

Canada's military top brass joins CSIS in demanding Huawei ban

Roger Jordan
12 February 2020

The top brass of Canada's military has joined the country's premier spy agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), in pressing the Trudeau Liberal government to completely ban Huawei and Huawei technology from the country's 5G network, the *Globe and Mail* has reported.

The revelation headlined the lead article in Monday's edition of Canada's "newspaper of record." The article, which was chock-full of shrill warnings from anonymous high-ranking military officials and corporate executives about the Huawei "threat," represents a further ratcheting up of an already pronounced anti-China campaign.

For months the military-security establishment, much of the media, and the Conservative opposition have been demanding the Trudeau government—which is already joined at the hip in Washington's military-strategic offensive against Beijing—take an even harder anti-China line. Whether Ottawa bows to Washington's demands and imposes a total ban on Huawei's participation in Canada's 5G network is increasingly being invoked as a litmus test of its anti-China bonafides.

An anonymous military official told the *Globe* that high-ranking officers, including Chief of Defence Staff General Jonathan Vance, believe Huawei is "not a trusted vendor because its 5G equipment could be used for Chinese espionage or to disable critical infrastructure during an international crisis." Moreover, they are "concerned that allowing Huawei into 5G could jeopardize security co-operation with the United States and intelligence sharing in the Five Eyes partnership of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States."

The efforts to further intensify the anti-China campaign over Huawei follows Britain's announcement late last month that it would permit the Chinese tech giant to supply equipment for parts of its 5G network. US and Australian officials, however, insist that any use of Chinese equipment in the network represents a threat.

In comments delivered to a state governors' meeting over the weekend, attended by five Canadian premiers, US

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo darkly warned of the "long arm of Beijing." This follows a series of comments from senior US senators, Democrat and Republican alike, threatening Ottawa with a downgrading of intelligence sharing if it opens any part of Canada's 5G market to Huawei.

Billions of dollars are at stake for the telecommunications giants. Bell and Telus, respectively Canada's second and third largest telecom communications companies, have invested heavily in Huawei technology, and have warned the government that a ban would cost them dearly. Rogers, the country's largest cellphone and internet provider, by contrast, has little to any exposure to Huawei.

Canada's ruling elite is above all determined to maintain its close military-strategic partnership with US imperialism, which has enabled it to pursue its own predatory imperialist ambitions around the globe for the past three-quarters of a century.

In addition to the vicious anti-China campaign in the media, Canada's ruling elite has sided with Washington in its economic and military build-up against Beijing. The Trudeau government renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement to consolidate what is in all essentials a North American trade bloc directed against China. It also green-lighted the arrest of Huawei's chief financial officer, Meng Wanzhou, as she travelled through Vancouver Airport in December 2018, and is pushing for her extradition to the US on bogus charges of evading Washington's economic sanctions on Iran.

On the military front, Ottawa has deepened its collaboration with Washington in operations in the Asia-Pacific, including by sending Canadian naval vessels on so-called "freedom of navigation" missions designed to challenge Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Ottawa's commitment to modernize the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD), and the related push from military-strategic circles for Canada to join the US ballistic missile defence shield, are ultimately aimed at preparing the US-Canada alliance for war with major

competitors like Russia and China, wars that will likely be fought with nuclear weapons.

This prospect is being discussed openly in military and defence circles. At a conference hosted January 29 by the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, Commodore Jamie Clarke, a senior Canadian Armed Forces' officer and NORAD's deputy director of strategy, appealed for urgent action to upgrade NORAD's capabilities, including its "early warning" detection system.

Making clear that this upgrade would require tens of billions of dollars in additional spending on top of the 70 percent defence spending increase already announced by the Liberal government by 2026, Deputy Defence Minister Jody Thomas told the same conference, "I don't think we should presume that we are going to do more with the same. That's been the history of the department, and we can't possibly do that. Not with the amount of money that is required" for rearmament under the government's national defence policy, "and the money that is required for NORAD."

Trudeau's initial pledge upon coming to power in 2015 to strengthen trading relations and possibly even conclude a free trade pact with Beijing have largely been dropped. An important section of the bourgeoisie, particularly those with ties to the powerful Demarais family, backed this strategy with a view to diversifying Canadian exports and opening up new business opportunities for the corporate elite.

A prominent spokesman for this faction is former Prime Minister Jean Chretien, who blamed deteriorating Canada-China relations on Trump in a December interview. He accused the US president of setting a "trap" for Ottawa by demanding that it detain Meng and said Canada has paid the price with a souring of relations with Beijing. This has included the tit-for-tat arrest of two Canadians in China and Chinese bans on some Canadian agricultural exports.

However, under conditions of Trump's expanding trade war measures and sharpening tensions between the major powers around the world, Canada is being forced to choose which side it stands on. John Turnbull, a retired brigadier general who worked in military intelligence, bluntly laid this out in Monday's *Globe* piece. "This Five Eyes relationship is pretty important to (the Department of National Defence) and to the military intelligence world," he said, referring to Canada's involvement in the US-led global spying network. "I'm not sure how many people really understand 5G, but they do understand economics and they do understand power plays. And there are two big economic spheres of influence here, and when we are forced to pick a side, it tends to be with the US for lots of excellent reasons that go well beyond IT security."

This unabashed assertion of Canadian imperialist interests provides yet another example of the utter fraud of the

Canadian ruling elite's pose, fronted since 2015 by Trudeau, as a "humanitarian" and "progressive" power. The reality is that no less than the far-right Trump in Washington, and Macron or Merkel in Europe, Canada's Liberal government is pushing a pro-war agenda combined with a sharp turn to the right on domestic policy.

The foul anti-China campaign that has pervaded the Canadian media for months has created an environment that is encouraging the most reactionary political forces. As the coronavirus epidemic has spread globally in recent weeks, Chinese Canadians, who make up a significant minority, especially in the country's largest cities, have reported an uptick in xenophobic and racist attacks. A petition initiated by parents in York Region near Toronto, where a substantial Chinese community lives, called on schools to quarantine any Chinese children and families who have travelled to the country since the virus first broke out.

Such racist sentiments have been actively encouraged by journalists from mainstream media outlets. CTV investigative reporter Peter Akman triggered a wave of public outrage by tweeting a picture of himself wearing a face mask next to an Asian hairdresser. "Hopefully all I got today is a haircut," read the caption.

Amy Go of the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice drew an historical parallel with the "Yellow Peril" racism promoted in the first half of the 20th century to divide working people and legitimize military conflicts, particularly during World War II against Japan. "This kind of violation of human rights, this further stigmatization, this entrenchment of 'Yellow Peril' perception ... ultimately, collectively we bear the consequences," commented Go. "When coronavirus is controlled, guess what's left still? [The idea that] Chinese are the carriers of diseases."



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact