Far-right army reservist who tried to assassinate Canada's prime minister sentenced to six years behind bars

Matthew Richter, Roger Jordan
30 March 2021

Corey Hurren, the 46-year-old active-duty member of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves who attempted to assassinate Prime Minister Justin Trudeau last July, was sentenced earlier this month to six years in prison, minus one year already served. Although the presiding judge openly acknowledged in his ruling that Hurren's crime was politically motivated and a violent attack on the government, the trial proceedings and accompanying media coverage have sought to cover up the political background to Hurren's assault.

In issuing the sentence, Justice Robert Wadden provided a sobering summary of Hurren's crime that left no doubt about his far-right and fascistic motives. Wadden declared, "This was an armed aggression against the government which must be denounced in the strongest terms."

"Corey Hurren committed a politically motivated, armed assault intended to intimidate Canada's elected government," continued the judge. "What spurred Mr. Hurren to action, to arm himself, load his guns, drive to Ottawa and attack Rideau Hall (Trudeau's temporary residence) were his political views, including some conspiracy theories. There is no evidence that he has renounced the conspiracy theories or that he has recognized the wrongfulness of using armed force to express his political views."

The judgement's blunt presentation of the political character of Hurren's crime stands in stark contrast to the police investigation and state prosecution of the would-be assassin, which at every point sought to trivialize and downplay Hurren's attack. When he was initially arrested, Hurren was charged with 21 firearms counts and one count of uttering threats to kill or injure the prime minister. Yet by the time his case got to court, he faced only seven firearms counts and one charge of causing property damage. The trial proceeded at lightning speed, with Hurren signing an agreed statement of facts and the judge issuing his ruling little more than a month later.

Given the unprecedented character of Hurren's crime—the first-ever attempt to assassinate a sitting Canadian prime minister—the deliberate effort to cover up its motives is all the more glaring. If it is true that Hurren conducted a "politically motivated, armed assault intended to intimidate Canada's elected government" and an "armed aggression against the government," i.e., sedition, why were none of the charges he faced in court political? Why was no serious effort undertaken to bring to light his political development, his political associates and possible accomplices? Why was he persistently portrayed as a disoriented lone wolf when the prevalence of far-right and fascistic forces within the military is a well-established fact?

Clearly, powerful forces within the political establishment and military and state apparatus wanted to keep the political background to Hurren's attempted assassination of Trudeau out of the public eye. They do not want attention shone on the fact that Hurren was a professed supporter of right-wing extremist positions for well over a decade, that the military is rife with far-right forces, and that just a day prior to his attack, an angry demonstration of hundreds of fascists took place on Parliament Hill demanding the reintroduction of the death penalty so it could be applied to Trudeau.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* previously explained, "The official narrative of Hurren as a disoriented individual who was overwhelmed by the pandemic and had no intention of harming anyone neatly dovetails with the ruling elite's desire to prevent any serious examination of the role of far-right networks and right-wing extremists within the military and state apparatus. Such an investigation would undoubtedly uncover significant support for far-right views, including those expressed by Hurren and the demonstrators on Parliament Hill on July 1."

The official narrative of the attempted assassination was buttressed by outright suppression of information. Although the RCMP acknowledged in January that two inquiries into the July 2 attack had been completed for several months, they refused to release the details to the public on the spurious grounds that police examinations into the attempted assassination of Canada's head of government were "not for public consumption."

Even the limited amount of information that has reached the public during the investigation and trial has undermined the official narrative. Hurren drove for over two days to reach

© World Socialist Web Site

Ottawa from Manitoba with five firearms in his truck. He was on active duty as a reservist in the Canadian Rangers as part of the military's COVID-19 response when he carried out the attack. At Hurren's sentencing, it was revealed that he carried his military ID with him during his attack, allegedly to aid him in evading the police.

Information sworn by an RCMP officer states that Hurren had an M14 battle rifle, two shotguns, a Hi-Standard revolver for which he did not have a license, and a prohibited high-capacity magazine when he was detained on the grounds of Rideau Hall. A handwritten letter left in Hurren's pickup truck opens with a list of the contact numbers of his family and his commanding officer—a clear indication that he did not expect to survive his attack. He asserted that Canada, under Trudeau, "is now under a Communist dictatorship." This is a common trope in far-right circles.

Judge Wadden noted in his sentencing that when police confronted Hurren, he hid behind a tree and refused to drop his arms. He told officers he had rammed his truck through the gates of Rideau Hall so he could "arrest Trudeau," whom he denounced as "a communist" and "corrupt."

After Hurren was detained, police discovered several chats on his phone about politics, COVID-19 and conspiracy theories, but no further details were provided.

There is much to suggest that Hurren's views are shared widely within the military and veterans' groups. Hurren himself was elected second in command of the Fourth Rangers Patrol Group of which he was a member.

Numerous incidents of far-right influence within the military have come to light over recent years. Erik Myggland of the Valemont, B.C. Rangers Patrol Group was shown to have ties to both the Three Percenters and the Soldiers of Odin and was pictured sporting their patches. He publicly referred to Trudeau as a "treasonous bastard"—language akin to that used by Hurren. Patrik Mathews, a military engineer from Manitoba, fled to the United States after a report exposed him as a member of the neo-Nazi terrorist group The Base. He was arrested together with several co-conspirators by the FBI in January 2020 during the advanced stages of plans for armed attacks.

As questions mounted about the presence of far-right forces throughout the military in the wake of Hurren's attempted assassination of Trudeau, top military officials felt compelled to acknowledge last fall that the army confronts a problem with right-wing extremism. Yet there have been no calls for an independent inquiry into this phenomenon. This contrasts sharply with the amount of press coverage given to the recent allegations of sexual misconduct in the Canadian military, which have already resulted in multiple investigations into allegations against General Jonathan Vance, till January Canada's Chief of Defence Staff, and the stepping down, at least temporarily, of his replacement, Admiral Art McDonald.

The trivialization of Hurren's fascist-motivated crime must be considered in an international context. In the United States, whose military was ordered to "stand-down" in February by the new defence secretary to "discuss the problem of extremism in the ranks," an armed fascist mob stormed the Capitol building on January 6 in an attempt to overturn the outcome of the 2020 presidential election. Although this mob was politically directed and supported by Trump and broad sections of the Republican Party leadership, the Democrats have refused to examine the political forces behind the attack and instead asserted their support for a "strong" Republican Party. In Germany, the military, police and state apparatus is rife with right-wing extremist networks planning for "Day X," when they intend to violently overthrow the government and kill their political opponents. When Walter Lübcke, a regional politician, fell victim to a successful assassination by a right-wing extremist gunman in June 2019, the subsequent murder trial portrayed the assailant, Stephan Ernst, as a mentally disoriented lone wolf so as to cover up his numerous ties to far-right networks.

Similar tendencies are at work in Canada. The ruling elite has no interest in exposing them, because to do so would discredit the military/security apparatus under conditions where unprecedented sums of money are being lavished on the armed forces with the full-throated support of the entire political establishment. In 2017, the Trudeau government adopted a plan to hike military spending by more than 70 percent by 2026, and all the parliamentary parties have lent support to Canada's ever-deeper integration into US military-strategic offensives around the world, including in the oil-rich Middle East and against nuclear-armed China and Russia

The basic reason for the ruling elite's indifference to right-wing extremist violence in every country is that they want to keep fascist forces in reserve to be used as shock troops against an increasingly rebellious working class. Under conditions of mounting social inequality and a rise of working class struggles in response to the disastrous handling of the pandemic, Canada's ruling class, like its counterparts internationally, feels that it will need right-wing extremists like Hurren to protect the vast wealth of the financial oligarchy and capitalist rule as a whole.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site