

Australia announces another \$110 million for US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine

Oscar Grenfell**26 June 2023**

The Australian Labor government yesterday announced a further \$110 million in aid to Ukraine, taking the total so far to \$790 million in a little over a year. The government is continuing to bill Australia as one of the most significant non-NATO contributors to the Ukraine war effort.

Announcing the latest spend, senior Labor politicians, including Foreign Minister Penny Wong, highlighted that \$10 million of the funding was going to United Nations “humanitarian operations.” Even if this were the case, \$100 million, or more than 90 percent, is being allocated directly to weapons of war.

The pledge for more military assistance comes amid a Ukrainian counter-offensive that is resulting in the deaths of up to 1,000 Ukrainian soldiers a day. The disastrous operation, with Ukrainian youths and conscripts treated as cannon fodder, is being ever-more openly directed by the US and NATO, which provoked the war and have used it to advance long-standing plans for a conflict with Russia.

Defence Minister Richard Marles said: “Australia continues to stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes for Ukraine to resolve this conflict on its own terms.”

That is a declaration, in line with the Biden administration’s position, that there will be no negotiated settlement to the war. Instead, it will be fought to the last Ukrainian, with the aim of inflicting a major defeat on Russia, which is viewed as an obstacle to the untrammeled pursuit of American imperialist interests globally.

The latest shipment will include 70 military vehicles, including 28 M113 armoured vehicles, 14 Special Operations Vehicles, trucks and trailers. News reports have indicated that previous deliveries of Australian Bushmaster military vehicles are being used extensively on the battlefield. This is not indirect

military aid, therefore, but direct Australian participation in the counter-offensive and the hostilities against Russian forces.

In addition, Australia will send an undisclosed amount of ammunition. In the past, Australian governments have also dispatched rifles. The precise destination of the weapons remains unclear. It appeared likely that at least some of the rifles were going to end up with volunteer and irregular Ukrainian units, many of which are infested with fascist and Nazi elements.

The announcement was couched in aggressive militarism. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese proclaimed that the Ukrainian forces “continue to show great courage in the face of Russia’s illegal, unprovoked and immoral war.”

Australia has participated in every illegal, unprovoked US war of the past eighty years, from Korea to Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. Russia’s reactionary invasion, moreover, was plainly provoked by the decades-long eastward expansion of NATO, and the transformation of Ukraine into a hostile garrison state on Russia’s border.

Albanese’s comments form part of a broader pattern, with the Australian government increasingly dispensing with even a pretence of diplomacy in its attitude to Russia. The new shipment was unveiled a week after the parliament came together to pass extraordinary legislation barring the construction of a new Russian embassy in Canberra on nebulous “national security” grounds.

Albanese touted the fact that: “We are continuing to train Ukrainian forces in the United Kingdom, and we will continue to engage with Ukraine for as long as it takes to support President Zelenskyy and the people of Ukraine in this struggle.”

It remains unclear precisely which forces Australia is

training, and in what. Again, the question of fascistic paramilitaries that are prominent in Ukraine is raised, but not answered.

The announcement of the shipment, despite its bellicose framing, received a mixed response. The opposition Liberal-National Coalition condemned the package as inadequate. The most hawkish sections of the media adopted a similar line.

Media reports had indicated discussions of even more extensive weapons shipments. There was talk of Hawkei armored vehicles, which are capable of transporting a major Norwegian-American air defence system. Marles indicated that these would not be forthcoming, based on unspecified advice.

Media reports earlier in the month also revealed advanced discussions between the Labor government, the US administration and the Ukrainian regime about the dispatch of Australian Hornet fighter jets to Kiev. That would be a vast escalation of the conflict, with US and NATO leaders previously admitting that the deployment of Western military aircraft could be a direct prelude to a world war.

In any event, the escalatory trajectory, and Labor's full commitment to it, are clear. Albanese will attend the NATO summit in Lithuania next month, planning the next stages of the Ukraine war. Previous such visits have been accompanied by announcements of military aid, so Labor is likely keeping some of the big-ticket items up its sleeve for unveiling next month.

Australia's role in the conflict, despite its geographical distance from the battlefield, again underscores the fact that the Ukraine war is increasingly morphing into a global confrontation. As it is committing hundreds of millions to the front in eastern Europe, Labor is playing a central role as an attack dog for Washington's aggressive confrontation with China in the Indo-Pacific.

This has included hectoring and bullying countries throughout the region, as well as embarking on the biggest Australian military build-up in post-World War II history.

Australia's involvement was also underlined by a report last week in the *Australian*. It revealed that Albanese will visit Germany on July 10, for talks with Chancellor Olaf Scholz, prior to the July 11-12 NATO summit. They will reportedly "discuss closer military ties and co-operation on critical minerals and

technologies."

Australia and the US have struck a far-reaching deal on critical minerals, aimed at guaranteeing US supply in a sector heavily-dominated by China. The US and Europe have reached a similar deal. The arrangements have the character of a wartime bloc, with national economies being readied for major conflict.

A huge arms export from Australia to Germany is being finalised. As per the *Australian*: "German-owned Rheinmetall is working on a deal to supply its home country with an extra 150 Boxer combat reconnaissance vehicles built at its Brisbane-plant, on top of an earlier 123-vehicle export pledge. The proposal to sell Boxers to Germany would lift the value of the planned transaction to about \$6.5bn, a source said, making it Australia's largest defence export deal by a wide margin."

Even the Murdoch-owned publication acknowledged that the deal is in the context of a massive German remilitarisation. That, like the similar rearment under way in Japan, evokes the worst horrors of the 20th century.

All these military preparations are being conducted behind the backs of the population. The vast aid packages to Ukraine, now approaching a billion dollars, are simply announced, without even a figleaf of democratic discussion or debate. So it was with Labor's announcement of a \$368 billion AUKUS program for Australia to acquire US and UK nuclear-powered submarines for use against China.

While there are almost limitless funds for war, Labor, together with the entire ruling elite, is insisting that workers must accept "sacrifice" in the face of the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades.



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