

Canada: Harper using “terror attack” to impose anti-democratic measures

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Canada’s Conservative government and corporate media are seizing upon a purported terrorist attack to advance the ruling elite’s agenda of war, reaction, and attacks on democratic rights.

Shortly after daybreak Tuesday, the Quebec Provincial Police (QPP) announced the death of Canadian Armed Forces’ (CAF) Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent—one of two CAF soldiers injured the previous morning in a hit-and-run in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec.

The two soldiers, one of them in his CAF uniform, were struck by a vehicle while walking in a shopping mall parking lot.

The vehicle’s driver was shot dead by police after he crashed into a ditch during a police pursuit. He has been identified as 25 year-old Martin “Ahmad” Rouleau.

There are numerous unanswered questions as to what happened Monday in St. Jean, that is home to a CAF base and training facilities as well as one of Canada’s two military colleges.

They include why police chose to use lethal force, rather than seeking to apprehend Rouleau. According to press reports, he was shot multiple times although armed only with a knife.

The government admits Rouleau was well known to Canada’s national security apparatus, was under surveillance, and recently had his passport confiscated by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) on the grounds he might be preparing to travel abroad to link up with Islamicist terrorists.

The authorities have described Rouleau as a “radicalized Muslim,” a recent convert to Islam who voiced support for armed Islamacist groups. This reportedly included posting a message on Facebook in support of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS).

The speed with which the police were able to put Rouleau under pursuit Monday suggests they may have been tracking his movements immediately prior to his running down the CAF personnel.

According to an article in yesterday’s *La Presse*, a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) agent of Moroccan origin had had an “eye” on Rouleau’s activities at the local mosque they both frequented. This included speaking with him on several occasions. The head of the mosque association told *La Presse* that the RCMP agent had “Rouleau’s file.”

In Canada and especially the US, there have been numerous cases of police agents and informants encouraging Muslims to engage in illegal anti-government activities, including supplying them with weapons and bomb-making materials. This was true of the “Toronto 18,” a group of Muslims, virtually all of them either teenagers or in their early twenties, who were accused of plotting a series of terrorist attacks in 2006. Many were subsequently convicted under Canada’s draconian 2001 Anti-Terrorism law.

Whether agents of the national-security apparatus played any role in Rouleau’s “radicalization” is at this point unknown.

What is evident is that the government and big business media intend to exploit the tragedy to whip up support for Canada’s participation in the new US-led war in the Middle East and to delegitimize opposition to further anti-democratic amendments to the country’s anti-terrorism laws

Just a few hours after the CAF soldiers were run over and before the press had drawn any connection to Islamacism or terrorism, Harper in an obviously scripted exchange responded to a Conservative backbencher’s question about “unconfirmed reports” of a “possible terror attack,” by declaring, “We are

aware of these reports. They're obviously extremely troubling ... We're closely monitoring the situation and obviously we will make available all of the resources of the federal government."

Thereafter, the Prime Minister's Office played a major and rare, if not unprecedented, role in releasing police-security information to the media. This included the fact that the driver of the vehicle was "known" to the federal government's "Integrated National Security Enforcement Team."

In a Monday night statement, the PMO announced that Harper had been briefed on the St. Jean events by RCMP Commissioner, Bob Paulson, the CAF Chief of Staff, General Tom Lawson, and National Security Adviser Stephen Rigby. The statement said authorities had "confirmed that there are clear indications that the individual had become radicalized" and urged Canadians to follow the advice of Canada's national security agencies and "remain vigilant."

In a rightwing "war on terror" screed, *National Post* columnist Michael den Tandt claimed the death of Warrant Officer Vincent was confirmation of Harper's claims "we live in dark and dangerous times." He then cynically added, "The Conservatives have been angling for months for a foreign policy and security wedge to set them apart from their opponents; they now have it ..."

The St. Jean incident came on the eve of yesterday's departure for Kuwait of the six CAF fighter jets Canada is deploying to assist the US bombing campaign in Iraq and Syria.

This intervention arises from and is the continuation of the illegal 2003 US invasion of Iraq and the other wars that the US has waged in the Middle East and North Africa since the beginning of the century. It is aimed at shoring up and extending US strategic hegemony over the world's most important oil exporting region.

The Harper government—which is determined that Canada's elite have, to use Harper's words, "a seat at the table" in the imperialist reordering of the Middle East—has sought to convince a skeptical public to support Canada's participation in yet another US-led war by dressing it up as a humanitarian intervention. This has been supplemented by lurid claims that if Canada does not fight ISIS in Iraq it will have to fight it in Canada.

Already the government is positioning itself to exploit Rouleau's reactionary and likely deranged actions to promote imperialist war. Speaking in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu Tuesday, Public Security Minister Steven Blaney said Monday's events were "clearly linked to terrorist ideology." "This," he continued, "is a terrible act of violence against our country, against our military and against our values."

The government has also served notice of its intention to introduce proposed amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act in parliament later this week. The full import of the changes the government intends to make are not known. But it has signaled that it will legalize a surreptitious arrangement whereby Canada's signals intelligence agency, the Communications and Security Establishment Canada (CSEC), and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) use Canada "Five Eyes" electronic eavesdropping partners to spy on Canadian "terrorist suspects" when they travel abroad. It is also planning to award CSIS informants blanket legal protection. This would mean not only that they couldn't be identified in court but that defence lawyers and even judges would be unable to question them.

Working people must beware. As in the US, in Canada, under Liberal and Conservative governments alike, a "bogus war on terror" has been systematically invoked since 2001 to stampede public opinion and justify imperialist aggression and sweeping attacks on democratic rights, including the state's arrogation of the right to spy on Canadians' electronic communications at will.



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