarianism” and invocations of the necessity to combat “evil,” the essential agenda is clear.

As the Socialist Equality Party statement of September 2 noted: “With the exception of isolated critics feebly urging caution, the political establishment has concluded that Australian imperialism’s interests are best served by supporting and encouraging the reckless US drive for global dominance.”

This drive for dominance is creating the conditions for the eruption of a new world war, which could be sparked by a conflict in East Asia, the Middle East or Eastern Europe.

The accelerating war drive is being conducted behind the backs of the population in what amounts to a political conspiracy involving all the major parties, taking their cues like actors in a well-rehearsed play.

When Abbott announced the deployment to Iraq, Labor Party foreign affairs spokesperson Tanya Plibersek could not get in front of the television cameras fast enough to assure the public that the present circumstances were very different from those of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

On both the issue of Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as the accompanying attack on democratic rights at home, there has been no difference between the government and the Labor opposition.

The bipartisan support for militarism was underscored last week when Labor Senator Sue Lines offered the observation that the Abbott government was “hyping up” the dangers of terrorism in Australia to deflect attention from its budget problems.

Even this mouse-like squeak of opposition could not be tolerated. Lines was brought to order by Labor leader Bill Shorten. Needless to say, she has since remained silent, along with the rest of the Labor Party.

The intensity of the clampdown reflects the fact that there is growing opposition among broad layers of the population to both the growth of militarism and the accompanying attacks on democratic rights at home. The lies over “weapons of mass destruction” in 2003 and the bogus “humanitarian” justifications for imperialist interventions since then have left their mark.

But this opposition finds no expression within the political establishment, which has aligned itself behind the war drive.

Here the Greens play a particular, pernicious role. Posing as critics of the Liberals and Labor parties, they in fact help facilitate the drive to war. The Greens called for a “parliamentary debate” over the intervention in Iraq, in order to try to position themselves as a lightning rod for anti-war opposition, while all the time tacitly supporting military intervention.

Events in parliament yesterday underscored the fact that they are no less supportive of the imperialist war drive against Russia.

One of the most common parliamentary manoeuvres is that when a government wants to announce a decision, it will arrange for a question to be asked on the subject in Question Time. Usually the questioner comes from the government backbench.

On this occasion, however, the government made an arrangement with Greens deputy leader Adam Bandt, who asked whether the government would add uranium to the Australian sanctions against Russia and end the agreement to supply it.

Abbott replied that he often disagreed with the Greens MP, but not on this occasion. He declared he was “very happy” to indicate that there would be no Australian uranium sales to Russia.

The episode served two purposes. It enabled the government to announce the uranium ban while providing the Greens with the opportunity to make clear they are completely aligned with the ever-deepening collaboration of Australia in the intensifying imperialist war drive.



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