

Canada rallies behind US in its incendiary anti-Russia offensive

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Just hours after unverified reports of a poison gas attack in Syria emerged Sunday, Canada's Liberal government issued a statement provocatively blaming the Assad regime and its ally Russia for "war crimes." Following hot on the heels of Ottawa's expulsion of four Russian diplomats over the alleged poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal, and Ottawa's claim that Russia has "interfered" in Canada's "democracy," the Trudeau government's response makes clear that it is in the frontline of the US-led charge to war.

In Ottawa's statement on the gas attack, which has all the hallmarks of a CIA-orchestrated operation, Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland denounced the Assad regime as "morally reprehensible." She continued, "Canada condemns the Assad regime and its backers—Russia and Iran—for its repeated gross violations of human rights and continued deliberate targeting of civilians."

In reality, no plausible explanation, let alone any evidence, has been provided as to why Assad, whose forces are on the verge of clearing the last remaining Islamist rebels from the environs of Damascus, would launch a chemical weapons attack. It is much more likely, if any gas attack in fact occurred, that it was staged by the US-backed Islamists so as to serve as a pretext for a massive escalation of Washington's illegal military operations in Syria. Such an escalation could rapidly trigger a regional war with Iran and/or a military clash with nuclear-armed Russia.

Freeland's statement is in line with the bloodthirsty military threats being made by US President Donald Trump, who vowed Monday to reach a decision by today on what military response to take. "Chemical weapons attacks are a war crime," declared Freeland. "Canada, alongside its international partners, will pursue accountability for these atrocities by all available means."

Freeland's invocation of "human rights" and hand-wringing over the "targeting of civilians" are shot through with hypocrisy and cynicism. Canada has participated in virtually every US-led war of aggression over the past quarter century, including the bombardment of Libya in 2011—a regime-change war that was dressed up as a crusade

to protect "human rights," resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent civilians, and has left the North African country in turmoil.

Canadian forces are also playing a major role in the conflict in Syria and Iraq, which is itself an outcome of the series of ruinous, aggressive wars Washington has waged in the Mideast since 1991.

Canadian Special Forces played a front-line role in supporting the brutal US-led onslaught on the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, and Canadian military aircraft continue to support US "coalition" bombing raids in Iraq and Syria. Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, was decimated by air strikes and shelling in an operation to reclaim it from ISIS that led to thousands of civilian deaths.

The Canadian government, which is committed to hiking military spending by over 70 percent in the coming decade, is now readying to participate in a far larger war that will eclipse these bloody conflicts. What other interpretation can be given to Freeland's remark, under conditions where missiles from the US and their French and British imperialist allies could be raining down on Syria within hours, that Canada will pursue "accountability," "alongside its international partners" with "all available means"?

Canada has played a leading role in the aggressive anti-Russia campaign led by the US and its NATO allies since Washington and Berlin orchestrated a fascist-spearheaded coup in Ukraine in 2014 to overthrow the country's pro-Russian elected president, Viktor Yanukovich. Canada is one of the four "lead" NATO states providing command and troops for the alliance's forward battalions stationed on Russia's borders in the Baltic and Poland with the aim of encircling and threatening Russia.

Canadian workers must take Freeland's denunciation of Russia as a serious warning of the imminent danger of war. It comes little more than a week after Ottawa expelled four Russian diplomats and refused to allow three more to enter the country in response to the alleged poisoning of Skripal in Salisbury, England.

In a statement announcing this action, which coincided

with the expulsion of over 60 Russian diplomats by the US and dozens more from Western Europe, the Liberal government asserted that those it had targeted had “used their diplomatic status to undermine Canada’s security or interfere in our democracy.”

No evidence whatsoever was provided to back up this incendiary claim. It essentially parrots the narrative about alleged Russian “meddling” in the 2016 US election the American intelligence agencies and the Democrats have been peddling for the past year and a half to pressure the Trump administration to adopt an even harder line toward Moscow.

Asked by reporters eager to stoke the anti-Russian atmosphere what precisely the diplomats had done to “interfere,” Trudeau’s main allegation was their role in last year’s exposure of Freeland’s grandfather, Mikhail Chomiak, as a Nazi collaborator. “We all can remember,” Trudeau declared, “efforts by Russian propagandists to discredit our Minister of Foreign Affairs in various ways through social media and by sharing scurrilous stories about her.”

In fact, the purported Russian “scurrilous stories” were true. Following Freeland’s appointment as Foreign Minister in January 2017, evidence came to light confirming that Chomiak served as editor-in-chief of *Krakivs’ki Visti*, one of the largest Ukrainian-language newspapers under Nazi occupation. After taking over equipment seized by the Nazis from a Jewish publication, *Krakivs’ki Visti* published Nazi propaganda, including anti-Semitic diatribes.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained when Chomiak’s role first came to light, if the Liberal government, with the full support of the media and opposition parties, was so emphatic in denouncing the revelation of his Nazi ties, it was because Canada has a long history of collaborating closely with far-right Ukrainian nationalists both in Canada and the Ukraine, including during and since the 2014 coup. Many of these far-right nationalists celebrate Stepan Bandera and his Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, which colluded with the Nazi occupation of the Ukraine and Poland, including in slaughtering Jews. (See: “Canadian media denounces exposure of foreign minister’s grandfather as Nazi collaborator”)

Trudeau’s decision to appoint Freeland as Foreign Minister in January 2017 was itself in part a provocation aimed at Russia. An anti-Russia hawk with close ties to right-wing Ukrainian nationalists, Freeland is on a Russian blacklist adopted in retaliation to Western sanctions over Russia’s annexation of Crimea.

As well as preparing the ground for a potential military clash with Russia, the hysterical claims about the threats

posed to Canadian “democracy” and elections will be used to clamp down on democratic rights and expand political censorship ahead of next year’s federal election. In late February, Janis Sarts, head of NATO’s Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, asserted in an interview with the *Canadian Press*, without offering a shred of evidence, that Ottawa should assume Russia will interfere in the 2019 federal election.

The Trudeau government has tasked Democratic Institutions Minister Karina Gould with “closely following how our allies are addressing these challenges in their countries,” according to a government spokesperson. This was a clear reference to the Liberal government’s endorsement of the campaign against Russia and purported “fake news” mounted by the US intelligence agencies with the full-throated support of the Democrats and the *New York Times*. This campaign is being used to justify censorship by Google and other internet giants, to smear the growing opposition in the working class as the product of Russian “interference,” and to whip up pro-war fever.

The entire media and political establishment in Canada is in full agreement with the anti-Russia campaign. The opposition Conservatives and New Democratic Party have no differences with the Liberals over their hard-line anti-Russia stance, as was shown last October when the three parties united to pass a law modelled on the US Magnitsky Act that imposes sanctions on Russian businessmen.

Denunciations of Russia have become so routine that the major media outlets did not even bother to report Freeland’s latest statement on Syria that all but commits Canada to an expanded war in the Middle East.

The corporate media’s reaction to the expulsions of diplomats was to push for the government to go even further. In a piece titled “Why aren’t we more freaked out about the Russians?” Susan Delacourt, writing on the iPolitics website, complained bitterly in the aftermath of the expulsions of the Russian diplomats that the government was not doing more and the public appeared indifferent. The “silence” of the government and citizenry, wrote Delacourt, was “kind of stunning.” She went on to demand the government launch a broader crackdown in the name of combatting Russian “interference” in Canadian “democracy.”



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