

Canada imposes “severe” sanctions on Russia, puts 3,400 troops on stand-by for deployment to Europe

Roger Jordan
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Canada’s Liberal government announced a package of “severe” sanctions against Russia Thursday in cooperation with the members of the G7: the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Japan. Lining up full-square behind the Biden administration’s aggressive war-mongering against Russia, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Defence Minister Anita Anand also announced that 3,400 Canadian army, navy and air force personnel have been placed on stand-by for possible rapid deployment to Europe.

Canada’s second tranche of anti-Russia sanctions this week will impose penalties on 58 financial institutions and other entities, including banks, the paramilitary Wagner Group, and leading oligarchs. Targeted measures were also introduced against the Defence Minister, Justice Minister and Finance Minister, who are members of the Russian Security Council. Ottawa has also banned the issuing of new export permits to Russia, and will cancel all the existing permits for the export of high-tech and possible dual-use products, said to be worth \$700 million.

At a press conference held only hours after Russia’s Thursday Morning invasion of Ukraine, Trudeau was joined by Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland and other ministers. He attacked Russia for its “violation of the UN Charter, the principles of the rule of law internationally,” and added, “(W)e will respond forcefully to make sure that Russia fails.” Freeland, a fervent Ukrainian nationalist and anti-Russia hawk, implicitly compared Russian President Vladimir Putin to Hitler, declaring, “Today, he cements his place in the ranks of the reviled European dictators who caused such carnage in the 20th century.” Putin had invaded a “sovereign democracy,” Freeland stated, while Trudeau appealed for Ukrainians to have the right to “decide their future in a free and democratic state.”

This moral posturing, coming from the ruthless representatives of Canadian imperialism, is grotesque. Trudeau, Freeland and their pro-war lackeys in the media seem to think the population has forgotten that during the past three decades Washington has waged an almost uninterrupted series of wars of conquest and plunder, violating international law and the “sovereignty” of nations at will. And that it has done this with Ottawa’s full support and active participation.

The actions of Putin’s reactionary oligarchic regime, whose response to imperialist aggression and provocation is military

violence and Great Russian chauvinism, only increase the threat of a disastrous global conflagration and assist the predatory ambitions of the imperialist powers to dominate the Eurasian landmass by splitting workers throughout the region along nationalist lines.

The savage 1999 bombardment of Serbia, which killed thousands and destroyed the country’s infrastructure, was conducted by the NATO powers, Canada included, in flagrant breach of the UN Charter. For a decade beginning in 2001, Canadian troops played a leading role in the neo-colonial war that the US and its allies waged in Afghanistan, devastating that poverty-stricken Central Asian country. A Canadian general headed the western powers’ 2011 regime-change war in Libya, which laid waste to one of Africa’s most advanced societies, slaughtered tens of thousands of civilians, and triggered a bloody civil war that continues to this day. The Libya war was justified with lying propaganda about protecting “human rights.” Yet even a Canadian commander, in a moment of candour, acknowledged that the western powers had allied with reactionary Islamists and Canada’s military had served as “al-Qaida’s air force.”

As for Ukraine itself, Canadian imperialism has played a significant role in providing political, military and financial support to far-right nationalist groups that are the descendants of Nazi collaborators during World War II. In 2014, Ottawa was a major player in the US-orchestrated and fascist-spearheaded Maidan coup, which toppled the democratically elected president, Viktor Yanukovich, and replaced his government with a pro-Western puppet regime under President Petro Poroshenko. The openly discriminatory measures the new government took against Russian speakers and the brutal acts of violence conducted by far-right nationalists against political opponents contributed to the support of the population in Crimea for Russia’s annexation of the peninsula and the growth of pro-Moscow separatist movements in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Canada has also joined the US and Britain as one of the leading states in NATO’s massive military build-up on Russia’s western border, which has seen the supposedly “defensive” military alliance expand its territory 800 miles to the east over the past 30 years. Since 2017, Ottawa has had 540 troops in Latvia where they lead one of NATO’s “Enhanced Forward Presence” battlegroups. It has also sent a squadron of fighter jets to Romania to help NATO’s “air policing” of Russia’s borders, and routinely

deployed warships to the eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea region.

For the past five years, the Trudeau government has also deployed 200 Canadian Armed Forces personnel directly to Ukraine, where they have trained military and National Guard units known to be riddled with members of the Azov Battalion and other fascist groups. In recent weeks, as part of the NATO campaign of escalating military pressure on Moscow, the Trudeau government extended the training mission to 2025, increased the number of CAF trainers to as many as 400, and began shipments of “lethal aid,” including sniper rifles and other guns, to Kyiv.

Responding to Putin’s recognition Monday of the breakaway people’s republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, Trudeau announced Canada would be sending an additional 460 Canadian Armed Forces personnel to Eastern Europe. 120 artillery gunners will join the Canadian-led Latvia battlegroup. Canada will also send a second frigate, HMCS Halifax, to participate in NATO’s naval patrols against Russia, and a long-range CP-140 Aurora surveillance aircraft.

The Trudeau government’s rapid escalation of military operations against Russia has come amid and in the immediate aftermath of the far-right Freedom Convoy occupation of Ottawa, which was systematically built up and incited by the opposition Conservatives and right-wing media outlets to shift official politics sharply to the right. While the first target of the Convoy’s threats of political violence was all remaining COVID-19 restrictions, the very same politicians who cheered and emboldened the far-right mob have led the calls for Trudeau and his Liberal government to take an even more belligerent stance against Moscow.

The extent to which this campaign has succeeded was underscored by a tweet Thursday from Conservative leadership candidate Pierre Poilievre, one of the Convoy’s most vocal backers. “Deliver weapons Ukraine needs,” wrote Poilievre, “sanction Russian officials and entities, sanction Russian energy and natural resource sectors, fast-track Canadian LNG (liquified natural gas) to replace Russian gas in Europe, welcome Ukrainian refugees.” By the time Poilievre had posted his tweet, virtually all of these demands had already been realized or promised by the Liberal government.

Trudeau and other government officials have pledged to assist European governments to find “alternatives” to Russian gas, including by encouraging various proposals to build LNG export terminals on Canada’s Atlantic coast. Business circles are also urging Canada, the world’s fourth-largest producer of natural gas, develop such capabilities, noting Canadian east coast LNG export terminals would have a competitive advantage over those on the US Gulf Coast because of their closer proximity to Europe.

In pursuing escalation and confrontation with Russia, the Trudeau government has the full support of the cabal of hard-right premiers, including Alberta Premier Jason Kenney, who championed the far-right Convoy. Kenney released a statement Thursday urging the “democratic world” to “stand united with Ukraine.” His main demand, an immediate embargo on Russian oil and gas exports, underscored the economic interests behind his bogus “democratic” posturing. Alberta is the main source of Canada’s natural gas production and hopes to take advantage of

the European market that would open up if Russian gas is excluded.

The establishment consensus on the need to prepare for war with Russia includes not just the Liberal government and the Conservatives official opposition, but also the ostensibly “left-wing” New Democrats (NDP) and Québec Solidaire (QS).

NDP leader Jagmeet Singh released a statement Thursday that denounced Russia’s “flagrant aggression” against Ukraine. He urged Canada and its “allies,” i.e., the very NATO powers that have incited the current conflict with their ever-escalating campaign, to militarily encircle and threaten Russia, “use all tools to deter Putin’s aggressive actions.” Singh went on to call for the Liberal government to go even further with its sanctions and exclude Moscow from the SWIFT payment system—an act of economic war meant to strangle Russia economically.

As for the pro-independence QS, it tabled a motion in the Quebec legislature, based on the western imperialist powers’ lying narrative about the Russia-Ukraine conflict that declared “solidarity” with Ukraine and denounced Russian “aggression.” The motion won unanimous support from the governing Quebec chauvinist CAQ and all the other parties in the Quebec National Assembly.

Unsurprisingly, the chorus of war-mongering politicians has been accompanied by pro-war propaganda from the corporate-controlled media. The *Globe and Mail* demanded in a Friday editorial that Canada provide Ukraine with “as much material support” “in the form of money, military advisers, weapons, and intelligence” “as possible.” Columnist John Ibbitson seized on the occasion to demand a major increase in military spending. He complained that Canada’s “fighter aircraft have become more obsolete and our Arctic border even more ungarded,” while “politicians have been debating the shape of ... our health care and education systems.” For years, Canadian imperialist strategists have demanded Ottawa expand its military operations in the far north to more aggressively assert claim to the natural resource wealth of the Arctic and Arctic Ocean, where Russia is a direct geostrategic and economic competitor.

The Liberal-aligned *Toronto Star* echoed Singh’s call for Russia to be excluded from the SWIFT banking system. The refusal to take this step raises a “question mark” about how much the West is willing to “sacrifice,” the *Star* asserted.



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