

Canada helping arm Kiev regime to fight Ukrainian civil war

Roger Jordan
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Canada's Conservative government, which is already supplying "non-lethal" military aid to Ukraine's US-backed government, is now moving toward providing weapons to the Ukraine Army and the ultra-nationalist and fascist militia that are fighting alongside it—both directly and through a network of Canadian-Ukrainian businessmen and nationalist organizations.

Defence Minister Rob Nicholson denounced Russia while on a trip to Europe last week. In bellicose tones, he proclaimed that Ottawa would never recognize Russian "claims" to "Ukrainian territory," stating, "Get out, Putin. Russians, get out of Ukraine. Let's bring some stability back to that area."

Without citing a shred of evidence, Nicholson charged that the Minsk ceasefire agreement, which brought fighting in eastern Ukraine to a halt last month, has been violated on several occasions by Moscow. "We've seen all kinds of instances of violations of the agreement," claimed Nicholson.

Contrary to the Canadian government's propaganda, the Ukrainian crisis was provoked by the United States, Germany and its allies, including Canada, and continues to be stoked by them. They helped orchestrate the fascist-led February 2014 coup that overthrew Ukraine's elected president, Viktor Yanukovych; have encouraged the new regime in Kiev to mount brutal civil war against the Ukrainian population in the Donbas region; and have threatened Russia with war by dramatically expanding NATO's presence along Russia's Eastern European borders and on the Black Sea.

Recent reports in the *Globe and Mail* have provided important information concerning the leading role Canadians are playing in supplying lethal and non-lethal aid to the Ukrainian army and volunteer battalions fighting the pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. While the *Globe*, Canada's leading big business daily, fails to make this point, the inescapable conclusion from its reports is that the Canadian government supports this aid and is facilitating it.

Conservative MPs have spoken at fundraising events

organized by Army SOS, the group that is coordinating much of the supply effort. The Canadian government has deemed Army SOS's efforts to raise money and other donations from Ukrainian-Canadians, a charitable enterprise meriting it special tax-status as a charitable organization. And, last but not least, many of the individuals involved are connected with a network of Ukrainian-Canadian organizations led by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress that for decades, under Liberal and Conservative governments alike, has been used to "partner" with so-called civil society groups in the Ukraine, helping to organize and fund pro-western political organizations and media.

Lenna Koszarny, who hails from London, Ontario, is coordinating the delivery of supplies from Army SOS to the Ukrainian Army and its militia allies. She is also a leader of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), serving on its Ukraine advisory council.

The *Globe* report details how Army SOS has supplied military clothing and equipment, including guns and surveillance drones, directly to the frontlines. Frequently bypassing the Ukrainian army, Army SOS has helped supply some of the notorious extreme right-wing volunteer battalions. An Army SOS member justified this in a *Globe* interview with the admission that the Ukrainian government and army are mired in corruption.

In Ukraine itself, no secret is made of where this aid is coming from. As the article notes, "In the Kiev headquarters of Army SOS, a volunteer organization that aids Ukraine's warriors in the field, the Maple Leaf hangs in both the warehouse on the first floor and the drone factory upstairs. Until recently, Canadian flags were often included with supplies delivered by Army SOS to the front – which likely explains why Canada's colours have been seen flying on the front lines outside of the rebel capital of Donetsk."

Canadian volunteers have also joined the fighting, apparently from quite early on, with at least one fighting for the notorious Azov battalion, which uses Nazi insignia and aims to establish an ethnically pure Ukraine. This individual, whose whereabouts are currently unknown, was quoted by

media in Mariupol last year proclaiming himself a “national socialist” fighting to defend ethnic Ukrainians and their culture.

Another volunteer combatant, who fought for a battalion that has been accused by Amnesty International of carrying out abductions and possible executions, has returned to Canada where he is participating in Army SOS events to raise funds and encourage Canadian volunteers to join the fighting. At one recent event in Toronto, which was attended by two Conservative MPs, Army SOS raised C\$52,000.

Even the *Globe* was compelled to note the glaring contrast between the government’s treatment of those who have gone to war with fascist militias in Ukraine and those going to Syria and Iraq to join the ranks of Islamic State.

The ultra-reactionary character of the “volunteers” aligned with the Ukrainian government was acknowledged by Mychailo Wynnyckyj, a Ukrainian-Canadian professor who teaches in Kiev and is involved with Army SOS. Speaking of the forces Army SOS is helping supply with money and military supplies, he said, “Would I like these fighters to be my neighbour? Probably not. But when you’re fighting a war, the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

The *Globe* report itself noted that the militias being patronized by Army SOS—with at least the tacit support of the Canadian government—are far from under the control of the government in Kiev and might well ultimately seek to overthrow it. “If there is a huge military defeat, the battalions could come to Kiev and stage a coup,” an anonymous Ukrainian government adviser told the *Globe*.

These latest revelations are entirely in keeping with Canada’s role in Ukraine over the past quarter-century. The first government to recognize Ukrainian independence in 1991, Ottawa, working in close concert with Washington and through Ukrainian-Canadian organizations, has invested heavily in pro-western groups, helping organize the 2004 Orange Revolution and the Maidan protests that ended in Yanukovych’s overthrow.

The Harper government has also been among the most bellicose supporters of the new regime in Kiev, repeatedly calling for more sanctions and threatening military moves against Russia.

Last month, as the Obama administration stepped up the pressure on Moscow with its threat to consider supplying Ukraine with lethal military equipment, Harper signaled his government would be prepared to follow suit. Commenting during a visit by German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Ottawa, he refused to rule out any course of action, so long as a consensus is reached between Canada’s NATO allies.

The UCC, for its part, has ties to the Ukrainian nationalist movement under the leadership of Stepan Bandera that collaborated with Nazi Germany during World War II. Some

of its constituent organizations were founded by veterans of Bandera’s nationalist forces, which participated in the mass killings of Jews and Poles during the Nazi occupation of Ukraine.

Working through these channels, the Canadian government has forged ties with right-wing Ukrainian oligarchs and businessmen with whom it is keen to do business. Negotiations are currently ongoing on a free trade agreement between the two countries, and Ukraine is on Canadian foreign ministry list of Ottawa’s top twenty “countries of focus.”

The direct connection between these economic interests and the more immediate military goals is clear for all to see by considering the individuals involved in financing and supplying the volunteer battalions on behalf of Canadian imperialism. The UCC’s Koszarny divides her time between supplying the front with weaponry from Army SOS and working as an investment banker. Bohdan Kupych is a Ukrainian-Canadian who has led a team of software developers to produce an artillery targeting system that has been provided to battalions to assist in the shelling of separatist-held areas, attacks which have produced the deaths of hundreds of civilians.

During a recent visit to Canada, Andriy Parubiy, who led the volunteer security forces of the Maidan protesters and in the 1990s co-founded the far-right Social National Party of Ukraine with the current leader of the neo-fascist Svoboda Party, commented that Canada had been Kiev’s most reliable ally. Now serving as deputy Prime Minister in the Poroshenko regime, Parubiy remarked, “Canada has been a kind of leader in the world vis-a-vis Ukraine.”

During his trip, Parubiy met with Foreign Affairs Minister Nicholson, the parliamentary secretary to the defence minister James Bezan, and House of Commons Speaker Andrew Scheer. He told the *Globe* that he hoped Canada will use its influence with Washington to convince the Obama administration to supply weapons to Kiev.



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