

# Canada's participation in US military-strategic offensives grows

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Canadian Defence Minister Jason Kenney's June 26-27 visit to Ukraine is one in a series of recent developments that exemplify Ottawa's full integration into the principal military-strategic offensives of US imperialism against Russia, China and the Middle East.

In addition to reaffirming Canada's staunch support for the pro-western Kiev regime, Kenney's trip was aimed at removing legal impediments to the deployment of 200 Canadian troops to the west of the country, where they will cooperate with US and British forces in training Ukrainian Army units and National Guard personnel. Many of those in the latter organization were recruited from right-wing, ultra-nationalist parties like Svoboda and the neo-fascist Right Sector that spearheaded the US-orchestrated February 2014 coup that overthrew Ukraine's elected president and brought a pro-western regime to power in Kiev.

Canada has been playing a leading role in the US drive to harness Ukraine to western imperialism and threaten and encircle Russia. Harper was the first foreign leader to visit Kiev after the 2014 coup and in G-7 meetings and other forums he has repeatedly joined US President Obama in pressing the Europeans to take a more belligerent stand against Russia.

On his last visit to Kiev at the beginning of June, Harper was accompanied by representatives of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress who are playing an important role in supplying the Ukrainian army and ultra-nationalist volunteer militia with military equipment and weaponry. Harper then spent 20 hours on a Royal Canadian Navy frigate in the Baltic Sea, the HMCS Fredericton, which was participating in the war games aimed at Russia.

Underscoring the close integration of the Canadian and US militaries, Kenney revealed that the Canadian army trainers deployed to Ukraine will share facilities with their US counterparts.

Kenney visited Kiev after attending a NATO defence ministers' summit in Brussels devoted to discussing further expansion of NATO forces, weaponry and operations in East European states bordering Russia. When plans to expand the

alliance's new rapid reaction force were discussed, Kenney said Canada is prepared to contribute Royal Canadian Air Force spy planes, refueling aircraft and specialist airlift capabilities.

He also pledged that Canada would contribute 1,650 armed forces personnel to a NATO military exercise planned for Italy, Spain and Portugal later this year. The exercise is being billed as NATO's largest since the end of the Cold War.

Prior to the Brussels meeting, Ottawa had already signaled its readiness to provide staff officers to take up positions in the six NATO command centers to be created in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.

The Conservative government followed this up on June 30 by announcing a further expansion of sanctions against Russia, adding to an already long list of restrictions, a ban on imports from Crimea and a halt to trade with energy giant Gazprom.

Canada's prominent role in the US-led campaign against Russia is indicative of the transformation in Canada's foreign policy over the past two decades. Under successive Liberal and Conservative governments, Canada has played a major role in one US-led war and military intervention after another, including the 1999 bombardment of Yugoslavia; the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan; the overthrow of Haiti's elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide; NATO's 2011 "regime change" war against Libya and the current war in Iraq and Syria.

All of these aggressive imperialist interventions have enjoyed the near unanimous support of Canada's ruling elite and its parties, including the trade union-backed New Democratic Party.

The NDP has been conspicuous in its support for the Harper government's anti-Russian stance, and while it claims to oppose the current Canadian combat mission in the Middle East, it supports the war's aims—the shoring up of US dominance over the world's most important oil exporting region—and the use of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel to help arm the local forces supported by

Washington.

Ukrainian military representatives acknowledged during Kenney's visit that one of the main reasons for their desiring Canadian military training was the experience the CAF developed during its 12 years in Afghanistan. According to the Canadian Press, Ukrainian generals privately admitted that the CAF's expertise in disarming roadside bombs would be invaluable.

Prime Minister Harper used his July 1 Canada Day Parliament Hill address to promote militarism. Returning to a favourite mantra, he hailed the armed forces as the defender and guarantor of Canadian values. He told the gathered crowd, "In the Baltic and Eastern Europe, they are supporting our friends and allies who face Russian aggression. And in Iraq and in Kuwait, they are fighting the terrorists there, to keep us safe here."

His comments came shortly after Canadian Air Force planes surpassed 1,000 sorties in the war in Syria and Iraq. This includes more than a hundred bombing missions by CF-18 fighters. Kenney reacted to this milestone in a boastful tone at a press conference, declaring that it "proves the capability of the Canadian Armed Forces to fight alongside our Allies and degrade the capability of ISIS to conduct operations in the region."

In truth, the war Harper and Kenney praise in such glowing terms is producing a social and political catastrophe, with the US now openly considering the option of partitioning Iraq along ethnic and communal lines. Just a few days after his press appearance, Kenney was forced on CBC's "Question Period" program to deny speculation that Canada will join the US in deploying more military trainers to Iraq to strengthen Baghdad's crumbling army.

In its April budget, the Conservative government announced a sharp increase in military spending, including an additional \$390 million for the current fiscal year. Fully \$360 million of this is to go to funding CAF activities in Syria and Iraq.

The budget also announced a hike in the annual increase in military spending from two to three percent commencing in 2017. This will result in an additional \$11 billion in military spending over the following decade, with the budget in 2026 being \$2.3 billion larger than was previously planned. By 2011, the government had already continued the expansion of military spending begun by the former Liberal government to the point where it had reached its highest level in real terms since World War II.

While the latest military spending increase was in part designed to move Canada closer to NATO's directive that member states should allocate at least two percent of GDP toward their military, the expansion of Canada's military is above all driven by Ottawa's determination to ensure

Canada can continue to serve as one of Washington's premier and most trusted military allies.

Under conditions where US world dominance is under threat due to its relative economic decline and the rise of new powers, Canada's ruling elite calculates that it can best advance its own predatory imperialist interests by doubling down on its partnership with Washington and Wall Street.

In Asia, where tensions have risen sharply in recent months due to provocations by the US and regional allies in the South China Sea, Ottawa is fully on board with Washington's aggressive drive to isolate and target China. In late 2013, the Conservative government struck a secret deal with the US military, the Asia-Pacific Defence Policy Cooperation Framework, which lays out the collaboration that will take place between American and Canadian armed forces in the region. Canada is also pushing for the establishment of new forward military bases in strategic locations, including Singapore and South Korea.

This anti-Chinese military-strategic agenda is coupled with Canada's participation in the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP)—a proposed US-led economic bloc, from which China is being excluded, and which Washington wants to use to dictate the rules for trade and investment throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Late last month, Harper used a public appearance in Quebec City to reiterate the importance of Canada's participation in the TPP. Echoing the Obama administration's line, Harper stated, "I believe these negotiations are going to establish what will become the basis of the international trading network in the Asia Pacific. It is essential in my view that Canada be part of that—that the Canadian economy be part of that."



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