

Canadian government endorses Trump's war-mongering against North Korea

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As US President Donald Trump's bellicose declarations against North Korea demonstrate that Washington is poised to instigate a catastrophic military conflict in northeast Asia that could claim the lives of millions, the Canadian government has made clear that it stands fully with US imperialism.

Last Friday, the same day that Trump proclaimed America's military assets, including its nuclear weapons, were "locked and loaded," Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland issued a statement saying that Ottawa viewed Pyongyang as a "grave threat." "We need to find ways to pressure and persuade North Korea that the path that it is on ... this path can have no positive ending for North Korea," stated Freeland.

Freeland remained mum on Trump's threats, and the declaration by US Defense Secretary James Mattis that a war with North Korea would mean the destruction of its regime and its people. But she effectively endorsed this hardline stance, remarking that when Canada's allies are in danger, "we are there."

Ottawa's deliberate silence on the Trump administration's reckless and dangerous provocations, which are chiefly responsible for the current crisis, demonstrates that the Liberal government would back US imperialism to the hilt in a conflict that could rapidly escalate. A war between Washington and Pyongyang poses the real threat of dragging in Russia and China, two major nuclear powers who have borders with North Korea and would be unlikely to stand by as Washington engages in a war for regime change on their doorsteps. Such a catastrophic conflagration would not only immediately endanger the lives of tens of millions on the Korean peninsula and throughout northeast Asia, but carry the danger of the eruption of a global war.

Freeland's statements are the latest example of the Trudeau Liberal government's concerted efforts to deepen Canada's strategic and military partnership with

US imperialism. Since coming to power in 2015, the Liberals have significantly expanded Canada's military presence in a number of US-led interventions around the world, including in the Asia-Pacific.

In line with the US military build-up against China, which is the real target of the current belligerent threats directed at North Korea, Canada has deployed additional naval capabilities to the Asia-Pacific to participate in US-led "freedom of navigation" exercises in the contested South China Sea. Just last month, the *National Post* reported that Chinese warships had shadowed Canadian vessels during one such recent manoeuvre carried out in conjunction with US ships. The HMCS Ottawa and HMCS Winnipeg also made two stops in South Korea during their recent deployment to participate in joint exercises.

In April, when the Trump administration first began ratcheting up tensions with Pyongyang, Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan made clear that Canada was ready to go to war over North Korea. Noting that Canadian forces remained part of the United Nations' Korean Command, which was established during the 1950-53 Korean War, Sajjan said that in the event of a US conflict with North Korea, Canadian forces could be made available through the UN Command structure.

Canada served as a leading US ally during the Korean War, sending more than 25,000 military personnel to participate in the conflict, which claimed the lives of over a million and laid waste to the vast majority of North Korea's cities.

While tacitly approving Trump's reckless escalation of the stand-off with North Korea, Ottawa has been seeking to provide Washington's actions with a diplomatic cover. Freeland declared in her August 11 statement that it was necessary to bring about "a de-escalation, to really get North Korea to understand it must get off of this path which is so destructive for North Korea and the world."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Trudeau dispatched his National Security Advisor Daniel Jean to lead negotiations in North Korea to secure the release of Hyeon-Soo Lim, a Canadian pastor detained by the regime. The real goal of engaging such a high-level official in the talks was revealed after Lim's release when the CBC reported that Jean and his North Korean counterparts also discussed broader issues during their meetings. Trudeau refused to provide any details, citing national security considerations.

Freeland's pledges of diplomacy stand in stark contrast to the record of the Liberal government. Two months ago, she declared in a foreign policy speech that "hard power," i.e. war, would be a central component of Canadian foreign policy in the future. The Foreign Minister specifically identified the rise of China as a "threat" to global stability, stressing that it would be necessary to integrate it into the US-dominated economic and political order. Her speech prepared the ground for an announcement by Sajjan of a 70 percent hike in military spending over the next decade to fund the purchase of new weapons systems and equipment, and to expand the size of the army.

The Conservative opposition and foreign policy commentators have seized on the war threat with North Korea to urge the Liberals to go even further in their remilitarization drive. Peter McKay, the former Defence Minister in the Harper government, remarked earlier this month that he regretted his decision not to join the US-led ballistic missile defence shield, which, its name notwithstanding, is aimed at providing Washington with the capability of waging and winning a nuclear conflict with its geopolitical rivals.

Conrad Black, the neo-conservative newspaper owner who supported the election of the Trudeau government in 2015 after concluding that Harper had faltered in his efforts to advance Canadian imperialist interests on the global stage, declared his full solidarity with Trump's war-mongering. "Trump and Mattis are speaking of massive carpet-bombing and precise targeting of conventional missiles and smart bombs on a scale that would eliminate every military target in North Korea and which would inevitably involve some collateral damage to the civil population," wrote Black in the *National Post*. "The United States certainly possesses the ability to inflict such damage, and it is not inappropriate to think in such terms now."

So-called liberal figures are no less enthusiastic about Canada intervening more forcefully in the war crisis. Tina

Park, a co-founder of the Canadian Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) wrote a guest commentary in *Maclean's* magazine in which she enthused over Canada's record on the Korean peninsula, including the deployment of "26,000 young and bright Canadians" who "volunteered to serve in Korea in defence of freedom and security" during the Korean war. Canada and South Korea have long retained close security and economic interests, she continued, noting that the US, South Korea and Canada maintained "a special friendship throughout the Cold War."

Despite attempting to portray Canada as an "honest broker" capable of mediating the dispute, Park's real objective became clear when she argued that the situation confronting North Korea's population called on "our collective responsibility to protect (R2P)." Since it was developed in the early 2000s by a Canadian-funded international commission, R2P has served as the ideological justification for one imperialist war of regime change after another, most notably in NATO's brutal air war in Libya in 2011, which led to the deaths of tens of thousands and plunged the country into a bitter civil war.

The New Democratic Party, whose leading personnel have criticized the Trudeau government's failure to stand up to Trump over economic issues such as the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, have had nothing to say about the US president's bellicose war threats on North Korea. Demonstrating once again the NDP's pro-war credentials, not a single one of the five contenders currently running to become party leader in the fall have made a statement on the North Korea crisis over recent weeks, let alone made the war danger a major issue in the leadership campaign.



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