Canada’s military forced to admit growing number of far-right extremists in armed forces

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The head of the Canadian Army, Lt-Gen. Wayne Eyre, has publicly conceded that support for far-right extremism is growing in the ranks of Canada’s military, declaring, “We have a problem with far-right activity across the army.”

This is a staggering about face. Canada’s military-intelligence and political establishments have for years downplayed the presence of supporters of the far-right in the Canadian Armed Forces. Those military personnel exposed as having far-right views and ties have invariably been labeled “rare,” and “bad apples.”

Internal intelligence documents, obtained by Global News through access to information requests, indicate a cavalier attitude towards the far right. In 2016, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Canada’s primary national intelligence agency, claimed that “within the broader context of extremism in Canada, the number of right-wing extremists who promote or are willing to engage in politically-motivated violence is extremely small.” An internal report authored by Military Police Criminal Intelligence on the presence of far-right and neo-Nazi elements in the Canadian Armed Forces was similarly dismissive, claiming that “hate groups do not pose a significant threat.” The report said that between 2013 and 2018, 53 members of the armed forces were confirmed to have connections to far-right groups, including the Three Percent, the Soldiers of Odin, Hammerskin Nation, the Proud Boys, La Meute, and Atomwaffen Division.

Last week, Eyre announced he would soon issue a special order giving army units ”explicit direction” on how to respond to expressions of support for the far right and racism among military personnel. According to CBC, he also pledged to convene a meeting of some 450 mid-level Army commanders to discuss “far-right infiltration of the military.”

The military top brass’ change of tack is in response to a series of recent incidents and revelations that have proven impossible to ignore, notwithstanding the best efforts of the corporate media to trivialize them. The most high-profile of these was the attempted assassination of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau by Army Ranger Corey Hurren, who was quickly revealed to be an advocate of far-right conspiracy theories.

On the morning of July 2, Hurren drove his pickup truck through the gates of Rideau Hall, the residence of the governor general, and the temporary residence of Trudeau. A 90 minute standoff between RCMP officers and the heavily-armed Hurren ensued, which ended when the latter was peacefully apprehended. A decorated Army Ranger who had received an army medal as recently as January 2020, Hurren was on duty when he carried out his attempted attack. Yet, as part of the media’s general indifference to the affair, no journalist has seen fit to inquire whether he conducted the assault in his army uniform. (See: **Canadian Establishment Downplays Attempt to Assassinate Trudeau**).

Hurren faces 21 weapons charges and one count of threatening the prime minister. His bail hearing has been delayed several times since July. The hearing is currently set for October 16.

The attempts to gloss over Hurren’s political motivations were undermined by the contents of a letter that he had on his person when he was arrested. “With the firearms ban,” wrote Hurren, “and seeing more of our rights being taken away, on top of bankrupting the country, I could no longer sit back and watch this happen. I hope this is a wakeup call and a turning point.” Hurren accused the Trudeau Liberals of establishing a “Communist dictatorship.” This is a trope of far-right conspiracy theorists, including the likes of the fascistic Alex Jones of InfoWars, whose views Hurren had promoted as far back as the early 2000s on his personal webpage.

Social media posts by Hurren on Instagram and the public Facebook account of his small business, GrindHouse Fine, show that he was influenced by conspiracy theories linked to QAnon, a far-right group that advocates violence and mass arrests to protect President Trump from what they allege is a state-organized conspiracy against him. Social media posts also show his strong support for the military, including many shared posts from the 4th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, of whose Swan River Patrol he had been elected second in command.

The Canadian Rangers are also in the spotlight because of other personnel with ties to the far right.

Two Rangers in the Valemont, B.C. Rangers Patrol Group,

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Erik Myggland and his ex-wife, Jodi Myggland, were under the scrutiny of military intelligence for at least four years due to their open support of far-right organizations. Erik Myggland has been pictured wearing patches of both the Three Percenters and the Soldiers of Odin. Remarkably, the two were allowed to continue serving in Canada's military unhindered, with Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan stating he only learned about their cases when the CBC raised the issue in August after the broadcaster conducted its own investigation.

Founded in 2008, the Three Percenters are an outgrowth of the militia movement in the United States. Their ideology combines extreme anti-government hysteria with an almost religious devotion to gun rights. As with the militia movement of the 1990s, they make references to the "New World Order" conspiracy theory and believe that the world is controlled by a shadowy "globalist" or "socialist" clique, a sentiment that overlaps with the far-right contemporary QAnon movement and the ravings of Alex Jones.

The Soldiers of Odin were formed as part of the right-wing nationalist backlash against the refugee crisis sparked by the imperialist wars in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia. Founded in 2015 in Finland, the movement quickly spread across Europe and to North America. Their ideology is ultranationalist, anti-immigrant, and anti-refugee. The first Canadian chapter of the Soldiers of Odin was founded in 2016. As with the Three Percenters, the Soldiers of Odin have a strong survivalist mentality, coupled with an obsession with protecting national sovereignty. They have been known to conduct "patrols" in immigrant neighbourhoods with the intention of intimidating and harassing immigrants and minorities.

Earlier this month, Eyre announced publicly that Eirk Myggland would be removed from the Rangers "within weeks." However, the army chief said that the military would not and could not take specific disciplinary measures against him, because he had engaged in his far-right activities during his own free time.

Myggland and Hurren were no doubt attracted to the Rangers by its promotion of bellicose nationalism. On the website of the 4th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, of which both Myggland and Hurren were members, the unit boasts that one of its main tasks is "watching for illegal immigrants."

The neo-Nazi terrorist organization "The Base" has also found support within the Canadian Armed Forces. The leader of the movement, Rinaldo Nazzaro, used to work as an FBI analyst and contractor for the Pentagon. The movement aims to recruit weapons specialists from western militaries. Corporal Patrik Mathews, a Canadian Armed Forces reserve combat engineer, went AWOL in August 2019 when an undercover investigative report uncovered his efforts to recruit members of his unit, the 38 Canadian Brigade Group in Winnipeg, to the Base. He fled to the United States, where he was arrested with two other Base members for planning a terrorist attack in Richmond, Virginia, in January. (See: **Virginia declares state of emergency barring guns at State Capitol ahead of far-right rally**).

The FBI discovered videos at Mathews' apartment in Delaware, in which he discussed his plans: "Derail some f—ing trains, kill some people and poison some water supplies … If you want the white race to survive, you're going to have to do your f—ing part."

This information has been largely ignored by the corporate media and political establishment. The same media outlets that for decades have screamed about the threat of Islamist terrorism, and cited it to justify foreign wars and a massive expansion of the powers and reach of Canada's intelligence agencies, have treated the attempted assassination of Canada's head of government as a non-event. Only a handful of articles, mainly in the CBC and the *Winnipeg Free Press* and based on their own investigative reporting, have drawn attention to the growing presence of far-right forces within Canada's military.

The reasons for this are clear. The exposure of far-right elements within the military cuts across the ruling elite's efforts to cast the armed forces as a defender of "democracy" and protector of "human rights" abroad. These have been the key justifications used to sell decades of Canadian military aggression around the world in close alliance with US imperialism, from the bombardment of Yugoslavia to the ongoing war in Syria. Additionally, the Trudeau government, backed by the entire political establishment, is in the process of vastly increasing military spending, so as to ensure Canadian imperialism has the "hard power," to use the words of Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, to be a protagonist in the new era of global strategic competition among the great powers.

Current plans call for Canada's defence spending to be hiked by more than 70 percent by 2026 over 2017 levels. But Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan recently indicated that military spending could be raised still higher so as to speed up delivery of new weapons and weapons systems.

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