

Canada sends anti-tank weapons to Ukraine, bans Russian oil imports

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced Monday that Canada will send a further shipment of weaponry to Ukraine, including anti-tank missiles and upgraded ammunition. Trudeau also confirmed that Canada would ban Russian oil imports, the first major Western country to do so. The oil import ban is largely symbolic, given that Canada has not received an oil shipment from Russia since 2019.

Together with the United States and Britain, Canada's Liberal government has led the charge of the imperialist powers in imposing devastating sanctions on Russia and supplying Ukraine with armaments following the Putin government's invasion of the country last Thursday. Russian President Vladimir Putin's military intervention, which all socialists and class conscious workers must oppose, was deliberately incited by the imperialist powers, Canada included, and is now being seized upon by Washington and its allies to push for a catastrophic war between the US-NATO and Russia.

In addition to Canada's weapons shipment, the Trudeau government is sending two Hercules C130 transport aircraft to Europe to help arms shipments from other NATO members reach Ukraine. Asked Sunday whether Canadian troops would be sent to Ukraine to fight Russian forces, Defence Minister Anita Anand responded, "A combat mission is not on the table at this time."

A senior Canadian government official boasted that Trudeau and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland played a significant role in applying pressure on the European powers to agree to the exclusion of Russian banks from the SWIFT payment system, a move described by the French finance minister as a "financial nuclear weapon."

This act of economic warfare by the G7, which was combined with restrictions on the Russian central bank to prevent it from backing the ruble, has already had devastating consequences as interest rates have more than doubled and the currency's value has plummeted. These sanctions will have disastrous consequences in the coming weeks and months, as regular Russians struggle to afford basic necessities, like food and medication.

The Trudeau government further escalated tensions with Moscow yesterday, when Foreign Minister Melanie Joly told reporters in Geneva that Ottawa would formally petition the International Criminal Court in The Hague to commence investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity by Russia. Joly was also one of a group of American, British, German and other diplomats who provocatively walked out of Tuesday's meeting of the UN Human Rights Council as soon as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov began his address via video.

Anti-Russian sanctions were also ratcheted up. Transport Minister Omar Alghabra confirmed that Canadian ports will be closed to Russian-owned and registered ships later this week. Canadian airspace was closed to Russian aircraft Sunday morning.

After a meeting with her G7 colleagues, Deputy Prime Minister Freeland announced Tuesday afternoon that further sanctions on Russia will be imposed in the coming days. Freeland denounced Putin as an "international pariah" and described Russia as a "failing kleptocracy."

Joly made clear Sunday that the Trudeau government supports individual Canadians joining the Ukrainian army to fight the Russian invasion. "We understand that people of Ukrainian descent want to support their fellow Ukrainians and also that there is a desire to defend the motherland and in that sense it is their own individual decision," she told a press conference. "Let me be clear: we are all very supportive of any form of support to Ukrainians right now."

This amounts to nothing less than official approval for far-right forces across Canada to mobilize support for the fascistic militias that play a prominent role in the Ukrainian military, such as the Azov Battalion. As part of a training mission established in Ukraine after the imperialist-sponsored coup in 2014 that overthrew pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych, Canadian personnel held meetings with and provided training to Azov members. The *Ottawa Citizen* reported in November that Canadian personnel gave instruction to members of Centuria, a neo-Nazi group, at Ukraine's National Army

Academy. (See: Canadian Armed Forces providing military training to Ukrainian neo-Nazis)

Underscoring the Liberal government's conscious promotion of such reactionary political forces, Freeland was pictured at a pro-Ukraine demonstration Sunday night holding aloft a banner of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). The UPA was the military arm of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), a far-right nationalist group founded by Stepan Bandera that collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. The OUN was complicit in the massacre of Jews and Poles during the Nazis' war of annihilation against the Soviet Union. After tweeting a photo of herself holding the banner, Freeland was forced to delete the tweet due to public criticism. She subsequently posted a picture from the same protest with the banner removed.

Canada's close collaboration with Ukrainian fascists has gone hand in hand with its role in the aggressive US-led expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe over the past three decades. Following the Western-funded 2014 coup in Kiev, Canada agreed to send 540 troops to Latvia to lead one of NATO's four "Enhanced Forward Presence" battlegroups in the Baltic and Poland. Trudeau announced in February the deployment of a further 460 troops to Eastern Europe, including a 120-man gunner unit, a reconnaissance plane, and a second frigate to join NATO patrols. Another 3,400 military personnel have been placed on stand-by for immediate deployment to Europe.

In addition to offering virtually unanimous support for the immediate supplying of weapons and other military aid to Ukraine, Canadian imperialist representatives are enthusiastically discussing the prospects that the current war will provide for enforcing Ottawa's longer-term geostrategic and economic interests. A major area of interest is the provision of oil and natural gas to Europe, where some countries rely on Russia for up to half of their natural gas requirements.

Peter MacKay, Canada's Defence Minister under Prime Minister Stephen Harper and a possible leadership candidate for the official opposition Conservatives, called for even more stringent sanctions on Russia to block all foreign trade, and a ramping up of arms supplies for Ukraine.

Fighting Russia was not only necessary due to the situation in Eastern Europe, MacKay explained, but due to Canada's extensive interests in the Arctic, which is becoming an important region for trade and the exploitation of natural resources due to the effects of climate change.

"Canada has an extensive northern border with Russia that is as wide open to encroachment and abuse if Putin so wills it as Ukraine's border has shown to be," stated MacKay. "If we don't come to Ukraine's help now—and in decisive and practical ways—how can we expect others to help us if Putin

(or Putin 2.0, 3.0 etc.) tries to come for us?"

Member of Parliament Pierre Poilievre, who is being touted as the frontrunner to take over as leader of the Conservatives, attacked the European powers Tuesday for their "weak" response to Putin. Declaring his support for a \$10 billion liquefied natural gas export terminal in Newfoundland and Labrador, Poilievre vowed that a Tory government under his leadership would scrap tougher environmental regulations introduced by the Trudeau government in Bill C69 in order to speed up pipeline projects.

"Canada has what Europe needs and lots of it," Poilievre said in a video message on Twitter. Speaking of the Newfoundland LNG project, which would reduce transport times to Europe by six days compared to the US Gulf coast, Poilievre added, "It will help Europe kick its addiction to Russian gas so they can stand up to Putin rather than funding him."

The right-wing *National Post* wrote yesterday in its daily newsletter, "Countries across Western Europe are now dramatically reassessing their dependence on Russian oil and gas. Germany, for instance, has already begun upgrading two ports on its northern coast to take in shipments of liquid natural gas to supplant Russian supplies brought in by pipeline.

"Canada sits on more than enough oil and gas to keep the lights on in Europe."

Canada's ruling elite also views the war in Europe as an opportunity to strengthen domestic state repression against any popular opposition to its predatory imperialist ambitions, above all from the working class. Christian Leuprecht, a security policy expert who appears regularly as a media commentator, wrote an op-ed in the *National Post* in which he advocated labelling all anti-pipeline protesters as accomplices of "Russian aggression."

"Canada has ample supply of natural gas to liquify and export," he wrote. "Yet, Canada lags way behind in that game because it naively has no sense for geopolitics. Make no mistake, Canadians who oppose construction of the Coastal Gas Pipeline from Alberta to British Columbia, and pipeline capacity to enable the export of natural gas from Canada's east coast to Europe, are aiding, abetting, and condoning Putin's behaviour."



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