

Canada's Trudeau visits Europe to plot escalation of war drive against Russia

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Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is currently on a four-country European tour to discuss Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and the US-NATO war drive against Russia. Prior to his departure, Trudeau told the media that Canada and NATO do not want to get into a "direct conflict" with Moscow.

"The thing that we have so far avoided, and will continue to need to avoid, is a situation in which NATO's forces are in direct conflict with Russian soldiers," Trudeau stated Friday. "That would be a level of escalation that is unfortunate."

Trudeau's comments are a pack of lies. His trip is in fact aimed at escalating the US-led drive to war with Russia, which Canadian imperialism has helped spearhead. Since Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine on February 24, Canada has, together with the United States and Britain, been among the Western powers pushing for the most aggressive and provocative measures against Moscow.

Trudeau held talks Monday with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, an arch-Thatcherite whose government has overseen the deaths of more than 180,000 people during the COVID-19 pandemic due to its "herd immunity" policies. The pair discussed options for supplying further weaponry to Kiev to further fuel NATO's proxy war with Russia.

At a joint press conference, Trudeau unveiled new sanctions against ten Russian oligarchs, who he bragged had been selected from a list compiled by jailed opposition figure Alexei Navalny. A far-right Russian nationalist and US imperialist asset, Navalny has called people from the Caucasus and Central Asia "cockroaches," and participated in marches with fascist political forces. The Prime Minister concluded his announcement with the declaration, "We continue to stand with Ukraine, united in struggle."

Trudeau pointed out that Ottawa has supplied Kiev with \$1 billion in financial aid in recent years. Over the past three weeks, the Trudeau government has sent tens of millions of dollars worth of lethal weaponry to the Ukrainian military, including anti-tank weapons, grenades, carbines, and rifles. It has also announced a further build-up of military

personnel in Eastern Europe, including sending a second warship to the Black Sea region, and placed 3,400 troops on stand-by for immediate deployment to the continent.

Along with his Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, who was photographed carrying a Ukrainian fascist banner at a recent demonstration, Trudeau pushed for the harshest possible sanctions against Russia from the war's outset. Freeland reportedly played an important role with her US colleagues in persuading the European powers to sanction Russia's central bank and exclude the country from the SWIFT payment system. These acts of economic warfare have crashed the value of the ruble, devastating the living standards of millions of workers across Russia.

From the standpoint of Canadian imperialism, there is nothing "unfortunate" about the escalation of direct military tensions with Russia, which carry the real danger of triggering a third world war. On the contrary, this is an outcome which the Trudeau government and its Conservative predecessor have been working towards for years. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union over three decades ago, Canada has played a major role in almost every US imperialist-led war of aggression around the world, from the NATO bombardment of Serbia to the wars in Libya and Syria. Successive Canadian governments have supported NATO's expansion right up to Russia's borders, and the alliance's isolation and encirclement of Russia with high-powered military forces. Ottawa has also given crucial backing to far-right Ukrainian nationalists.

Shortly after the fascist-led Maidan putsch in 2014 that brought a pro-Western regime to power in Kiev, Canada's Conservative government, led by Stephen Harper, dispatched fighter jets to Romania and a warship to the Black Sea. Ottawa began sending military aid to Kiev in August 2014, and initiated a military training program for the Ukrainian national guard and military in 2015 involving the deployment of 200 Canadian Armed Forces personnel to western Ukraine.

When Trudeau came to power in 2015, his Liberal government picked up seamlessly from where Harper left

off. Trudeau ratcheted up pressure on Russia at the 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw, announcing that Canada would lead one of NATO's four battlegroups stationed in Poland and the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

After the NATO summit, Trudeau travelled on to Ukraine, where he vowed to support the far-right regime of Petro Poroshenko to reconquer the territory in eastern Ukraine taken over by pro-Russian separatists following the 2014 Maidan coup. "We are giving significant support to the Ukrainian military to be able to be more effective in defending and reclaiming Ukrainian territory," Trudeau said at the time. Trudeau twice lengthened Canada's training mission in Ukraine, including earlier this year when he increased the troop contingent to 400. Leaked documents late last year revealed that Canadian military personnel provided training to members of the fascist Azov Battalion and officers belonging to the neo-Nazi Centuria group.

In October 2017, Canada's House of Commons adopted a "Magnitsky Act" law with all-party support. The law contained provisions to freeze the Canadian assets of "corrupt foreign officials" and block their entry into Canada. Earlier that year, the Liberal government unveiled a plan to hike military spending by over 70 percent in less than a decade, and cited the "threat" posed by Russia and China as justification.

In March 2020, a high-level defence policy conference held in Ottawa discussed how Canada was already "at war" with Russia. Speakers at the gathering demanded massive upgrades to the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), a Cold War-era bilateral continental defence system operated by Canada and the United States, to prevent Russian incursions from the Arctic.

Canada played an important part in US-led efforts to incite the Putin government's reactionary invasion of Ukraine. It was an active partner in a series of provocative NATO exercises throughout 2021, including the Seabreeze military drills in the Black Sea. Then in January 2022, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly travelled to Kiev and added to the Biden administration's efforts to goad Putin into a war by refusing to acknowledge any of Russia's security concerns. "Canada's position has not changed," she proclaimed. "We believe that Ukraine should be able to join NATO."

Trudeau will visit several key NATO allies this week to plot the next stage in the imperialist powers' aggressive drive to war with Russia. In addition to Johnson, he is scheduled to have talks with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, before travelling on to Poland and Latvia. His meeting with the German Chancellor will no doubt touch on Scholz's tripling of Germany's defence spending for 2022 in what has been labelled the beginning of a "new foreign policy epoch."

The Trudeau government's position as one of Washington's attack dogs in the drive to war with Russia has been welcomed with enthusiasm by top military and defence policy experts, who see the war in Europe as an opportunity to push for an even larger rearmament program. In particular, the cost of NORAD modernization, which was not included in the 2017 round of military spending hikes, is front and centre. The key upgrade for military planners is bringing Canada into the US ballistic missile defence system, which is aimed at making a nuclear war "winnable."

"Here's a perfect moment to announce that we're coming on board with all forms of ballistic missile defence ... and we are going to discuss the positioning of new radar systems and new missile interceptors on Canadian soil," said Tom Lawson, the former deputy commander of NORAD and Canada's chief of the defence staff from 2012 to 2015. Andrea Charron, director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at the University of Manitoba, commented, "Ukraine has made NORAD even more important, because we are the back door to NATO."

Leading *Globe and Mail* columnist John Ibitson wrote Saturday that increasing Canada's defence budget to more than 2 percent of gross domestic product is in "the national interest." He proceeded to present a shopping list of items to be procured, including "new fighter aircraft," "combat surface vessels to replace the retired destroyers," "cutting-edge sensors, satellites, and software" to upgrade NORAD, and "new submarines."

Calls for more military spending are supported by all major parties in parliament, from the Liberals and Conservatives to the sovereignist Bloc Quebecois. The New Democratic Party has waged the past two election campaigns on platforms demanding defence spending increases, and denouncing the Liberals and Conservatives for allegedly not increasing the military budget enough. More importantly, the NDP has provided the minority Liberal government with the parliamentary votes it needs to secure a majority in the House of Commons since 2019, helping it enforce its defence spending hike and provocative anti-Russian policies.



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