

Trudeau and Trump: An alliance of aggression and war

Roger Jordan
9 February 2017

With the full support of Canada's ruling elite, the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau has responded to the coming to power of Donald Trump, at the helm of the most right-wing administration in US history, by signaling its eagerness to maintain and deepen Ottawa's military-strategic partnership with Washington.

Two events over the past week have underscored the reactionary character of the Trudeau-Trump alliance—an alliance which will be founded on an aggressive assertion of the predatory interests of Canadian and US imperialism through trade war, militarism, and war.

Last week, Canada's Chief of Defence Staff, General Jonathan Vance, delivered a speech to a meeting in Vancouver in which he enthused over the future of the Canada-US relationship. "We are on the verge, I think, of great things together with the new administration," he boasted.

Then on Monday, Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan travelled to Washington. There he met with Secretary of Defence James "Mad Dog" Mattis, who led US forces in invading Afghanistan, then oversaw the US military's scorched-earth assault on the Iraqi city of Fallujah in 2004.

The mutual backslapping and compliments exchanged by the two former military officers (Sajjan served as an intelligence operative in the Canadian army in Afghanistan) was all the more ominous in that it took place immediately after Mattis' return from a trip to South Korea and Japan, where he continued the Trump administration's bellicose denunciations of China. As part of the Obama administration's anti-China "pivot to Asia," Ottawa and Washington concluded a secret military agreement in 2013 governing joint operations in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mattis applauded the role played by Canadian

soldiers in Afghanistan, where they spearheaded the neo-colonial counter-insurgency war in the country's south for more than five years (2005-11). "The Princess Patricia's Light Infantry were the first troops that came in to reinforce us at Kandahar, and they were a welcome sight," said Mattis. "There was 'don't ask, don't tell' in those days, but I was hugging and kissing every one of your guys coming out of the plane."

Sajjan responded by emphasizing Ottawa's ongoing commitment to its joint missions with the US military in Iraq and Ukraine. He also stressed the importance of the North American Aerospace Defence (NORAD) alliance, a Cold War partnership which was expanded in 2006 to incorporate joint maritime defence.

That Sajjan made a point of praising NORAD is significant. Canada's defence policy review, which is soon to issue its conclusions, is expected to recommend Ottawa join the US ballistic missile defence shield. This would take place under the auspices of NORAD and would be aimed, its name notwithstanding, at giving Washington the capability to fight and win a nuclear conflict with Russia and other great-power rivals of the Canadian and US bourgeoisies.

In contrast to the ruling elites of Europe, whose main reaction to Trump has been consternation and a push to assert their interests more independently of and even in opposition to the United States, Canada's is clinging ever more tenaciously to the coat-tails of US imperialism. This is because Canadian big business is determined to retain privileged access to the US market and its role as Washington's closest ally.

The Canada-US partnership has served, since the Second World War, as the cornerstone of the Canadian elite's foreign policy—the foundation from which it has asserted its imperialist ambitions around the globe. To secure and strengthen that partnership, Canadian

governments have deployed troops in virtually every US-led war and major military intervention over the past quarter century, including the 1991 Gulf War, the 1999 NATO war on Yugoslavia, the 2004 “regime change” operation in Haiti, the Afghan War, and the 2011 war on Libya.

Canada is also deeply involved in the Washington’s major military-strategic offensives in the oil-rich Middle East and against Russia and China. Canadian troops are in the process of deploying to lead one of four, new “forward-deployed” NATO battalions in Eastern Europe that are aimed at menacing Russia. Canadian Special Forces are training Kurdish forces in Iraq in a so-called “advise and assist” role that has repeatedly seen them active on the front line. Ottawa has also deployed 200 military trainers to the Ukraine, where they are preparing troops loyal to the ultra-right wing government in Kiev to, in the words of Trudeau, “liberate” eastern portions of the country from pro-Russian separatists.

So as to underscore the importance it attaches to coordinating Canada’s military-security initiatives with Washington, the Trudeau government has delayed a planned deployment of 600 troops to Africa to wage counter-insurgency war under the United Nations’ blue. “peacekeeping” banner. This decision has reportedly angered Germany and France, which have been looking for Canadian help in pacifying West and Central Africa. But as Trudeau government officials have bluntly explained to the media, before proceeding they want to make sure they have the necessary military resources to meet any “asks” from the Trump administration.

Senior figures in the Liberal government have emphasized that war is an enduring bond between Washington and Ottawa. Following his meeting with Mattis, Sajjan remarked that the Canada-US alliance had been “forged on the battlefield.” Voicing confidence that the Trudeau government will be able to establish a productive relationship with a Trump-led America, Andrew Leslie, the parliamentary secretary to Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, declared, “We’ve established a reputation earned in blood of being there when the chips are down, and being tough and determined, and getting the job done.”

A retired lieutenant-general and ex-commander of Canada’s forces in Afghanistan, Leslie has been given

a point-man role in managing Canada-US relations, because of his close ties to Mattis, Trump’s National Security Adviser, General Michael Flynn, and other militarists in key administration positions.

The Trump administration’s unprecedented reliance on ex-military officers and promotion of the military, as exemplified by the unexplained appearance of ten military officers behind the President during his inaugural address, has provoked little, if any concern, in Canada’s ruling elite. Nor is it put off by Trump’s patently anti-democratic actions, such as his ban on all entries to the US of people from seven Muslim countries. An anonymous senior government source told the *Globe and Mail*, “Actually, we’re getting along quite well with these guys,” before adding, “They are saying very nice things to us. They are saying they love Canada.”

Canada’s corporate media and military-strategic think-tanks have seized on Trump’s pledges to strengthen the US military and his criticisms of NATO states for not “carrying their weight” to step up their longstanding campaign for Canada to rapidly move toward meeting the NATO target of spending 2 percent of GDP on Defence. This would require doubling Canada’s military spending to \$40 billion per year.

On his return from Washington, Sajjan indicated that the Liberal government will be hiking Canada’s defence budget beyond the ten-year schedule of increases announced in the Conservatives’ 2015 budget. “We are committed to investing in our defence,” he told a press conference Tuesday.

Any increase in military spending will be paid for through new austerity measures directed against the working class. With Canada expected to run a budget deficit of \$25 billion this year, the *National Post*’s John Ivison recently noted that Ottawa has already cut all the “low-hanging fruit” and any savings will require taking unpopular decisions. He cited Brian Lee Crowley, head of the right-wing McDonald Laurier Institute, who remarked, “Pretty much all the choices available are politically hard and/or economically damaging.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact