

New Zealand boosts support for US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine

Tom Peters
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New Zealand's Labour-Greens government has again increased its support for the US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine.

Prime Minister Chris Hipkins announced an additional \$5.3 million, bringing New Zealand's total military and non-military support for the Kiev regime to \$78 million. This includes funding for weapons and ammunition, and funding for the International Criminal Court to pursue charges against Russian leaders.

Hipkins, who is in Britain for the coronation of King Charles III, visited the Salisbury Plain Army Training Area on Wednesday to announce a further one-year extension of the deployment of 95 New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) personnel who are training Ukrainian conscripts and volunteers.

So far, Defence Minister Andrew Little said, "440 NZDF personnel have been deployed to support Ukraine, with 279 directly involved in the artillery and infantry training delivered in the UK." They have trained more than 1,000 Ukrainians.

Little told *Stuff*: "As the conflict goes on, we will continue to review the support we will provide Ukraine. So this is unlikely to be the last of these sorts of announcements."

Last month, Minister Little attended a meeting of the US-led Ukraine Defense Contact Group in Germany, where the imperialist powers discussed plans to escalate the war, including the delivery of battle tanks and other advanced weapons systems.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg declared before the meeting that Ukraine should join NATO, a move which could trigger Article 5 of the alliance treaty to demand that all NATO member states declare war on Russia.

Russia's disastrous and reactionary invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which the New Zealand

government and media falsely described as "unprovoked," was a response to years of military encirclement and provocations by NATO and the United States. There is an increasingly imminent danger that the war, which has killed at least 200,000 Russian and Ukrainian soldiers, will expand into a direct conflict between nuclear-armed powers.

This was underscored on Wednesday by the criminally reckless drone attack on the Kremlin in Moscow—an apparent attempt to assassinate Russian President Vladimir Putin. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken made clear that the Biden administration supported the attack, which was clearly designed to provoke Russian retaliation and justify a further escalation of the war.

For the US and its allies, the goal is not the defence of Ukraine but the military defeat and break-up of Russia, to plunder its resources. At the same time, preparations are far advanced for war against China, which Washington sees as the main obstacle to its global supremacy.

As was the case in 1914 and the 1930s, the historic crisis of capitalism is driving the imperialist powers towards world war to redivide the globe.

New Zealand is deeply involved as a minor imperialist power allied with the US, and a member of the US-led Five Eyes intelligence sharing network. In defiance of widespread anti-war sentiment, the Labour government—with the bipartisan support of the opposition National Party—has committed the country to an open-ended war that could end in nuclear armageddon.

Significantly, in addition to training Ukrainian troops in Britain, Defence Minister Little stated that "the NZDF has been invited by the United States to support training of Ukrainian personnel in western-led space

operations and increase their interoperability with like-minded partners. This work may also include the training of Polish Armed Forces personnel.” Two NZDF personnel have been deployed to Poland.

Meanwhile, the New Zealand military is increasing its cooperation with Australia and the government is being urged to join the AUKUS (Australia-UK-US) pact. AUKUS includes a deal to supply Australia with nuclear-powered attack submarines, and other measures to integrate Australia into the US plans for war against China.

On Anzac Day—the April 25 national holiday that marks New Zealand and Australia’s entry into the First World War—New Zealand Navy chief Rear Admiral David Proctor delivered a belligerent speech urging a more open and explicit anti-China position.

Speaking during a visit to Hawaii, he told an audience largely made up of US military personnel: “When you look at what China is doing and their hugely significant additional spend on their military capability, particularly maritime capability, we in New Zealand can’t stand aside and say ‘nothing to see here—we will just carry on with what we’re what we’re doing.’”

This was a barely disguised rebuke of both the government and opposition politicians, as well as sections of the corporate media, which have been reluctant to antagonise China, New Zealand’s most important trading partner—even as they support stronger ties with US imperialism.

Proctor denounced China as a “coercive state” that “poses an unwelcome challenge for freedom, prosperity and peace in our region,” and said New Zealand “remains as committed as ever to having a credible military capability ready to respond to those who challenge freedom, peace and the international rules-based order.”

Proctor’s statements turn reality on its head. The US leads the world, by far, in terms of military spending, and has turned the Indo-Pacific region into a powder-keg. It has carried out provocative naval exercises in Chinese-claimed waters, stationed troops in South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Australia and Taiwan, and expanded military bases in Guam and the Marianas. The aim is to goad China into an attack on Taiwan, which would provide a pretext for war.

Interviewing Prime Minister Hipkins on April 26, Radio NZ’s Corin Dann pointed to the “far more

aggressive approach” outlined in Australia’s Defence Strategic Review. “They’re saying they can no longer rely on their distance, they have to have missiles and attack submarines. Are we comfortable with that?” he asked.

Hipkins replied that he had no objection to the Australian war plans. He pointed out that his Labour government had also decided to “upgrade our air force fleet quite significantly, [with] very, very big investments in that in recent years.” He said similar decisions would have to be made to boost the capability of the rest of New Zealand’s armed forces in light of the “more heated geostrategic environment,” including the war in Ukraine.

These statements must be taken as a warning that the government is preparing a further significant increase in military spending in the May 18 budget, to be paid for with cuts to spending on basic services such as healthcare and education.

The urgent task facing the working class and young people in every country is the construction of an anti-war movement to stop the insane drive to World War III. The recent International Online May Day Rally, hosted by the International Committee of the Fourth International, explained the socialist strategy that the fight against war must be based on. We urge readers to watch and share the speeches delivered at this important event, and to contact us today to join this movement.



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