Trudeau pledges tens of billions of dollars more per year to wage global war

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At the NATO summit in Washington earlier this month, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced billions in new military spending and pledged that Ottawa would sharply raise its military budget in coming years—reaching the 2% of GDP spending "floor" dictated by the US-led military alliance by 2032.

The NATO summit plotted a major escalation of the war against Russia over Ukraine, while threatening China. It announced the establishment of a permanent office in Ukraine that could serve as a pretext for direct NATO intervention if it came under attack, and a NATO Command in Germany to oversee its contribution to the war, including an endless supply of missiles, tanks, fighter jets and other war materiel. The summit's final communiqué denounced China as "a decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine" and hypocritically demanded that it halt shipments of "weapons components" to Russia.

Canada, which has played a critical role in supporting Ukraine's far-right Zelensky regime and has integrated itself into the US-led economic and military-strategic offensive against China, is in lockstep with the aggressive actions of its NATO allies. Since coming to power in 2015, the Liberal government has sharply raised military expenditure. Trudeau's commitment to hike military spending by tens of billions more per year, in order to reequip and bolster the capacity of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to wage war, is a recognition that even more is necessary to earn Canadian imperialism a "seat at the table" in the unfolding re-division of the world.

CAF Budget to be doubled to $60 billion per year

In a series of announcements on the sidelines of the summit, culminating with his promise to meet the NATO target by 2032, Trudeau outlined several major military spending initiatives:

*on July 10th, he announced an additional 500 million Canadian dollars in military aid for Ukraine. This is on top of the $4 billion in arms and ammunition that Canada has already pledged and delivered. Canada will also expand its role in training the Ukrainian Air Force to fly the F-16 fighters donated by NATO allies, giving tens of millions to private military contractors who will spearhead the effort.

*the same day, the Trudeau government confirmed that it was officially launching the process to purchase "up to 12 conventionally-powered, under-ice capable submarines." Though the announcement did not include any estimate of the potential cost of the submarines, Defence Minister Bill Blair signed a letter of intent to join a trilateral maritime partnership with Germany and Norway, who are currently building 6 submarines in a joint program worth $8.1 billion. It was reported in June that Canada has been invited to join in the second round of this program.

*the next day, Canada, the United States and Finland announced a trilateral agreement to build new fleets of icebreakers. The agreement aims to produce 90 icebreaker ships that would be critical to opening up transportation routes and supply chains in the Arctic, to ensure that NATO can assert its military dominance over the northern region, which is the site of competing territorial claims and directly borders Russia. Prevailing over Russia and China, which has declared itself "a near Arctic power," in securing control over Arctic Ocean sea lanes and the vast wealth in Arctic natural resources—both increasingly accessible due to the climate-change-driven retreat of sea ice—is the explicit goal of the new Icebreaker Collaboration Effort (ICE) partnership.

*Finally, in the last hours of the summit, Trudeau made the explicit commitment that Canada would reach NATO's 2% of GDP floor for military spending by 2032. According to Defence Minister Bill Blair, the military budget will swell to over CA$60 billion per year in order to reach the target. Touting the Liberal government's record in drastically increasing the military budget, made possible by the support of the social-democratic New Democratic Party (NDP) and its trade union allies, Blair boasted that "Canada is on track to almost triple its defence spending between 2014-15 and 2029-30—and we will not stop there."

As Blair emphasized in his statement, the new military spending initiatives announced by Trudeau at the NATO summit only add to the long list of military procurement projects that the government outlined in its recent defence policy review. These include spending $38 billion over the next 20 years to "modernize" NORAD, $19 billion to purchase 88 F-35 fighter jets for the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and a projected $84 billion for the purchase of 15 new surface warships for the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN).

The scale of this planned increase in the military budget is massive. From a 2014-15 low of $18.5 billion per year, the military budget has already grown by over 60% to reach its current level of more than $30 billion per year. To reach the proposed $60 billion per year level necessary to achieve the NATO spending floor, the current military budget will have to be *doubled.*

The proposed military budget of $60 billion per year is *nearly triple* what the federal government projected it would pay out in Employment Insurance (EI) benefits to all unemployed workers in the last fiscal year ($23.0 billion). It also dwarfs what the federal government transferred to the provinces for health care expenses in 2023-24 ($51.4 Billion).

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The ruling elite demands far more, far faster—and that the working class must pay

For important sections of the ruling elite in Canada and the United States, however, this ramp-up in Canada's military budget goes neither far nor fast enough. Moreover, the plans for tens of billions on new military spending need to be "fiscally sustainable"—in other words, they need to be financed through massive cuts to the public and social services relied upon by workers.

During the NATO summit itself, important sections of the US political elite criticized Canadian military spending directly, demanding that the Liberal government go even further. "It's time for our northern ally to invest seriously in the hard power required to help preserve prosperity and security across NATO," wrote Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell.

In a July 10 editorial, the *Wall Street* Journal referred to Canada as a "NATO Scofflaw" and the Trudeau government as a "deadbeat," hitching a "free ride off the US." Pointing to the escalating war in Ukraine, the mounting campaign of military confrontation against China in the Pacific, and increasing competition in the Arctic ocean, the WSJ editorial board provocatively wrote that "Canada is still sleeping, and if it doesn't meet its alliance obligations, it will have no cause to complain if the alliance wonders if the country should remain a member."

After Trudeau announced the spate of new military spending measures and his plan to reach the NATO spending floor in 2032, prominent members of the Canadian ruling class immediately demanded that the Liberal government make its planned spending more concrete—and ensure that the tens of billions more for war are balanced by equal lion-sized cuts to social spending.

The president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute think tank blasted the announcement, saying, "If all he's going to say is, 'We'll get there eight years from now, and we'll give you the plan and the detail four years from now,' I don't think that that's a very credible statement at all."

Goldy Hyder, chief executive of the Business Council of Canada, wrote in a statement that Trudeau's announcement "fails to include any details on how that target will be achieved" and "does not clarify how any new defence investments will be fiscally sustainable." He urged that "any new spending on defence (be) offset by the reallocation of funds from other areas of government." Likewise, a senior director of Canadian economics with Caisse Desjardins wrote that the federal government "can raise revenues or reduce spending elsewhere to pay for the increased outlays on defence without increasing the size of the deficit."

To pay for such a massive reallocation of funds towards the military, these representatives of the ruling class demand that the federal government slash employment in the public sector and implement ruthless cuts to spending on public services. The cost of rearming Canadian imperialism must be borne, they insist, by the working class.

The NDP and trade union bureaucracy support Canadian imperialism's agenda of aggression and war

Through their alliance with Trudeau's Liberals—formed at the behest of the trade union bureaucracy—the NDP has provided essential parliamentary support for Canada's role in the war in Ukraine, its backing of the Israeli genocide in Gaza, and the accelerating military buildup.

At their annual conference last week, the premiers of Canada's provinces—from the far-right United Conservative Party Premier of Alberta, Danielle Smith, to Wab Kinew, the NDP premier of Manitoba—emphasized the importance of ramping up military spending for the economic and strategic partnership between Canadian and US imperialism. The premiers wrote in their joint statement that, "Canada fulfilling its NATO obligation of defence spending of 2 percent of GDP is an important element of being a stable ally and strong economic partner."

Significantly, the NDP's Wab Kinew was the most bellicose in his public remarks, urging the federal government to reach the NATO target in four years, rather than the eight proposed by Trudeau. "I'm encouraging the federal government to move more quickly," he told reporters on Wednesday. "I think the timeline we have to think about is the next administration, whoever that may be, in the United States of America. So let's hit that target in the next four years with a credible plan to do so."

Kinew, who is the son of an Anishinaabe chief and the first indigenous premier of Manitoba, is hailed by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), Unifor and the Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) as a "progressive." Following in the footsteps of NDP Manitoba Premier and former Ambassador to the US Gary Doer, who acts as his advisor on Canada-US trade, Kinew has embraced his role as a "responsible" steward of capitalism in the prairies. He explicitly linked the rearming of Canadian imperialism to the success of the US-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement, saying that "Canada needs a plan to get to that 2 percent within that first four-year term. Otherwise, it is going to be a trade irritant. The conversations will be linked."

In his exhortation to ramp up military spending by tens of billions twice as fast, Kinew made sure to emphasize the profits that US and Canadian capital could amass extracting his province's natural resources, specifically the critical minerals prized by both the military-industrial complex and for developing "green" capitalism. Rich in untapped deposits of lithium, graphite, nickel, cobalt, copper and other rare earth elements, Manitoba was billed by Kinew as "the Costco of critical minerals."

Meanwhile, in a silence that demonstrates his total consent, federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh has not said a word regarding Trudeau's commitment to spend 2% of Canada's GDP on the military. To ensure "political stability," the NDP forged a "supply and non-confidence" agreement with the Trudeau Liberals in March 2022, one month after the outbreak of the Ukraine war, under which the social-democrats are pledged to keep the minority Liberal government in office through June 2025.

Like the NDP Premier of Manitoba, Liberal Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland was at pains to link Canada's position in the world economy with NATO's aggressive military posture. She announced last week a public consultation bringing together representatives of the auto companies and the trade union bureaucracy, to discuss erecting new tariffs targeting Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs).

The discussions follow the Biden administration's move to sharply raise tariffs on Chinese-made EVs and green technology products, the latest in a series of trade war measures targeting China economic growth and preparing the US economy for war, by creating "secure supply chains" in industries deemed critical to "national security."

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Freeland, who has embraced her Ukrainian fascist heritage as one of the most bellicose advocates of the war against Russia, struck an aggressive tone in an interview with Bloomberg. “Geopolitics and geo-economics is back,” she declared. “That means that Western countries—and very much the US—is putting a premium on secure supply chains and is taking a different attitude towards Chinese overcapacity. And that means that Canada plays an even more important role for the United States.”

In anti-communist language no-doubt learned at the knee of the fascist collaborators who formed the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), Freeland characterized China’s admission to the World Trade Organization as a mistake. “I see that Leninist precept in Chinese economic policy—of dominating the commanding heights of the global economy and of acting quite intentionally to undermine and cut out Western competitors,” she said. “I think it’s high time for us to be clear-eyed about that.”

Freeland then pointed to the statement from the NATO summit in Washington that China is a “decisive enabler” of Russia’s war against Ukraine. “What NATO said this week about China is significant,” said Canada’s finance minister and deputy prime minister. “I would sort of urge people to pay attention to that.”

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