

Canadian foreign minister's Ukraine visit underscores Ottawa's backing for US-led war drive against Russia

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Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly's two-day trip to Ukraine this week underlined Ottawa's full-throated support for the US-led imperialist war drive against Russia. Unlike most of the imperialist political leaders descending on Kiev in recent days, Joly went out of her way to proclaim her country's support for Ukraine's prospective NATO membership, a move that would be interpreted by Moscow as akin to an open declaration of war.

Asked by Radio Canada what her message would be to Ukrainian government officials, Joly replied, "I [will] tell them that first of all, Canada's position has not changed. We believe that Ukraine should be able to join NATO." She added that her visit was aimed at showing the Trudeau Liberal government's "unwavering solidarity" with Ukraine's far-right, pro-western regime, which idolizes Nazi collaborators like Stepan Bandera and has integrated fascist militias into its armed forces.

Joly's incendiary remarks give the lie to the claim, incessantly repeated in the mainstream media, that the crisis in Ukraine has been produced by "Russian aggression." The reality is that in the thirty years since the Stalinist bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union and reintroduced capitalism, the imperialist powers have vastly expanded their influence throughout Eastern Europe and encircled Russia militarily. NATO's territory has moved 800 miles eastward, and the US-led military alliance now has troops positioned in the Baltic republics on Russia's border. Russian President Vladimir Putin has declared that Ukraine's membership of NATO is a "red line."

The provocative character of Joly's demand that Ukraine be made a NATO member becomes even clearer when one considers the character of Ukraine's ruling elite. Riven by the internal conflicts within Ukraine's fabulously wealthy and corrupt oligarchy, and widely despised by the country's impoverished population, President Volodymyr Zelensky's government is a crisis-ridden and extremely unstable regime. The same day Joly touched down in Kiev, former Ukrainian

President Petro Poroshenko returned to the country to face charges of sedition for sanctioning, while president, the purchase of coal from pro-Russian separatists in the east of the country.

The danger that Kiev, emboldened by the backing it has received from Washington, Ottawa, and the European imperialist powers, could launch a reckless attack on Russia to divert attention from social and political turmoil is real and growing. If this scenario occurred with Ukraine as a NATO member, the Canadian, US, and European militaries would be obligated under the alliance's collective defence rules to come to Kiev's military support, triggering a conflagration between nuclear-armed powers that would put the very survival of humanity on the line.

Joly made clear that Canada would provide the right-wing Kiev regime with hundreds of millions of dollars in loans. Noting that Canada has already provided Ukraine with \$245 million in loans since 2014 as well as hundreds of millions in foreign aid, Joly left little doubt that the new financial package would be used to strengthen Ukraine's readiness for war. "We are ready to ... offer financial resources to Ukraine because we know that the Russian threat creates a form of economic instability, and that has an impact on state revenue and the ability of the Ukrainian government to finance its approach."

Contrary to the bogus propaganda about Canada financing "democracy" and "judicial reform" in Ukraine, the "approach" of Kiev over recent years obliquely referred to by Joly has been to whip up virulent anti-Russian nationalism and integrate fascist militias into its police and security forces. A study by George Washington University last year revealed that Canadian and US military personnel were training members of the fascist "Centuria" group at Ukraine's National Army Academy, a military school for future army officers. Centuria functions as a faction of the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion, with which Canadian officials held a direct meeting in 2018. (See: **Canadian Armed**

Forces providing military training to Ukrainian neo-Nazis)

After backing the fascist-spearheaded coup in Kiev in 2014, which overthrew the elected pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich, and brought a pro-Western government to power, Canada sent 200 troops to Ukraine to train its armed forces. Joly made it abundantly clear during her trip that this deployment, scheduled to expire in March, will be extended.

A report in yesterday's *Globe and Mail* confirmed that the Trudeau government plans to announce an extension of the deployment for at least six months next week and could expand the number of Canadian Armed Forces' personnel involved. The warship HMCS Montreal has already been deployed to join NATO's provocative military operations in the Black Sea. Ottawa is also considering sending small arms, night-vision goggles, military radios, and armoured vests to the Ukrainian military. The Canadian Security Establishment, a key player in the US-led "Five Eyes" global spying network, could also begin supplying Kiev with intelligence and cyber-security support. The *Globe* noted that Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, an anti-Russia hawk whose grandfather, Michael Chomiak, edited a pro-Nazi Ukrainian nationalist newspaper during World War II, is heavily involved in the deliberations over additional Canadian support for Kiev. So too, is Canadian Armed Forces' head Wayne Eyre.

Trudeau is in talks with the US and Britain, which announced it would send anti-tank missiles to Kiev earlier this week, on a package of economic sanctions against Russia that US President Joe Biden described Wednesday as "punishing." Turning reality on its head, Trudeau told a press briefing, "We are working with our international partners and colleagues to make it very, very clear that Russian aggression is absolutely unacceptable."

During Joly's trip, media reports confirmed that a group of Canadian Special Forces troops was recently dispatched to Ukraine.

In another provocative move, the Canadian Commercial Corporation, a crown corporation that supports Canadian firms in securing foreign government contracts, announced last week it plans to back the construction of an ammunition factory in Ukraine. The facility, which would be operated by several Ontario-based firms, would manufacture small arms, and be supported by \$60 million in government funds.

Canada's fulsome support for Kiev reflects its determination to strengthen its eight decade-long military-strategic partnership with Washington, which is leading the charge of the imperialist powers towards war with Russia. But it would be wrong to see Canada as simply playing a supporting role to US imperialism's insane drive to retain its

global hegemony. Ottawa has its own imperialist interests at stake, including its close ties to far-right regimes in Ukraine and the Baltic republics.

The Canadian ruling elite is also determined to push back Russian influence in the Arctic, which is assuming growing geostrategic and economic significance due to climate change. Last August, Trudeau reached an agreement with the Biden administration to modernize NORAD, the Canada-US North American aerospace and maritime defence command, to the tune of tens of billions of dollars. A key objective of the modernization is to strengthen North American continental military capabilities to counter so-called "over the horizon threats" so as to wage a "winnable" nuclear war against Russia or China.

The drumbeat for war with Russia is coming from all sides within the Canadian political establishment. Media reports on an almost daily basis contain lurid claims about an "imminent" or "looming" Russian "invasion." The only "evidence" ever provided to back up these assertions is that Russia has carried out troop movements on its own sovereign territory. This war-mongering propaganda is accompanied by the never-ending media campaign against China.

The establishment parties unanimously endorse the anti-Russian course. In a statement released on the eve of Joly's Kiev trip, Conservative leader Erin O'Toole demanded that Trudeau reject "capitulation to President Putin's aggression." He urged the government to adopt "Magnitsky sanctions against those responsible for Russian aggression" and "provide Ukraine with lethal defensive weapons."

New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh demanded targeted sanctions against Russia. NDP foreign affairs spokesperson Heather McPherson suggested her party would be prepared to support sending weapons to the Ukraine at a future date but called for more diplomatic efforts to be tried first. "I don't think this is the time to be giving arms to the Ukraine," she commented. The NDP has consistently backed Canada's military deployment to Ukraine and strongly endorsed Joly's visit to Ukraine this week. "I am very happy that Minister Joly has taken it upon herself to go to Ukraine at this time," said McPherson. "It is absolutely vital that Canada do everything (it) can to work to deter Russia."



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