

Canada planning for war with North Korea

Roger Jordan
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As the Trump administration continues to recklessly escalate tensions on the Korean peninsula, Canada's Liberal government has given its strongest indication yet that Canadian troops would join a war with North Korea—a war that could result in the deaths of millions and trigger a nuclear clash between major powers.

Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan revealed April 21 that in the event of a US conflict with North Korea, Washington might well use the US-led United Nations Korea Command to mobilize troops and materiel from its allies. Korea Command, which includes Canada, was established at the onset of the 1950-53 Korean War.

While Sajjan maintained that Ottawa was focused on “diplomacy” first, he stressed that military plans for crisis situations on the Korean peninsula have been developed. According to the *Canadian Press*, policy documents prepared for former Defence Minister Peter MacKay in 2010 stated that if fighting broke out, the UN Command (UNC) “structure would be used as a means of force generating, and receiving and tasking any contributions that UNC sending states may choose to contribute.”

Sajjan's remarks followed bellicose anti-North Korean remarks from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. While in France earlier this month to commemorate the Battle of Vimy Ridge, a First World War battle in which 10,000 Canadians were killed or injured, Trudeau denounced the “dangerous and unstable North Korean regime.” Siding fully with Washington's provocative actions, which have included sending an aircraft carrier strike group to the region and the deployment of the THAAD missile defence system to South Korea, he continued, “This rogue regime in North Korea is a danger not only to the immediate region but the entire world.”

Speaking on CTV's “Question Period” broadcast April 16, Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland refused to rule out Canadian support for a US-led military attack on North Korea under the pretext of targeting its nuclear weapons arsenal. “What I will say is we unequivocally condemn the missile testing that North Korea has done. North Korea is breaking international law and its own commitments,” she noted, echoing the Trump administration's line.

Freeland also hailed China's decision to abstain from a UN Security Council resolution on Syria, suggesting that this marked a shift by Beijing away from Russia. She urged China to intercede with Pyongyang to bring about a solution to the current political and military standoff.

The readiness of the Liberal government to line up squarely behind the Trump administration's aggressive actions in Korea—which are primarily aimed at bullying China and legitimizing the further militarization of northeast Asia—is in keeping with Canada's role as a close partner of US imperialism in all its major military-strategic offensives around the world. In the 18 months since the Trudeau government came to power, it has ramped up Canada's support for the US Mideast war coalition, deploying more Special Forces to Iraq and military personnel, including strategic planners, to the region. Liberal-led Canada is also playing a substantial role in the strategic encirclement of Russia in Eastern Europe by extending a Canadian Armed Forces training mission in Ukraine and dispatching hundreds of troops to Latvia to lead one of four new “forward deployed” NATO battalions to be stationed on Russia's borders.

Taken together with these aggressive steps, the Liberals' Korea policy underscores once again the essential continuity between the Harper Conservatives and Trudeau Liberals in ruthlessly asserting Canadian imperialism's global geopolitical interests. In 2013, in conjunction with the Obama administration's “Pivot to Asia,” an economic, geopolitical and military strategy aimed at isolating and preparing for military conflict with China, the Harper government concluded a secret military agreement with the United States for increased collaboration in the Pacific. It included provisions for joint military operations in the Asia-Pacific region and came as Canada finalized deals with Singapore and South Korea to enable Ottawa to establish forward military bases in these two countries when needed.

The Canadian military is a frequent participant in US-led military exercises in South Korea and the Asia-Pacific, including a major naval exercise last summer. Trudeau has also agreed to closer security cooperation with Japan, Washington's chief imperialist ally in the region.

Canada's alliance with US imperialism in the Asia-Pacific goes back much further. During World War II, the US supplanted Britain as the Canadian ruling elite's principal military-security partner, and by the war's end Canada was preparing to send tens of thousands of troops and an armada of 60 ships to join the war between the US and Japan for domination of the Asia-Pacific.

Canada was an early and important US ally in the Korean War, a conflict that wrought death and destruction on a vast scale, sealed the partition of the Korean peninsula, and laid the basis for the bitter conflicts that today threaten to plunge the region into another catastrophic war.

In the wake of the 1949 Chinese Revolution and under conditions of deepening Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union, the US abandoned its commitment to unite Korea after ending nearly a half-century of Japanese colonial occupation. Instead Democrats, Republicans and the burgeoning military-intelligence apparatus came together as one in declaring that in Korea, Asia and around the world, the overriding objective of American foreign policy had to be thwarting "world communism."

Some 26,000 Canadian military, naval and air force personnel served in the Korean War, initially under the overall command of the arch-reactionary and imperialist, General Douglas MacArthur. The Korean War pitted the armed forces of the US-sponsored South Korean state, the US, Britain, Canadian and other western and allied states against the North Korean-led Korean People's Army and Chinese troops. Sections of the American military command demanded a much more aggressive intervention, with some, including MacArthur, advocating airstrikes on China and the use of nuclear weapons.

On 7 August, 1950, Liberal Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent announced the creation of the Canadian Army Special Force (CASF) to deploy soldiers to Korea. So as to encourage young recruits to join up for the war, the Canadian Army lowered its recruiting standards. A total of 516 Canadians died in the conflict.

Reflecting the overwhelming support within Canadian ruling circles for Washington's drive to force North Korea to bow to US domination, even if that means provoking all-out war, the CBC article that reported Sajjan's comments about possible Canadian participation in such a conflict prompted no debate within the corporate media. Only one other news organization, and clearly so for its own political reasons, the far right US publication the *Daily Caller*, saw fit to even take note of the defence minister's comments and the revelation that Canada has been involved in planning for war in Korea.

Macdonald-Laurier Institute deputy editor, David McDonough, did however pen an April 18 article in which

he described the mounting war tensions between Washington and Pyongyang as an "opportunity" to push for Canada to join the US antiballistic missile shield, hike military spending, and develop its cyberwar capabilities.

The Liberals' readiness to align Canada with the Trump administration's reckless military escalation in Korea demonstrates the politically criminal role played by all those political forces that, in one way or another, promoted Trudeau as a "progressive" alternative to the Conservatives in the 2015 election. The trade union bureaucracy, which is peddling ever more virulent Canadian nationalism as economic protectionism rises internationally, spent millions on "Anyone but Conservative" advertising campaigns, while the NDP announced that it was ready to form a coalition government with the Liberals.

Within days of Trudeau's election, the Canadian Labour Congress leadership met with him to offer their support and assistance, and Unifor, Canada's largest private sector union, gave Trudeau a rousing standing ovation at its August 2016 convention.

The Trudeau government's warmongering, whether over Korea, in the Middle East or in Eastern Europe, has not prompted a word of criticism from these layers. This is because they are in fundamental agreement with the need to uphold the global interests of Canadian capitalism by serving up Canadian workers as cheap labour for big business, while at the same time playing them off against their class brothers and sisters internationally with the poison of Canadian nationalism.

The NDP, which has supported every Canadian imperialist military intervention since the late 1990s, has not issued a single statement on the imminent threat of war with North Korea. This is in keeping with its role in defending Canadian imperialist foreign policy interests and supporting the ruling-class agenda of austerity and war.



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