

Canadian PM gives full-throated support to US missile strike on Syria

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, his Liberal government, and virtually the entire Canadian political and media establishment were quick to give their full-throated support to last week's illegal, and geopolitically incendiary, US missile strike on Syria.

The ruling elite's rush to endorse Washington's aggression is further proof of its eagerness to work with the Trump administration, so as to assert Canadian imperialism's predatory global interests—including in a new US drive for “regime change” in Syria and an intensified US-led military-strategic offensive against Russia.

On Thursday, prior to the US strike on al-Shayrat air base, Trudeau and his foreign minister, Chrystia Freeland, were calling for an “international investigation” of the alleged April 4 chemical weapons attack in Idlib province, adding that it was too early to say who was responsible for it.

Less than 24 hours later, Trudeau appeared before the television cameras and without batting an eyelash declared that his government “fully supports” the US missile strike because the Syrian regime “cannot be permitted to continue” chemical weapons attacks “with impunity.”

When asked why—absent the international investigation he was calling for just a day before—he was now certain that the Assad regime had carried out a chemical weapons attack, Trudeau said the Trump administration had told Ottawa that the Syrian government was responsible and that was sufficient for Canada.

Trudeau described Trump's missile strikes as “limited and focused.” Such claims are transparently false and an attempt to conceal from the population the extent to which Canada is implicated in aggressive acts that could rapidly lead to a regional and even world war.

Trump's attack on Syria is the outgrowth and continuation of more than a quarter-century of US wars in

the Middle East, aimed at consolidating American imperialism's hegemony over the world's most important oil-producing region. It threatens to lead to a military clash with nuclear-armed Russia, the Assad regime's most powerful international ally. Moscow has responded to last week's missile strike by canceling an air-cooperation agreement with the Pentagon over Syria's skies and by dispatching a warship to the Mediterranean.

The threat of a wider conflict did not cause the Trudeau government any pause. Asked about the possibility of Canada lending support for further US attacks on Syrian government forces, Trudeau declared, “Those are determinations that obviously the international community will be seized with today and in coming days.”

Foreign Minister Freeland, meanwhile, sharply criticized Moscow, painting it as complicit in violations of international law, when it was Washington that had just illegally attacked Syria and without even the pretense of seeking United Nations authorization. “Russia needs to pressure Assad to do the right thing,” said Freeland. “Russia needs to step up and act. What is very important is that the international community cannot be paralyzed by that Russian (Security Council) veto. And we won't.”

Trudeau's and Freeland's remarks make clear that Canada is preparing to expand both its military intervention in the Middle East—where Canadian Special Forces are currently assisting the brutal offensive to retake the Iraqi city of Mosul and Royal Canadian Air Force pilots are mounting surveillance missions in Iraq and Syria—and against Russia in Eastern Europe.

Canadian troops are already set to deploy to Latvia in the coming weeks to lead one of four new “forward” deployed NATO battalions aimed at encircling and menacing Russia. The government also recently announced that six CF-18 fighter jets will deploy to Romania in September for military exercises with the

NATO member. And last week, the Liberal government signed a military cooperation agreement with the far-right Ukrainian regime, clearing a major hurdle to the sale of Canadian-made weaponry to Kiev.

Trudeau's endorsement of Trump's missile strikes is further proof—although by this point none should be needed—of the cynical and duplicitous character of the Liberals' attempt to appeal to antiwar sentiment in the 2015 election by promising to withdraw the Canadian fighter jets bombing Iraq and Syria.

Under Trudeau, Canada has deepened its participation in the three major US military-strategic offensives, in the Middle East and against Russia and China.

Last year, the government extended and expanded Canada's military intervention in the Middle East, by tripling the number of Special Forces deployed to Iraq and significantly increasing the number of officers tasked with assisting US war planning in Iraq and Syria.

Recently, the Liberals extended the Iraq deployment by a further three months, while pledging in the meantime to put together a long-term proposal for Canadian operations in the country, including possible further increases in troop deployments.

Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan and his aides have made it known that they are anxious to coordinate Canada's military intervention with the Trump administration. Toward that end, Ottawa delayed moving forward with a planned counterinsurgency deployment to Africa until receiving assurances from the Pentagon that Canadian forces would not be needed elsewhere.

Finalization of Canada's "long-term" plans for the current Mideast deployment have clearly been waiting upon completion of the Trump administration's own review. Even before last week's missile strike, there were many indications that a major US escalation was in the works.

Despite Trudeau's whole-hearted endorsement of Trump's missile strike, certain media commentators and the Conservative opposition have criticized the Liberals for not being sufficiently supportive and forthcoming with offers of military support of Washington.

Several *National Post* commentators berated the Trudeau government for its supposed "reluctance" to back Trump's action, which was apparently demonstrated by its having briefly raised the possibility of an international investigation into the alleged gas attack and its calls for multilateral efforts to end the Syrian war to continue through the UN.

The missile strike has also been used as grist for the mill

for the ruling elite's longstanding push for major hikes in military spending. The Liberals are slated to announce the results of their defence policy review by the summer, after which they have pledged to hike military spending from its current level of 1 percent of GDP.

But for the *Post*, which is demanding that Ottawa double military spending to \$40 billion per year to meet the 2 percent target agreed upon at NATO's 2014 summit, this is woefully inadequate. A *Post* editorial hailing Trump's attack on Syria declared, "This is also another reminder, as if more were needed, that no member of the Western alliance—Canada very, very much included—can afford to underfund its military, and, more generally, to degrade its ability to act in concert with allies abroad."

In Quebec, the pro-Quebec independence Parti Quebecois (PQ) joined with the provincial Liberal government in welcoming the missile strike and condemning Assad as a "war criminal."

The New Democratic Party (NDP), Canada's social democrats, refused to condemn Trump's illegal attack on Syria, saying it was too soon to say what the consequences of raining missiles on Syria would be. However, it gave tacit support to Washington's actions, by making no mention of the illegal wars the US has waged and fomented in the region, including in Syria, while declaring, "Assad must be held accountable for these crimes."

The NDP has supported Canada's participation in one US-led war after another, including the 1999 war on Yugoslavia, the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and the 2012 regime-change war in Libya.



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