New Zealand government reaffirms support for US-NATO war against Russia

Tom Peters
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Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky has been invited to speak by video-link to the New Zealand parliament, as Jacinda Ardern's Labour Party-led government continues and deepens its support for the US-NATO imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine.

The invitation was publicly reported on November 22, although a date has not yet been announced. Underscoring its significance is the fact that Zelensky will be only the second world leader ever to speak to the New Zealand parliament (the first was Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard in 2011).

The announcement follows New Zealand defence minister Peeni Henare's visit to Ukraine, which the government revealed on November 20. He met with Ukraine's defence minister Oleksii Reznikov in Kiev and discussed New Zealand's contribution to the war, which includes 120 NZ soldiers training Ukrainian troops in the UK, and $60 million in military and other support.

While in Europe, Henare also visited the UK, where he spoke with his British counterpart Ben Wallace about the war against Russia, and extended the deployment of 66 NZ soldiers in the UK as part of the training mission until the end of July 2023. New Zealand also has a dozen military personnel involved in intelligence operations relating to the war based in the UK, and another 12 embedded with NATO in Europe assisting with "administration support" and logistics.

Henare said in a statement that visiting Kiev had sent a message that "our support for the Ukrainian defensive effort against Russia's illegal invasion is unwavering." While saying "it is important to push for de-escalation and diplomacy," Henare also expressed support for the Ukrainian regime's "mind set of *we can win, we will win, and we must win*." Kiev has rejected negotiations to end the fighting unless Russia meets its demand for a complete demobilisation and withdrawal.

The NZ government's statements align with the US and NATO propaganda that presents Ukraine's far-right regime as the blameless victim of "Russian aggression." In reality, Vladimir Putin's disastrous invasion was deliberately provoked by the imperialist powers; it was a desperate response to NATO's military build-up, encirclement and threats against Russia. The drive to war sharply accelerated after the imperialist powers in Europe and the US engineered a coup in Kiev in 2014, bringing to power a viciously anti-Russian regime backed by fascists, and sparking a civil war and the break-away of Crimea and two eastern provinces.

Washington is using Ukraine's population as cannon fodder to weaken Russia militarily in what are the initial stages of a Third World War for the redivision of the planet. The aim of the US is nothing less than the subjugation of the entire Eurasian landmass. War against Russia is the antechamber to war with China, which Washington considers its main economic and geopolitical threat.

Far from promoting diplomacy and de-escalation, the Ardern government, along with the corporate media, is supporting provocations aimed at escalating the war. Henare, who also visited Poland and met with its defence minister, Mariusz B?aszczak, echoed NATO's position that the November 15 Ukrainian missile strike in Poland, which killed two people, was the outcome of "Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine." In fact, Ukraine deliberately launched the attack on Poland with the aim of blaming Russia, in the hopes of drawing NATO directly into the war.

Opposition National Party leader Christopher Luxon declared his bipartisan support for the invitation to Zelensky, telling Radio NZ (RNZ) that National was

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“very supportive” of providing more assistance to Ukraine’s war machine.

Zelensky has used his virtual appearances at parliaments in the UK, Germany and Australia as a platform to call for greater commitments of funding and military support.

RNZ reported that the Green Party, which is part of the Labour-led government, “did not raise any objections about Zelensky’s address.” In an attempt to disguise the Greens’ embrace of US imperialism, co-leader Marama Davidson said the government should also invite leaders from “other oppressed nations” such as Palestine to address parliament.

At the same time, speaking to Radio Waatea, Davidson called for a stepped-up war propaganda campaign. In addition to Zelensky, she said, “I want to hear from people on the ground in Ukraine, people organising and having to be at the front line of the terrors of war.”

The M?ori Party, which represents indigenous business interests, has sought to distance itself from the rest of the political establishment with a hypocritical “pacifist” stance. In a recent interview with M?ori Television, party co-leader Rawiri Waititi called for New Zealand to be “neutral” on the war in Ukraine, stating: “Are we puppets of America? Our actions say so.”

The party, however, supported the Ardern government’s sanctions against Russia. In parliament on March 1, Waititi condemned “the unprovoked and unjustified actions of Vladimir Putin, his government, and the fascist ideologies that enable this type of violence and supremacy.” He said nothing about the provocations by NATO and its training and arming of the Ukrainian military, which includes fascist forces such as the Azov militia.

The M?ori Party was a coalition partner in the 2008-2017 National Party-led government, which repeatedly deployed troops to take part in the illegal US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a minor imperialist power, New Zealand’s ruling elite relies on its alliance with the US and Australia to support its own domination over parts of the Pacific.

Even as New Zealand’s economic and social crisis worsens, with soaring living costs and predictions of a recession and increased unemployment, the government is diverting more and more funds towards the military, in preparation to join new wars and to divert social tensions outwards against an external enemy.

Among ordinary people there is widespread anti-war sentiment and distrust of the propaganda aimed at conditioning the population to accept a nuclear war with Russia and China.

What is lacking, however, is any organised opposition to war. The pseudo-left groups like the International Socialist Organisation and Peace Action, which orbit Labour, the Greens and the trade unions, speak for layers of the upper middle class that have joined the camp of imperialism.

A new anti-war movement will only be built on the basis of a socialist program aimed at uniting the working class internationally to put an end to the fundamental cause of war: the capitalist system and the division of the world into nation states.

There is no time to lose: if human civilisation is to have a future, workers and young people have to fight for it. We urge readers to study and share the statement of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), “A call to youth throughout the world: Build a mass movement to stop the Ukraine war!” and register to attend the webinar called by the IYSSE to launch a global movement against the war, on December 11 at 7:00 a.m. New Zealand time.

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