

Canada dispatches heavy weaponry to Ukraine, while accusing Moscow of “genocide”

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Canada’s Liberal government, with the support of the entire political establishment, is recklessly and relentlessly escalating the US-NATO war with Russia over Ukraine. The minority Liberal government, which relies on the support of the trade union-sponsored New Democrats for its parliamentary majority, has begun supplying heavy weaponry to the Ukrainian army and has pledged to provide half a billion dollars worth of additional military aid to Kiev by next March.

Over the past week, the Trudeau government has confirmed it will send armoured vehicles and heavy artillery to Ukraine. Defence sources who spoke to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) on condition of anonymity confirmed that four 155mm M777 howitzers from the Canadian Armed Forces’ stockpile are now in the hands of the Ukrainian armed forces. The M777s were first used in combat by Canadian forces during NATO’s neocolonial occupation of Afghanistan. The Department of Defence press release also revealed that Canada has supplied Ukraine with an unspecified number of Carl Gustaf anti-tank weapons from its existing stockpiles.

At a Pentagon press conference with her US counterpart Lloyd Austin on Thursday, Defence Minister Anita Anand confirmed that Canadian troops will train Ukrainian forces on using the M777s but refused to say where the training is to take place. An official later said that a “third country” in Eastern Europe would be used.

Anand and Austin, fresh from attending a war council involving 40 countries at the American Ramstein air base in Germany, held talks for an hour. Austin used his trip to Europe to all but acknowledge that the US, and by extension its NATO allies, is a direct party to the war with Russia in Ukraine.

The deluge of heavy weaponry being sent to Ukraine by the US, Canada and other NATO powers will undoubtedly exacerbate what is already an explosive situation in Eastern Europe. The slightest miscalculation could ignite the Eastern European powder keg and plunge the world into a Third World War fought with nuclear weapons. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said this week that NATO-supplied weapons are legitimate targets for Russian strikes, while President Vladimir Putin made a thinly veiled threat to deploy nuclear weapons against countries “interfering from the outside.”

The political establishments in both the United States and Canada know full well that their aggressive policy of NATO

expansion up to Russia’s borders over the past three decades, which was responsible for provoking the current war, is bringing the entire world to the brink of a nuclear catastrophe. Appearing before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on Thursday, Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly asserted that Canada must prepare for “all scenarios” given the warnings made by Russia about a nuclear exchange.

In other words, the Trudeau government calculates that NATO’s criminal escalation of the war, to which it is eagerly contributing, carries the real risk of a nuclear weapon striking Canada but considers this a risk worth taking in order to secure its predatory imperialist ambitions. As Joly put it, “(W)e won’t stop our efforts until Ukraine wins. When I mean Ukraine wins, what I mean is Russian forces leave Ukraine.”

Nobody is asking Joly, Anand and Trudeau the obvious questions that follow from this: If you are prepared for “all scenarios,” how many Canadians do you estimate would die in a nuclear strike by Russia? How many lives are you prepared to sacrifice to maintain Canada’s alliance with far-right and fascist forces in Ukraine and advance Canadian imperialist ambitions in Eastern Europe and the Arctic?

The ruling elite’s recklessness is not merely motivated by geopolitical considerations but also by the mounting domestic social and political crisis. Last month, the Trudeau Liberals entered a formal “confidence-and-supply” agreement with the NDP, whereby the social democrats, with the full-throated support of the unions, have pledged to provide “political stability” by keeping the Liberal government in power until June 2025. Under conditions in which inflation has hit a 30-year high, and strikes and protests by workers across all sectors are on the rise, Trudeau, his NDP allies and the Conservative opposition are banking on war fever to produce “national unity” and suppress the class struggle.

Those workers who do boldly assert their class interests will be denounced for disrupting the war on Russia and targeted for state repression. This was already the case for 3,000 CP Rail workers who challenged management’s concession demands and brutal work regime, only to have the Teamsters union accept binding arbitration under threat of a government back-to-work law.

The recent shipments of weaponry to Ukraine are only the latest in a massive program of military and financial aid to Kiev. Figures in the 2022 budget state that Canada has officially announced at

least \$1.2 billion in direct contributions and \$1.6 billion in loans to Ukraine.

In her April 7 budget, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland announced a five-year \$8 billion increase in defence spending. This is in addition to the 2017 commitment to hike military spending by over 70 percent from 2017 levels by 2026. Expenditures highlighted in Chapter 5 of the budget include \$847 million to maintain Canada's military at a higher state of readiness for the NATO Readiness Initiative and \$252 million over five years to lay the groundwork for modernizing the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD). The Canadian bourgeoisie considers NORAD's modernization as essential for enabling Ottawa to wage wars of aggression in alliance with Washington against its geopolitical rivals, including conflicts fought with nuclear weapons.

Two weeks after the budget's release, a report by the Parliamentary Budget Officer revealed that it surreptitiously set aside a further \$15 billion for military expenditures over the next five years.

As with Canada's disastrous response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw hundreds of billions of dollars transferred to the banks and major corporations virtually overnight, the cost of footing the bill for this huge military build-up will fall on the working class in the form of cuts to public spending and attacks on jobs and wages.

Canada's ever-more aggressive role in the US-NATO war with Russia underscores that Canadian imperialist foreign policy is in lockstep with the US and its NATO allies, which are intent on effecting regime change in Moscow and reducing Russia to the status of a semi-colony. Once upon a time this bellicose policy would have met with at least rhetorical resistance from some sections of the ruling elite, who sought to portray Canada as a "peacekeeper" and "honest-broker" middle power during the Cold War. However, this period has long since passed.

Insofar as there are criticisms of Canada's aggressive war drive against Russia, they are that Ottawa is not advocating even more aggressive measures, such as a NATO no-fly zone over Ukraine, or investing enough in Canada's war arsenal. The US has consistently bemoaned the fact that Canada does not spend 2 percent of its GDP on its military, a goal to which all NATO members and the Trudeau Liberal government have formally committed.

The Conservatives attacked the Liberal-authored, NDP-backed budget for not doing enough to further Canada's imperialistic ambitions in the Arctic. Conservative shadow ministers for the Arctic, Procurement and National Defence released a joint statement attacking the government for not presenting a concrete plan of massive military expenditures, particularly in Canada's barren, albeit resource-rich north.

Citing Russian and Chinese interest in the Arctic, the ministers stated, "What we needed from this NDP-Liberal budget was an understanding that urgent action and firm commitments are required to match today's geopolitical realities. The fact that the budget contains neither of these is unacceptable and further shows that Justin Trudeau still does not take this issue seriously. Conservatives will continue to call on the NDP-Liberal

government to put forward a robust plan to defend Canada's Arctic sovereignty and security."

Support for waging war around the world and strengthening the military extends from the Conservatives on the right to the NDP on the "left." The New Democrats responded to the US-NATO conflict with Russia by forming their three-year governmental alliance with the Liberals. It gives the Trudeau government a free hand to wage war against Russia in Eastern Europe, massively hike defence spending and launch attacks on the working class at home to pay for imperialist war abroad.

On Wednesday, NDP MP Heather McPherson introduced a motion in parliament calling for Canada to adopt the inflammatory description of Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a "genocide." Motivating support for the motion, McPherson explained that she hoped it would impel the government to do more to support Ukraine militarily.

The motion was backed unanimously by all MPs and parties, including the Greens and Bloc Québécois. Prime Minister Trudeau previously gave his stamp of approval to the genocide accusation, telling reporters on April 13, that it is "absolutely right that more and more people" are "talking and using the word genocide in terms of what Russia is doing, what Vladimir Putin has done."

The term genocide was coined in the aftermath of the Holocaust to describe the systematic, industrial extermination of 6 million Jews at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators, including the Ukrainian nationalists of Stepan Bandera's fascistic Ukrainian Insurgent Army, the Nachtigall Battalion, and the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Galician). The political heirs of these fascists are now being equipped with lethal weaponry by the NATO powers, including Canada.

The UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide codified the international legal definition of genocide as specific crimes "committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, as such."

If what Russia is perpetrating in Ukraine is genocide, the US and its NATO allies, Canada included, are guilty many times over. Russia's bloody invasion has not seen the overwhelming use of air power that characterized the "shock and awe" campaigns the US and its NATO allies mounted in the Balkans and Iraq. Nor has it seen the endless, indiscriminate drone strikes on weddings and funerals employed during the "free world's" interventions in the Middle East and Afghanistan.



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