

Canada to arm Ukraine with lethal weapons as part of US-led war drive against Russia

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced Monday that Canada will provide \$7.8 million worth of lethal weaponry and a \$500 million loan to the right-wing Ukrainian regime as part of the US-led drive to war with Russia. The announcement was tacked on to the end of a press conference at which Trudeau invoked the Emergencies Act to end the ongoing far-right “Freedom Convoy” occupation of Ottawa.

A news release from the Department of National Defence noted that the weaponry, referred to cynically as “lethal aid,” would include machine guns, pistols, carbines, sniper rifles, 1.5 million rounds of ammunition, and other small arms equipment. Canada has previously gifted Ukraine more than \$23 million in “non-lethal” military aid, including communications equipment, body armour, and a mobile field hospital.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), a rabidly anti-Russian, vocal pro-Kiev lobby group, enthusiastically greeted the announcement of the delivery of Canadian “lethal aid.” Alexandra Chyczij, the UCC’s president, said, “Canada has shown again that it is a true friend to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.”

The \$500 million loan is in addition to a \$120 million loan announced on January 21. Both of these loans are being provided through the Bretton Woods and Related Agreements Act R.S.C 1985, which also regulates Canada’s collaboration with the IMF. They bring the total Canada has lent Ukraine since 2014 to \$1.02 billion. In February 2014, a US-orchestrated, fascist-spearheaded putsch overthrew Ukraine’s democratically elected, pro-Russian president, Victor Yanukovich, paving the way for the current crisis.

Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, reiterating the common line of all NATO governments, stated that “Canada will not stand idly by while the rules-based

international order is challenged ... Any further invasion of Ukraine by the Russian military will be met with severe consequences.”

Canada’s foreign ministry ratcheted up the anti-Russia propaganda Thursday after reports emerged of an exchange of shellfire between Ukrainian government forces and pro-Russian separatists in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. In a grotesque distortion of the reality on the ground, where the first shells were fired by Ukrainian government forces, Joly declared in a statement, “Canada strongly condemns the unprovoked Russian military activity in the Donbas region of Ukraine. Innocent civilians were put in danger by this clear effort by Russia to escalate the crisis. We commend the restraint shown by Ukraine.”

The endless stream of lies about finding a “diplomatic solution” to “Russian aggression” is intended to dupe the public as to who the actual aggressor is. With every day that goes by, it becomes ever clearer that Canada, like its NATO allies, is recklessly inflaming the conflict with Russia in order to provoke an all-out war.

The present crisis is the product of the Stalinist bureaucracy’s dissolution of the Soviet Union three decades ago, which unleashed a period of aggressive NATO expansion into Eastern Europe. In 1990, the US, UK and France offered Gorbachev assurances that they would not expand NATO into the former Warsaw Pact countries in exchange for the Soviet Union not exercising its legal veto power against the unification of Germany. Intent on offsetting its economic decline with its considerable military might, American imperialism has overseen the integration of numerous Eastern European states, which are riddled with virulent nationalist, fascistic, and outright neo-Nazi movements, into NATO. Ultimately, the NATO war drive is part of

imperialism strategy to carve up Russia, reduce it to semi-colonial status, exploit its resources, and consolidate a hegemonic geopolitical position on the Eurasian continent in preparation for war with China.

Canada—a junior partner of American imperialism with extensive and lucrative cross-border economic and military supply chains and its own strategic rivalry with Moscow in the Arctic—has assumed a major role in NATO’s military buildup and encirclement of Russia. Barely two months after the far-right coup in Kiev, Canada offered its military assets to Operation REASSURANCE, the ongoing NATO deployment in Eastern Europe. Military deployments undertaken since 2014 include: a rotating task force of six CF-18 Hornets for what is euphemistically called “air policing”; 540 soldiers of the Enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup in Latvia, who will be deployed there until at least 2023; and the dispatch of Halifax class frigates to the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 in the Baltic Sea.

Canada plays a significant role in Ukrainian political life. Two weeks ago, a report in the *Globe and Mail* noted that pressure from Ottawa played a decisive role in persuading President Volodymyr Zelensky not to detain former President Petro Poroshenko on corruption charges following his return to the country. Poroshenko, the first Ukrainian president following the 2014 coup, is seen as even more loyal to US imperialism and its allies than Zelensky and is being held in reserve as possible replacement for the latter.

Through Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces provides training to the Ukrainian army, which is infested with far right and outright fascist forces. Trudeau recently announced the expansion of Operation Unifier from 200 to as many as 400 troops.

Operation Unifier sheds some light on the sort of “democratic” forces Canada is cultivating in Ukraine. In November, it was revealed that Canadian soldiers provided training on firearms usage and infantry tactics to the neo-Nazi Azov battalion. Canadian officers and diplomats actively tried to cover this fact up.

The cultivation of relationships with outright fascist forces abroad is complemented by a similar process domestically. Sections of the political establishment—including leading Conservatives, like Pierre Poilievre and Candice Bergen, and Maxime Bernier, the former Harper Conservative cabinet minister who now heads the ultra-right People’s Party

of Canada— have enthusiastically promoted the Freedom Convoy. They have used it to press for the elimination of all remaining anti-COVID public health measures, so as to remove any impediments to big business maximizing its profits, and to push politics far to the right.

The Liberal government has been continuously berated by the Conservatives and the corporate media for being insufficiently aggressive in confronting Russia. In a written statement in response to the Trudeau government’s announcement of the extension of the military training mission in Ukraine in January, Shadow Foreign Minister Michael Chong—widely considered a “moderate” in a party that is ever more closely following in the far-right footsteps of the US Republican Party—and two other front-bench Conservative MPs attacked Trudeau. They claimed his failure to provide Kiev with lethal weaponry “calls into question the Liberal government’s support for Ukraine in their fight against Russia’s aggression. “The time for half measures has long passed,” the statement continued. “Ukraine needs Canada’s support and today Mr. Trudeau let them down.”

The social democratic New Democratic Party—which has propped up the minority Liberal government for the past two-and-a-half years—is no less vociferous in its anti-Russia, pro-war rhetoric. NDP Foreign Affairs Critic Heather McPherson declared in a January 31 statement that the party was “alarmed by escalating threats of further Russian invasion into Ukraine,” and claimed to support an “independent and democratic Ukraine.”

In reality, the NDP, like the entire Canadian political establishment, wants Ukraine to serve as a loyal client state to the Western imperialist powers on Russia’s doorstep.



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