

Canadian authorities prepare mass repression of anti-G7 protests

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Canada's Justin Trudeau-led Liberal government is mounting a massive police-military "security" operation around the G7 Summit, which is to take place this Friday and Saturday in La Malbaie, a small municipality in Charlevoix County, 150 kilometers east of Quebec City.

Hosting the summit of the leaders of the principal imperialist powers will cost the Canadian treasury more than C\$600 million, the vast majority of which is going toward funding the security operation.

An Integrated Security Unit (ISU) has been established that is comprised of 8,000 police and military personnel, which is equal to the entire population of La Malbaie. The ISU includes the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Sûreté du Québec (the Quebec Provincial Police) and the municipal police of Quebec City. It is working in close collaboration with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Canadian counterpart and partner of the US National Security Agency (NSA), the Communications Security Establishment (CSE).

The G7 leaders are to meet and sleep at the luxurious Manoir Richelieu hotel, which sits atop a hill offering a panoramic view of the St. Lawrence River.

Canadian authorities have transformed the Manoir Richelieu into a fortress for the event. The hotel is at the heart of a security "red zone" that is bounded by a 3.7-kilometer-long, 6-meter-high fence, sporting numerous surveillance cameras and anchored in concrete. Access to the red zone will be strictly controlled by the RCMP.

The red zone is itself located within a 20-square-kilometer "green zone." Some 1,000 La Malbaie residents whose homes fall in the green zone will be subject to rigorous surveillance and control during the

summit, including having to show special accreditation when entering the zone.

The green zone includes Route 362, the main road to La Malbaie, which will be partially fenced off. Motorists, therefore, will have to bypass the area to continue their journey. A maritime and air exclusion zone (with a radius of 20 kilometers) will also be imposed by the Canadian Armed Forces, which has requisitioned the nearby Charlevoix county airport.

Vehicle movements around the Valcartier military base, near Quebec City, will also be restricted. Vehicles travelling in the area that do not bear a special government-issued sticker will be subject to police searches.

Those who want to traverse the security gauntlet to go to La Malbaie and exercise their right to protest will be confined to a museum parking lot, which has been declared, in Orwellian style, a "free expression" zone. It is surrounded by a 1.5-kilometer fence.

An "operational center for offenders" has been hastily constructed in the neighboring town of Clermont where demonstrators deemed to have violated these police-state measures can be formally charged and imprisoned. "Adjustments" have also made to the Orsainville prison in Quebec City, where the largest anti-G7 protests are expected to be held. Orsainville gained international notoriety when security forces used it in perpetrating numerous human rights violations of demonstrators arrested at the April 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City.

The Canadian government and state are using this year's G7 summit to accustom the population to state repression and to refine the techniques of the police and military forces in countering social unrest.

Since 2001, Liberal and Conservative federal governments have vastly increased the powers, budgets

and reach of the national-security apparatus in the name of the “war on terror.” In 2015, the Liberals voted for the Harper Conservative government’s draconian Bill C-51, while promising to amend it when they formed government. Predictably, the Liberals’ Bill C-59 left in place the most important authoritarian powers granted the security-intelligence agencies under Bill C-51. This includes virtually unlimited access to the government’s personal information on Canadians and the “right” of the CSIS to violate almost any law when “disrupting” threats to public security.

The G7 summit at La Malbaie is taking place amidst an international resurgence of working class struggle against everything that the G7 stands for: militarism, the assault on democratic rights, capitalist austerity and the rise of social inequality. In Canada, where workers are told, as elsewhere, that “there is no money” for good-paying jobs and quality public services, the number of billionaires has increased tenfold in the last 20 years. Their collective wealth now stands at C\$150 billion.

At the same time, international tensions are reaching an explosive level. In a measure that could trigger a 1930s-style trade war, the Trump administration has just slapped tariffs on aluminum and steel exports from Europe, Canada and Mexico.

The security preparations for the La Malbaie/Charlevoix summit ominously recall the 2010 G20 Summit in Toronto, chaired by Canada’s then Conservative prime minister, Stephen Harper. Ottawa budgeted more than C\$1 billion for the massive police-military surveillance and control operation mounted during the Toronto G20 meeting and the G8 summit in Huntsville, Ontario, that preceded it.

In what was a state-orchestrated provocation, police, despite their massive numbers, stood by, allowing a small number of anarchists to break away from the main protest against the Toronto G20, smash some windows and commit other acts of vandalism. Their actions then became the pretext for a violent police crackdown.

Unsurprisingly, it subsequently emerged that police agents provocateurs had infiltrated anarchist groups and urged them to carry out acts of vandalism.

Police “kettled” hundreds of people for hours on one of Toronto’s busiest streets, including bystanders, and took more than a thousand people into custody,

reputedly the largest mass arrest in Canadian history.

Those arrested were strip-searched and caged. Security officials denied most of them medical assistance, water, food, or access to toilets for hours.

In an action that underscores the arbitrary character of the mass arrests, the authorities released the vast majority without charge. Similarly, many of those who were initially charged never faced trial due to the lack of any evidence that they had committed any offense.

As for the cops who ran amuck bludgeoning, beating up and shooting plastic bullets at peaceful protesters, only a handful faced any disciplinary measures even though their violent actions were frequently caught on video.



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