

Australia dispatching military “trainers” to aid the US-NATO war against Russia

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28 October 2022

Australia’s Labor government announced on Thursday that it will dispatch 70 Australian Defense Force personnel to Britain to train Ukrainian forces for their war against Russia. It also pledged an additional 30 Bushmaster armored vehicles to Ukraine.

The move is a significant escalation of Australia’s frontline role in US-led military preparations and outright war. Australia is already playing a central role in Washington’s aggressive confrontation with China in the Indo-Pacific, aimed at ensuring American global hegemony. It is also the largest non-NATO funder of US-backed Ukrainian forces in Ukraine, underscoring its role as a pivotal ally of the militarist Biden administration.

The context, moreover, underscores the recklessness of the move to deploy the advisors. They are being sent to Europe, under conditions in which US President Joseph Biden has stated that the conflict may be heading towards a “nuclear armageddon,” even as his administration does everything possible to throw fuel on the flames.

In unveiling the latest round of military aid, Labor leaders repeated the line that they were seeking to protect “democracy” against Russian autocracy and aggression.

“This is not just about Ukraine’s sovereignty—the brave people of Ukraine are defending international law, rules and norms,” Prime Minister Anthony Albanese declared. Defence Minister Richard Marles presented Ukrainian forces as undermanned and untrained, asserting that inexperienced “reservists” were taking on the Russian army.

In fact, the announcement itself gives the lie to these claims. The US, NATO and their allies, including Australia, are flooding Ukraine with high-powered weaponry to the tune of tens of billions of dollars. This

is a continuation of protracted Western intervention in Ukraine, including the instigation of a fascist-led coup in 2014, and the vicious attacks on ethnic Russians within Ukraine, which provoked Russia’s reactionary invasion in February.

The Australian military trainers are joining Operation Interflex, a program of the British army, hosted in the UK. By mid-September, more than 5,000 Ukrainian troops had cycled through the training. While the details are scanty, they receive instruction not only in infantry operations, but in areas such as “anti-mining” and underwater operations.

Such areas of training point to NATO’s aim of bogging down Russia in a protracted guerilla-style war aimed at destabilising the Putin regime, including through terrorist-style operations. Canada, New Zealand and the Netherlands have also dispatched trainers to join Interflex.

The program underscores the long-term character of the NATO intervention in Ukraine. It is the direct successor to Operation Orbital, a British operation that trained thousands of Ukrainian troops beginning in 2015, as they waged a brutal war against separatists opposed to the right-wing Kiev regime installed in the 2014 coup.

Interflex is one of several training programs for Ukrainian forces throughout Europe. A separate program in Poland schools Ukrainian troops in the use of anti-aircraft and other advanced weaponry.

The Labor government and the defence department emphasised that the Australian military trainers would at no point enter Ukraine itself. But those statements are worthless.

Time and time again, the deployment of military trainers has been the prelude to direct imperialist intervention, including the deployment of troops. Such

was the case in the US war against Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, and the first Gulf War against Iraq in 1991.

Moreover, under conditions of conflict, the line between “training” and participation in combat operations is easily blurred. It is quite conceivable that the trainers in Operation Interflex are planning concrete operations with their Ukrainian pupils. Reports have confirmed the presence of US intelligence officers and other representatives of the American state within Ukraine itself.

The latest pledge comes on top of several “aid” packages to Ukraine, by the previous Liberal-National government and the current Labor administration, which scraped into office in the May 21 election. In total, they take Australia’s commitment to the war to \$655 million, including \$475 million in direct military aid.

That has included the dispatch of 90 Bushmaster trucks. Ukrainian officials, including President Volodymyr Zelenskyy say the Bushmasters have played a key role in several operations seizing territory from Russian troops.

Weapons shipments have reportedly also included rifles, ammunition, hand grenades and US-made Javelin anti-armour missiles, which can be used against tanks and other armored vehicles. At least one batch of rifles was to be provided to “civilian fighters and international recruits,” likely for the fascist militias that play a critical role in the Ukrainian war effort.

In August, media reports revealed that an Australian defence company was preparing to send 300 Drone40 small uncrewed aerial vehicles. Dubbed “kamikaze drones,” the devices can carry payloads, as well as electronic warfare and spying devices.

In an interview last month, Justin Bassi, executive director of the hawkish, government-funded Australian Strategic Policy Institute think tank, asked Ukrainian ambassador Vasyl Myroshnychenko if Kiev had specifically requested the drones from Australia. “Absolutely, these are basically fighting drones. We can inflict damage remotely and thus save the lives of our personnel,” Myroshnychenko replied.

The role of the government in the arms sale is unclear. That such weapons could be used in “irregular” warfare, including terrorist-style activities, is evident.

The seamless continuation of the arms shipments to Ukraine, since the election of Labor, underscores the right-wing and militarist character of the government. Albanese participated in a NATO summit in Madrid last June, which called on its member states to ready themselves for conflict with nuclear-armed powers, i.e., Russia and China.

In addition to providing arms to Ukraine, the Labor government has ratcheted-up Australia’s key role in the preparations for conflict with China in the Indo-Pacific. It has aggressively campaigned throughout the region against any turn to Beijing, including with thinly-veiled threats against impoverished Pacific states. Labor has deepened a web of relations between Australia and other US allies, directed against China, including with the unveiling of a new security pact with Japan last weekend.

The funding for weapons and trainers to Ukraine is part of a broader boost to military spending, contained in Labor’s budget. It provides for an increase in military outlays by 8 percent this financial year. This is part of a broader growth from around \$34 billion in 2016 to an estimated \$70 billion by 2030. But Labor has pledged to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, together with hypersonic missiles and other advanced military infrastructure, which will likely increase the spending by hundreds of billions of dollars.

At the same time, the budget inflicted sweeping attacks on the working class, slashing funding for healthcare and other vital social services, while locking in years of declining wages amid record inflation. Along with the vast military expenditure, the budget provides for massive tax cuts for the ultra-wealthy, underscoring the connecting between war abroad and a class war against workers domestically.



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