

Canadian warship transits through the Taiwan Strait in provocation against China

Niles Niemuth**2 August 2024**

A Canadian warship sailed through the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday in a military provocation against the Chinese government that was carried out in close coordination with the Biden administration in the United States.

China denounced the transit, with Li Xi, a spokesman for the People's Liberation Army, declaring Canada's action "harassed and disrupted the situation and undermined peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

The HMCS Montreal, a frigate with 240 personnel on board, passed through the 180-kilometer-wide strait which separates the island of Taiwan from mainland China in what Defence Minister Bill Blair said was an expression of Canada's commitment to a "free, open and inclusive" Indo-Pacific.

"As outlined in our Indo-Pacific Strategy, Canada is increasing the presence of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Indo-Pacific region," Blair said in a statement. Canada's trade union and New Democratic Party (NDP)-supported, Justin Trudeau-led Liberal government announced \$2.3 billion in new spending in 2022 to develop Canada's military presence across the Indo-Pacific.

The Taiwan Strait provocation follows shortly on the heels of a visit to Beijing by Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly, the first by Canada's top diplomat to China in seven years. Diplomatic relations between Canada and China spiraled downward after Canada, acting at Washington's behest, arrested Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of Chinese tech company Huawei, in December 2018 while she changed planes in Vancouver. The Trudeau government pressed for Meng's extradition to the US on trumped up, politically motivated charges of helping circumvent the brutal economic sanctions Washington has imposed on Iran, only to allow her to return to China almost three years later after the US and Canada climbed down and made a diplomatic trade-off with China.

The tensions between Ottawa and Beijing over the Meng affair were deliberately fanned by the Canadian political establishment and corporate media with the aim of whipping up animosity toward China and integrating Canada still more deeply in the US military-strategic offensive against China.

Over the last year-and-a-half, the Canadian elites anti-China campaign has been massively intensified, with the security-intelligence agencies making lurid, unsubstantiated claims that

Beijing interfered in the 2019 and 2021 federal elections and that it constitutes the "greatest threat" to Canadian democracy. These claims were quickly embraced by the government and all the opposition parties and served as the justification for the unanimous passage in June of legislation creating a new category of "foreign interference" crimes and granting the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) sweeping new powers.

"As the world faces increasingly complex and intersecting global issues, Canada is committed to engaging pragmatically with a wide range of countries to advance our national interests and uphold our values," Joly said in a statement on her July 19 meeting with China's Foreign Affairs Minister, Wang Yi. "As described in Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy, we must maintain open lines of communication and use diplomacy to challenge where we ought to, while seeking co-operation in areas that matter most to Canadians."

Joly's pragmatic pursuit of business deals with Beijing on behalf of Canadian capital has been denounced by the most bellicose sections of the corporate media as an act of appeasement born of strategic muddle-headedness and cowardice.

In reality, the Trudeau government is fully committed to the US war drive against China, just as it is a major participant in the US-NATO war on Russia and has fully backed Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza.

Following her visit to Beijing, Joly went to both Seoul and Tokyo to pursue further expansion of Canada's security and defence ties with Washington's treaty allies in north-east Asia. In an interview with the *Nikkei*, Japan's principal financial newspaper, Joly said Canada wants to be as close to Japan as it is to key NATO partners like the UK, France and Germany. Japan, she added, is a "core" part of Canada's anti-China Indo-Pacific strategy.

American warships and navy spy planes routinely transit and fly over the Taiwan Strait, and with increasing regularity are doing so in the company of Canadian warships. Under the Canadian Armed Forces' Operation Horizon, Canadian imperialism is establishing its own independent foothold and increasing its military presence in the Indo-Pacific. "Canada is a Pacific nation—and Indo-Pacific security is crucial to our

national interests,” Blair declared in a statement on X/Twitter as the Montreal was making its transit.

Canada’s Department of National Defence describes Operation Horizon as a “forward-presence mission to the region to promote peace, stability, and the rules-based international order.”

The Montreal’s mission to the region is to be followed by visits by two other frigates, the HMCS Vancouver and HMCS Ottawa, which like the Montreal are armed with an array of torpedoes, missiles and guns. The Vancouver was deployed first to participate in RIMPAC 2024, a biannual maritime warfare exercise hosted by the US in the Pacific around Hawaii, which ran from June 27 to August 1.

Since deploying from Halifax, Nova Scotia in April, the Montreal has made a port of call in South Korea and conducted bilateral operations with the US Navy’s USS Ralph Johnson in the East China Sea, which borders Taiwan, China, South Korea and Japan. This included a stretch in June and July, where it joined the US and other imperialist powers in policing sanctions against North Korea. Under Operation Neon, Canada’s military rotates warships and CP-140 Aurora surveillance planes to the region to enforce the trade blockade against North Korea. Canada was a belligerent in the 1950-53 Korean War, which has never legally ended (as only an armistice was ever signed.)

The Indo-Pacific, a vast region encompassing the countries which abut the Indian Ocean, South China Sea, Philippine Sea and the Pacific Ocean, has been turned into a powder keg by the United States and its imperialist allies as they pursue their predatory geostrategic interests against China. The stage has been set for World War III over the course of three American administrations from Obama’s pivot to Asia to Trump’s trade war measures and Biden’s expanded campaign to thwart China’s economic rise and its establishment of the AUKUS military pact with Australia and UK.

AUKUS, which Canada is now actively seeking to join, is aimed at transforming Australia into a frontline state in any war with China and developing and perfecting new weapon systems to fight such a war, including nuclear-powered submarines.

Canada is not only expanding its presence in the Indo-Pacific to counter China. “Strategic” or “great-power” conflict with China and Russia in the Arctic is also driving a massive \$40 billion Canadian government investment in the modernization of NORAD, the joint US-Canada aerospace and maritime defence command.

Last month the HMCS Regina clandestinely trailed a Chinese arctic icebreaker research ship as it passed through the Bering Strait between Russia and the US state of Alaska. According to the *Globe and Mail*, Department of National Defence spokesperson Frédérica Dupuis declared that the operation was part of an “Arctic awareness and sovereignty mission.” Dupuis warned that other nations “are exploring Arctic waters and the sea floor, probing our infrastructure and collecting

intelligence.”

The last week of July also saw a joint patrol of Chinese and Russian bombers enter Alaska’s Air Defense Identification Zone, a massive expanse that extends hundreds of miles into the Bering Sea, which triggered operations by NORAD. While they did not enter Canadian or American airspace, the bombers were intercepted by American F-16s and F-35s and Canadian CF-18 fighter jets. The US and Russia are separated by just 53 miles of ocean at their closest point in the Arctic.

“We are seeing more Russian activity in our air approaches, and a growing number of Chinese dual-purpose research vessels and surveillance platforms collecting data about the Canadian North that is, by Chinese law, made available to China’s military,” Dupuis declared.

The expansion of Canada’s military footprint in the Indo-Pacific is a key component of the defence policy update published by the Trudeau government in April. As the WSWS reported, the document declares Canada needs to prepare to wage war on every continent, ocean, in cyberspace and outer space, declaring that, as “an Atlantic and Pacific nation that shares a continent with the United States, Canada lies at the geographic middle” of the “strategic competition... centred in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions” that “will define” the world’s “future.”

Canada has poured billions of dollars into providing military aid and training to fuel the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, boosting fascist forces as the proxy spearhead of the imperialist offensive against Moscow. To prepare for direct conflict with Russia and China, Trudeau has pledged that Canada will boost military spending to 2 percent of GDP or some \$60 billion annually by 2032. This will require dramatic attacks on workers’ living standards and a massive assault on social programs and public services.



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