

Trudeau bolsters Canadian support for Ukraine's far-right regime

Roger Jordan
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Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged to strengthen Canada's alliance with the far-right Ukrainian government during a two-day visit earlier this week that featured the signing of a Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

Trudeau flew to Kiev following his participation in the NATO summit in Warsaw, where he committed Canada to taking a leading role in the US-led alliance's threats and war preparations against Russia. Canada is to assume command and supply many, if not most, of the troops for one of the four 1,000 soldier-strong battlegroups NATO is establishing in Poland and the three Baltic Republics, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. These "forward" battlegroups will be permanently stationed on Russia's borders and backed up by NATO's newly-created Rapid Reaction Force, which is capable of deploying 40,000 troops to the region in a matter of days.

The Liberal government's belligerence against Russia and staunch support for Ukraine's pro-western government is fully in line with the ultra-right course of its Conservative predecessor. The free trade deal formally signed by Trudeau, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Ukrainian Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman in Kiev July 11 was tentatively agreed to by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper in July 2015. While Ottawa hopes it will bring benefits for Canadian businesses, the overriding aim of the free trade deal is to provide much-needed political support for the corrupt and increasingly unpopular Kiev regime.

The free trade deal will facilitate the conclusion of a Canada-Ukraine defence cooperation agreement, which is expected to allow Canadian arms manufacturers to sell offensive weaponry to Kiev and to promote partnerships with Ukrainian weapons-makers. Earlier this month Andriy Shevchenko, Ukraine's ambassador to Canada, told CBC that the two countries' ministries of defence were close to finalizing the cooperation agreement.

Trudeau used his Ukraine trip to underscore his support for the Harper government's decision to deploy 200 Canadian Armed Forces' personnel to the west of the country, where

they are training Ukrainian National Guard and Army units to fight in the country's civil war against pro-Russian separatists. During a stop at the training facility, in the company of General Jonathan Vance, Canada's chief of defence staff, Trudeau witnessed Canadian soldiers training their Ukrainian counterparts in live fire exercises, including in techniques for storming and capturing buildings.

No secret is made of the fact that the training is aimed at preparing the Ukrainian forces for resuming offensive operations against the Russian-backed rebels in the east. Many of those being trained have already participated in the fighting and have been ordered to return to the frontlines once their training is over.

Codenamed "Operation Unifier," the Ukraine training mission is providing Canadian forces with experience in urban combat and the use of Russian-made weapons. Speaking of the Ukrainians, CAF Captain Jean-Pierre Coloumbe told the *National Post*, "They are warriors. They are professional soldiers. We teach them new things and we learn from them. The interaction has been good. They are motivated and patriotic."

Trudeau signaled that Canada would support offensive operations by Ukrainian forces, a recipe for triggering all-out war with Russia, when he proclaimed at a press conference following the signing of the free trade deal, "We are giving significant support to the Ukrainian military to be able to be more effective in defending and reclaiming Ukrainian territory."

While publicly urged to do so by Poroshenko, Trudeau would not confirm that the 200 Canadian trainers will remain beyond the expiry of their current mission in the spring of 2017. But Canada's prime minister did announce the expansion of a program through which Canadian police officers have been deployed to Ukraine to provide domestic security forces with training and institutional support. He also said additional Canadian monitors will be added to the Organization of Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission in eastern Ukraine, which has frequently been used to pin the blame on Russia for clashes and uphold the

interests of the imperialist powers.

Trudeau also offered an additional \$13 million in “humanitarian” aid. Since January 2014, reports Global Affairs Canada, the rebranded foreign affairs ministry, Canada has provided Ukraine with \$700 million in assistance, including \$43 million for security forces. Many of Ukraine’s security forces have been repeatedly exposed as having ultra-nationalist and even fascist sympathies.

Canada’s close alliance with pro-western Ukrainian nationalist forces began long before 2014. The first western country to recognize Ukrainian independence, Canada invested heavily in so-called civil society forces in the run-up to the “Orange Revolution” of 2004, which installed a right-wing government committed to developing closer ties with the North American and European imperialist powers. Ottawa was also heavily involved in organizing and financing the forces that participated in the Maidan protests, which formed the back-drop to the February 2014 fascist-led, US-orchestrated putsch that overthrew the country’s elected president, Victor Yanukovych.

From his first days in office, Trudeau left no doubt that his government would press forward with Canada’s promotion of the pro-western government in Kiev as part of a broader US-led military-strategic offensive aimed at isolating and encircling Russia in Eastern Europe and beyond. At the NATO summit, Trudeau committed additional Canadian military support for the US-led Mideast war—the ultimate aim of which is to topple Syria’s Assad regime, Russia’s only ally in the region, and establish a pro-western puppet regime in Damascus so as to strengthen US hegemony over the world’s most important oil-exporting region.

In a press conference with Poroshenko, Trudeau went out of his way to place the blame squarely on Russia for the failure to implement the September 2014 Minsk ceasefire agreement, stating that Moscow was “not a positive partner.” By contrast, he praised Ukraine for purportedly implementing its side of the bargain, despite the Poroshenko regime’s stridently anti-Russian stance, rampant corruption and repeated provocations against the anti-Kiev rebels. Trudeau provocatively described Russia’s actions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine as “illegitimate and illegal.”

Significantly, in his speech to Canadian soldiers July 12, Trudeau declared, “The reason we’re here supporting Ukraine is not just because Ukraine is a good friend to Canada and the Ukrainian people are good friends to us. It’s because the values, the principles that they’re fighting for are the values and principles that we stand for and that we fight for.”

Trudeau neglected to outline the “values and principles” to which he was referring, but the personnel accompanying him on his trip left no doubt that the Canadian government is

cooperating with far-right, ultra-nationalist forces in the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) in its policy towards Ukraine.

Although the Harper government refused to officially provide offensive weaponry to the Ukrainian army and volunteer militias fighting the pro-Russian separatists, it encouraged the Army SOS group to do so. Army SOS was set up by UCC members and has supplied military equipment, including parts for weapons and even a drone, directly to the front lines. This has frequently meant bypassing Ukrainian government control and working directly with ultra-nationalist and outright fascist militias, over which the Kiev regime has only partial control.

During his stay in Ukraine, Trudeau made a series of stops at war memorials for Ukrainian soldiers who died during World War II, including those who collaborated with the Nazis in fighting the Soviet Union and exterminating Jews. The current Ukrainian government venerates the Ukrainian-Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera.

Canadian imperialism has a long history of collaborating at the highest levels of the state with right-wing Ukrainian nationalist forces. In the aftermath of World War II, Canada became one of the preferred destinations for Nazi collaborators who had fought against Soviet troops after the initiation of Hitler’s war of annihilation in June 1941. Estimates from academic studies suggest that hundreds of members of the Galicia Division, also known as the 14th Grenadier Division of the Waffen SS, which was formed out of a faction of Stepan Bandera’s Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in 1943, immigrated to Canada in the decade after the war. Although Galicia Division members were initially barred from entering the country due to their fascist links, the British government persuaded Ottawa to accept them in 1950 in a campaign heavily promoted by the Ukrainian Canadian Committee, the UCC’s predecessor.

Trudeau was accompanied by a large UCC delegation, including UCC National President Paul Grod. In 2010, Grod released a statement to mark Remembrance Day that praised members of the Galicia Division for having fought for the “freedom of their ancestral Ukrainian homeland.”



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