

Trudeau visits Kiev to bolster US-NATO war on Russia

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In a surprise visit to Kiev on Saturday, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed another C\$500 million in military assistance to the far-right Ukrainian regime, and pledged Ottawa would continue supplying weapons and funds to Kiev to wage war on Russia for “as long as it takes.” Coming as the major imperialist powers are carrying out a dramatic escalation of the US-NATO war with Russia, Trudeau’s visit also saw Ottawa advocate for Ukraine’s membership in NATO, which would result in a direct military clash between nuclear-armed powers.

Trudeau was accompanied on his trip by Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, a bellicose Ukrainian nationalist whose grandfather served as the editor of the only Ukrainian-language newspaper permitted in Nazi-occupied Europe. The pair held private talks with the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, before Trudeau unveiled the new military support package at a joint press conference with Zelensky. Although the Prime Minister refused to specify how the funds would be spent, his remarks made clear that the military aid will contribute to the major escalation of NATO’s participation in the conflict that is already under way.

Canada committed to extending Operation Unifier, the training program for the Ukrainian army launched in 2015, until 2026. Canada will now train Ukrainian pilots to fly F-16 fighter jets, which are one of the main types of combat aircraft that NATO members are planning to provide Kiev. According to a press release by the far-right Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the aid package also includes additional supplies of 105mm ammunition, air-to-surface missiles, and a tank maintenance centre in Poland.

Trudeau used his press conference with Zelensky to make provocative denunciations of Russia. This included accusing Moscow, without providing a shred of evidence, of being responsible for the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam, and vowing it “will be held accountable.” The implications of Trudeau’s statement are that Russia, by deliberately destroying civilian infrastructure, is guilty of war crimes—the very type of claim that the NATO powers, Canada included, have used to justify directly intervening in conflicts (as in the 1999 NATO war against Yugoslavia).

Trudeau also boasted that Ottawa has already provided Kiev over \$8 billion in aid, including well over \$1 billion in military assistance, since Russia’s reactionary, US-NATO provoked Feb. 2022 invasion of Ukraine. This vast support for waging imperialist war against Russia has been implemented by a minority Liberal government with close ties to the trade unions, which have

suppressed all working-class opposition to Trudeau’s pro-war, pro-austerity agenda. At the unions’ behest, the social-democrats of the NDP have provided Trudeau’s Liberals with their parliamentary majority since 2019. In March 2022, just one month after the war began, the NDP entered into a formal governmental alliance with the Liberals, guaranteeing to sustain the Trudeau government in office through June 2025.

Zelensky’s declaration at his joint press conference with Trudeau that Ukraine’s long-promised counter-offensive has begun underscores that the war in Ukraine is entering a new, even more explosive stage. Leading officials from the United States and other imperialist powers have repeatedly declared their commitment to the military defeat of Russia, while their governments significantly expand military activity throughout Europe. The latest high-point of this huge mobilization is the Air Defender 2023 exercise, a 12-day operation involving hundreds of fighter jets over German, Dutch, and Czech air space and thousands of soldiers on the ground. Participants have been given explicit instructions to “train as you fight,” increasing the likelihood that Russia will interpret activity near its borders as preparations for an all-out attack.

Having staked everything on Ukraine’s counter-offensive producing a significant shift in the course of the war, the imperialist powers, including Canada, are being compelled by the logic of the conflict to expand their involvement. Both in his statements while in Ukraine and in a thirteen point “joint declaration” with Zelensky, Trudeau reiterated Canada’s support for Ukraine’s accession to NATO membership, which is expected to be significantly advanced by the NATO summit to be held in Vilnius next month.

The consequences of the war’s intensification and expansion were explained in a recent *World Socialist Web Site* Perspective, which noted, “The US-NATO war against Russia is evolving rapidly into a protracted struggle that is increasingly violent, bloody and global in character. The conflict has entered into the gravitational field of total war—that is, a war of unlimited destruction, complete disregard for life, and to which all social needs of the mass of the people are subordinated. Its corollary is the direct assault on the working class in all countries and the obliteration of democratic rights.”

Western propaganda claims that this is “Putin’s unprovoked war” and that Washington, Ottawa, London, Paris and Berlin are acting to save Ukrainian “democracy.” In reality, the Ukraine war

was long prepared and instigated by the imperialist powers through their drive to strategically encircle Russia, harness Ukraine to NATO, and reorganize and rearm Ukraine's military. Their aim—as Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly blurted out last March—is to secure “regime change” in Moscow, reduce Russia to a semi-colony, and plunder its vast natural resources.

The predatory aims of the imperialists correspond with the vicious anti-democratic forces they have cultivated to spearhead the war, above all the political descendants of Stepan Bandera's fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), whose militia have been integrated into Ukraine's security forces. The OUN participated in the Nazi war of annihilation against the Soviet Union and was complicit in the Holocaust. Canadian imperialism plays a special role in this process, having developed over the past three-quarters of a century a close alliance with far-right nationalists from eastern Europe who collaborated with the Nazis during World War II and were subsequently given refuge in Canada. Freeland's prominence in the government and in Trudeau's Kiev visit underlines that this alliance is more important than ever. With state-support, the far-right UCC is mounting a concerted campaign to censor and smear all opposition to the war. At his joint press conference with Trudeau, Zelensky acknowledged Ottawa's outsized role in the war, declaring that Ukraine needs “more friends like Canada.”

Canada's latest round of military assistance was announced less than two weeks after Ukraine's Defence Minister, Oleksii Reznikov, delivered a long list of requests for weapons in a video statement to the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries, Canada's top arms manufacturers' body. Noting the unusual character of the address, the CBC reported that Reznikov had “bypassed the [Canadian] government” to speak directly to the assembled executives. In reality, he was given the opportunity to do so by the Trudeau government, whose Defence Minister Anita Anand delivered the opening address but was conveniently absent when Reznikov spoke.

Urging Canada to commit to “long-term support,” Reznikov said, “Ukraine has given a list of their Canadian products and technologies it needs to the Canadian government.” He emphasized that Kiev is closely following the Liberal government's defence policy review, which has been under way for more than a year. “We expect,” said Reznikov, “that [a] substantial volume of technical assistance to Ukraine will be provided within the framework of the defence policy review. Ukraine's Defence Minister went on to claim that the review will be “released in July,” although the Trudeau government has yet to inform the Canadian public of this.

Even as the union-backed Trudeau government positions Canada in the front rank of the imperialist powers responsible for the escalation of the war with Russia, Ottawa is strengthening its involvement in US-led preparations for war with China. Late last year, the Liberal government released Canada's “Indo-Pacific” strategy. Drafted in close consultation with the White House, it is based on the Pentagon's concept that the struggle against China requires military preparations across a vast geostrategic arena, including the entire Indian Ocean and Asian Pacific. The strategy calls for Canada to systematically expand its military and

economic efforts in the region to confront Beijing, with which leading US military experts are publicly declaring American imperialism could be at war by as early as 2025. Last week, a serious incident was only narrowly avoided after Washington and Ottawa provocatively sailed a US destroyer and Canadian frigate through the Taiwan Strait, which separates mainland China from Taiwan. Beijing responded by sailing a warship across the path of the two military vessels.

Sections of the ruling elite dissatisfied with the Trudeau government's alleged failure to adopt a sufficiently hardline course towards China have made increasingly strident demands for Canada to go even further, including by seeking admission to the anti-China AUKUS military pact involving Australia, Britain, and the US. Over recent months, the main mechanism for this campaign has been the furor whipped up over lurid allegations of Chinese interference in Canadian elections, based on illegal, anonymous leaks from senior sources within the intelligence agencies. These leaks, which have been presented by the corporate media as virtually akin to the gospel truth, have served not only to whip up animosity against China; but also to destabilize the Trudeau government, with a view to driving establishment politics sharply further right, with claims it has failed in its duty to “defend Canada.”

Late last month former Governor General David Johnston, who was appointed by the Trudeau government to investigate the interference claims, released an interim report that said much of the information cited in the intelligence agency-fed media reports was either one-sided, unsubstantiated or misinterpreted. He also opposed the opposition parties' and corporate media's clamour for a public inquiry.

This provoked an outcry. On Friday, Johnston resigned as the government's Special Rapporteur on Chinese interference after a sustained campaign of vilification led by the official opposition Conservatives and their far-right leader Pierre Poilievre, and supported by the Bloc Québécois and the NDP.



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