

Canada's Liberal government abets US-sponsored coup attempt in Venezuela

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In the wake of the failure of last week attempt by the US and its domestic stooge Juan Guaidó to foment a military coup in Venezuela, Canada's Liberal government has reaffirmed its support for Washington's regime-change operation in the South American country. In addition to statements endorsing the criminal putsch, Justin Trudeau's Liberals are working behind the scenes to orchestrate the establishment of a far-right, pro-imperialist puppet regime in Caracas.

The principal means through which Canada is assisting Washington and pursuing its own predatory imperialist interests in Venezuela is the Lima Group, an alliance of US allies in the Americas in which Canada is playing the leading role. Established in 2017 for the ostensible purpose of ending the political and social crisis in Venezuela "peacefully," the Lima Group in reality has acted as a front for American imperialism's drive to install a client regime in the country with the world's largest proven oil reserves.

While the Trump administration has explicitly threatened military intervention, which could rapidly escalate into a region-wide conflagration, the Lima Group has publicly declared that, for the present, it opposes any outside military action. But the group's activities are closely coordinated with Washington, with Canada time and again rallying the Lima Group members behind each new US escalation, from declaring Maduro's re-election last year "illegitimate," to immediately endorsing Guaidó's Jan. 23 self-proclamation as the country's "interim president" and last week's attempted military coup.

Just hours after Guaidó launched his coup, which quickly collapsed due to a lack of popular support and the refusal of any significant section of the military to defect from the bourgeois nationalist Maduro regime, the Lima Group issued a statement that cynically promoted the attempted putsch as an effort "to restore democracy" to Venezuela. The statement went on to demand that the Venezuelan military "cease being instruments of the illegitimate regime for the oppression of the Venezuelan people."

That Canada was the driving force behind this propaganda

for the US-sponsored coup is beyond doubt. Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, whose intimate ties to leading members of the US political and financial elite are well known, organized an emergency Lima Group meeting by video conference April 30 to discuss what the Canadian government evidently hoped would be the rapid ouster of Maduro at the hands of Venezuela's military. But the coup bid quickly fizzled, and on the following two days the Maduro regime made a show of force, with large crowds demonstrating in support of the government on May 1 and the president marching with his top military commanders through Caracas the next day.

Trudeau responded to the collapse of Guaidó's coup by seeking to promote regime change in Caracas by other means. According to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Trudeau spoke with Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel about Venezuela late last week. "The prime minister, on behalf of the Lima Group, underscored the desire to see free and fair elections and the constitution upheld in Venezuela," declared the statement. "The prime minister also reiterated his concern for the ongoing suffering of the Venezuelan people. The two leaders discussed ways they could work together to support a peaceful resolution to the crisis."

The references to "free and fair elections" and the upholding of the constitution are an utter fraud, aimed at cloaking savage imperialist aggression in "humanitarian" and "democratic" garb. Canada, no less than the United States, is eager to get its hands on Venezuela's vast oil reserves, and thereby strengthen the position of its multibillion-dollar mining and financial investments across Latin America. It also shares Washington's aim of curtailing Russian and Chinese influence in the region. China in particular has emerged as a major investor in South America over the last decade.

The PMO statement leaves no doubt that Trudeau was seeking to strong-arm Cuba, which is now the target of enhanced US sanctions, into abandoning its support for Maduro in favour of Guaidó. Since Jan. 23 Canada has

maintained that Guaidó is Venezuela's "constitutional" president and the incarnation of the "democratic" aspirations of the Venezuelan people. In reality his self-proclamation as president was a criminal conspiracy orchestrated by the Trump administration, but in which Canada played a significant supporting role. In the days and weeks before Jan. 23, Canadian diplomats, including those on the ground in Venezuela, held meetings with opposition leaders to encourage them to unite and launch a bid to topple Maduro.

Trudeau's attempt to bully Cuba, one of Maduro's closest allies, is of particular significance. Canada has major economic interests in Cuba and has long served as an intermediary between Havana and Washington. Ottawa is now trying to leverage those ties to prevail on Havana to use its diplomatic connections with the Maduro regime to facilitate the defection of important sections of it behind the US puppet Guaidó.

Trudeau's initiative comes as the Trump administration is increasing its pressure on Canada to adopt a harder line towards Cuba. Last month, Trump lifted the ban on US citizens suing companies who do business in Cuba using property seized from American companies during the 1959 revolution—an action he tied directly to Havana's continuing support for Maduro.

The full implementation of the so-called Helms-Burton Act was supported above all by Trump's hawkish National Security Adviser, John Bolton, who has been in the frontline of those bullying Venezuela with the threat of war. The coming into force of the provision is expected to lead to some 6,000 lawsuits, predominantly directed against European and Canadian companies.

Although the newly enforced provisions of the Helms-Burton Act directly target Canadian economic interests and are yet another example of Washington trying to impose extraterritorial sanctions on the world, the Trudeau government's response has been low-key. Ottawa has issued a pro forma complaint and pledged to back Canadian companies against any Helms-Burton-inspired lawsuits.

Meanwhile, Ottawa is leaning on Havana to abandon one of its closest allies and accept the installation of an antidemocratic regime pledged to Guaidó's "Plan Pais," which calls for the privatization of the Venezuela's oil wealth and the imposition of IMF structural adjustment measures.

The Trudeau government's naked intervention in Venezuela with the aim of bringing about regime change is just one part of Canada's increasing involvement in US military-strategic offensives around the world. Canada has been one of Washington's staunchest allies in expanding NATO and now NATO deployments to Russia's borders and in its preparations for military conflict in the Asia-

Pacific with China.

Canada's promotion of regime change in Venezuela, like all of its predatory imperialist adventures around the world, enjoys virtual unanimous backing from the political establishment. The official opposition Conservatives have been even more bellicose in their denunciations of Maduro than the government, while the corporate media, from the liberal *Toronto Star* to the *Globe and Mail*, the mouthpiece of Canada's financial elite, have proclaimed their support for Guaidó's attempts to seize power.

The lone establishment voice to oppose the Trudeau government's endorsement of last week's attempted putsch was the New Democratic Party. Its foreign policy spokesman Guy Caron issued a statement that condemned "any attempted coup with the assistance of the military." But this hypocritical remark, coming from a party that has endorsed one Canadian military intervention after another over the past quarter of a century, was aimed above all at covering up the NDP's pro-imperialist stance on Venezuela. Later in the very same statement, Caron raised the demand for "free and democratic elections," thereby endorsing the US, Lima Group, and right-wing Venezuelan opposition lie that Maduro's presidency is constitutionally illegitimate. "Canada must continue working with its local allies to find a peaceful and democratic solution," declared Caron.

The reality is that Canada and its "local allies," organized in the Lima Group, are conspiring to engineer an anti-democratic regime change operation that will bring a far-right, anti-working-class government to power in Caracas. This endeavour is incompatible with both a "peaceful" and a "democratic" solution. It leads inevitably in the direction of civil war, military conflict and the imperialist plunder of Venezuela's oil and other natural resources.

Moreover, it should be recalled that the NDP lent its explicit backing to the imperialist-orchestrated regime-change operation when it was launched in late January. Only after a public outcry did the NDP feel compelled to walk back this brazen endorsement.



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