

# Canada escalates war in Ukraine with purchase of surface-to-air missile system for Kiev

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Canada's Liberal government announced Tuesday that Ottawa will purchase a National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS) for Ukraine. The announcement followed a bilateral meeting between Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the "three Amigos" summit in Mexico City, which brought Biden and Trudeau together with Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

Ottawa's purchase of the missile defence system is a further escalation of the US-led NATO war on Russia. Coming in the wake of the Biden administration's pledge to send Patriot missiles to Ukraine and rapid-fire announcements from France, Germany and the US that they will provide Kiev with tanks, Ottawa's supplying of a NASAMS battery underscores that the chief NATO powers, Canada included, are parties to the Ukraine war, and adds to the likelihood of a direct clash between Russia and the imperialist powers.

NASAMS batteries, according to the system's co-designer Raytheon, provide "a tailorable, state-of-the-art defence system that can maximize their ability to identify, engage and destroy current and evolving enemy aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles and emerging cruise missile threats." The US has already supplied two NASAMS batteries to Ukraine, with a further six in the pipeline. Each NASAMS battery is worth approximately US\$200 million, based on a Pentagon contract with Raytheon from late November for six NASAMS worth \$1.2 billion.

Tuesday morning's bilateral meeting between Biden and Trudeau underscored the aggressive character of the Canada-US imperialist alliance. Stretching back over eight decades, Washington and Ottawa's military-strategic partnership is being modernized and expanded to wage the wars of the 21st century, including by guaranteeing the US war machine access to Canadian critical minerals and deepening military cooperation between the two countries from the Arctic to the South China Sea.

On the eve of the North American leaders' summit, Canada confirmed its purchase of 88 F-35 fighter jets from US producer Lockheed Martin at a cost of C\$19 billion (US\$14.2 billion). The supersonic fifth generation aircraft, which has gained notoriety in recent years due to several serious design flaws, costs US\$36,000 for every hour of flight time and over US\$7 million for the annual maintenance of each plane.

The purchase is one of the headline moves in Ottawa's largest

rearmament program since World War II. This program includes a more than 70 percent increase in defence spending between 2017 and 2026, the purchase of new fleets of warships and warplanes, and the modernization of the bilateral North American Defence Command (NORAD) to prepare for the waging of war with hypersonic missiles and nuclear weapons. The White House readout of the Trudeau-Biden meeting made special mention of NORAD modernization, noting that the bilateral alliance is critical for "ensuring the continued defence and security of North America."

Since the Ukraine war erupted last February, Canada has committed \$3.4 billion in aid to the right-wing regime in Kiev, including over \$1.1 billion in military assistance. Canada was also in the front rank of the imperialist powers who goaded Russian President Vladimir Putin into launching his reactionary invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Along with the US and British militaries, Canadian Armed Forces' personnel were instrumental in reorganizing and training Ukraine's military for war between 2014 and 2022. This included helping integrate the far-right Azov Battalion and other fascist forces into the Ukrainian military and para-military National Guard.

Recognizing the importance of Canada's involvement, the White House readout noted that Biden thanked Trudeau for "providing security, economic and humanitarian assistance for Ukraine."

The pair also discussed further integration of Canada into Washington's strategic offensive against China, which US imperialism currently views as the greatest threat to its global hegemony. According to the Prime Minister's Office, the meeting included discussion of "China and a coordinated approach to the Indo-Pacific."

Recent months have seen Ottawa significantly deepen its support for Washington's all-sided diplomatic, economic and military drive to isolate and prepare for military conflict with China. In late November, the Trudeau government released its long-delayed Indo-Pacific strategy, which it emphasized was drafted in close consultation with Washington. The document labelled China "an increasingly disruptive global power" and provocatively pledged to step up Canada's "multifaceted engagement" with Taiwan. In effect, Canada has declared its support for Washington's de facto abandonment of its decades-long "one China" policy, which recognized China's historic claim to sovereignty over the island.

No corner of the globe is spared from US and Canadian imperialist meddling. Biden pressed Trudeau Tuesday for Canada to lead a military and police intervention to prop up the pro-imperialist puppet regime in Haiti. The Western hemisphere's most impoverished country, Haiti has experienced a calamitous social crisis over recent years, as armed gangs with close ties to the country's security forces and traditional elites have terrorized large swathes of the country. A lack of food combined with a cholera outbreak and the virtual collapse of the economy have left the vast majority of the country's 11 million population in destitution.

Critical to the predatory geopolitical ambitions of North America's twin imperialist powers is their consolidation of control over key raw materials vital for future economic development, including "green" and computer technology, and the production of advanced weapons and weapons systems. In 2019, the Trump administration and Trudeau government initiated the Canada-US Critical Minerals Action Plan, an agreement to coordinate access to 17 rare earths and critical minerals deemed essential for the military and economic dominance in the decades to come. In March 2021, at their first official meeting, Biden and Trudeau agreed to a Roadmap for a Renewed US-Canada Partnership, which included a detailed section on strengthening the action plan and North American supply chains.

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland spoke on this theme extensively last fall. At an October keynote speech at the Brookings Institution in Washington, she advocated a policy of "friend-shoring," i.e., an economic nationalist and protectionist plan aimed at confronting Washington's and Ottawa's chief global rivals, above all China. Canada would focus on "fast-tracking, for example, the energy projects our allies need to heat their homes and to manufacture electric vehicles."

These policies, dressed up with bogus commitments to defending "democracy," supporting "green" energy and tackling climate change, are aimed squarely at Russia, one of the world's largest oil and natural gas producers, and China, which has a strong position in the market for raw materials required for EV production. Underscoring this fact, the Trudeau government moved just weeks after Freeland's speech to tighten regulations for investors in Canada's critical minerals sector. The changes block "state-owned enterprises," a euphemism for Chinese businesses, from investing in many energy and mining projects. The new rule allows the government to trigger a provision in the Investment Canada Act that gives them the power to declare investments "injurious to national security." Following the change, Ottawa forced three Chinese companies to divest their investments in Canadian lithium mines.

A joint statement by the chambers of commerce of Canada, Mexico and the United States urged the "Three Amigos" summit to adopt an agenda to make North America the world leader in electric vehicle production based on the "competitive" advantage provided by cheap labour in Mexico, and Canada's rich deposits of raw materials. As Flavio Volpe, head of the Canadian Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association, put it, "The US has capital, Mexico has human capital and Canada has lithium, cobalt, graphite and nickel."

Canadian and US imperialism are determined to pursue their economic interests just as ruthlessly against their supposed allies as against Russia and China. Washington and Ottawa's "North America First" agenda for EV production and other "clean energy" initiatives has prompted criticism from the European imperialist powers, who fear being sidelined in the key economic industries of the coming decades.

At the North American leaders' summit, Ottawa and Washington continued their sustained push to compel Lopez Obrador to reverse course on his plan to strengthen the position of state-controlled companies in Mexico's energy sector. Billions of dollars in investments and massive profits are at stake for American and Canadian big business, with Canadian companies holding C\$13 billion in investments in the sector. Last July, the Trudeau and Biden governments launched a dispute resolution procedure under the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), the successor to NAFTA, to compel Mexico to make concessions.

The trade union bureaucracy, which has systematically suppressed the class struggle as worker opposition has mounted to the austerity policies demanded by the ruling elite to pay for wars abroad, is fully integrated into Canadian imperialism's "North America First" militarist and protectionist agenda. When the Trudeau government unveiled in June 2022 its Indo-Pacific Advisory Committee, which assisted in the preparation of the government's strategy document, one of its most prominent members was Hassan Yussuff, the former head of the Canadian Labour Congress. Unifor, Canada's largest private-sector union, was intimately involved in the USMCA negotiations, during which its subsequently disgraced president Jerry Dias served as a semi-official government adviser.

The involvement of the union bureaucracy demonstrates the capitalist ruling elite's recognition that the massive mobilization of resources to wage war abroad will only be possible through the suppression of working-class struggles at home. They view the unions, which have decades of experience in this task, as their best mechanism to block strikes and protests for wage increases, improved working conditions, and more social spending.



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