

Canada hikes military spending 17 percent this year as part of stampede right

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Canada's newly-minted Liberal Prime Minister, the former central banker Mark Carney, announced on Monday, June 9 a massive C\$9.3 billion or 17 percent increase in defence spending effective this fiscal year. He ended last week welcoming the leaders of world imperialism to the G7 summit, which is being held in Kananaskis, a remote Rocky Mountain Alberta resort.

At the top of Carney's G-7 guest list was US President Donald Trump, who over the course of the previous week deployed National Guard troops and Marines in Los Angeles to brutally suppress mass protests against his war on immigrants, and to acclimatize the American people to soldiers on the streets.

That Trump is in the midst of erecting a presidential dictatorship will be an unmentionable at the G7.

Carney and the leaders of the other imperialist powers are embroiled in a series of bitter conflicts with Trump over his America First global trade war, his vow to annex Canada and seize Greenland (the overseas territory of Denmark, a European Union state), and his attempt to cut a deal with Russia to end the NATO-instigated Ukraine war over their heads and at their expense.

However, they will not breathe a word of protest about the breakdown of democracy in the US, let alone indict Trump as a fascist coup plotter, and this for two main reasons. As capitalist society is rent by ever-deepening social inequality and an imperialist-led drive to a third world war, their governments are themselves increasingly resorting to authoritarian forms of rule; the other G7 leaders are all anxious to placate Trump and cut deals with the would-be dictator to advance their respective imperialist agendas.

One of the reasons Carney gave for the massive military spending hike is that the US can no longer be considered a reliable Canadian imperialist ally. The US, he asserted, "is beginning to monetize its hegemony: charging for access to its markets and reducing its relative contribution to our collective security." Previously he has warned that America under Trump is "out to break us."

Yet Canada's Liberal Prime Minister is currently engaged in secret negotiations with Trump, communicating via telephone calls and chat messages with the president as he systematically violates the US constitution and tramples on the rights of the American people.

Secret Trump-Carney talks on a renewed "economic and security" partnership

The stated aim of their talks is to hammer out a new "economic and security" partnership between North America's twin imperialist powers.

Little about the contents of the negotiations, which involve a handful of senior officials on both sides, has been revealed. The CBC, in what was

no doubt a controlled-leak, has reported that US and Canadian officials have exchanged a 5-page "working document" in which Ottawa commits to making massive military investments in the Arctic and to joining Trump's geo-politically incendiary "Golden Dome" missile defence initiative.

In media interviews, the US ambassador to Canada, Peter Hoekstra, has emphasized that any deal would have to align Canada's trade and economic policies vis a vis China still more closely with those of the US. Canada is already in a trade war with China, as a result of its matching Washington's 100 percent tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles; and it is deeply integrated into the Pentagon's preparations for war with Beijing.

Canadian government sources have stressed that the talks with the White House are highly fractious, that Trump is insistent that some level of tariffs remain, and that their outcome is far from certain.

These developments confirm everything that the *World Socialist Web Site* has said about the breakdown in Canada-US relations. It is a reactionary conflict between rival imperialist powers. Workers in Canada have every reason to oppose Trump and all he represents—oligarchy, dictatorship, imperialist war and territorial expansionism. But they cannot do so by lending support to the Canadian ruling class, or any of its rival factions and political representatives. In so far as they "oppose" Trump, it is solely from the standpoint of defending their own predatory interests and "sovereign" right to the lion's share of the profits derived from the exploitation of Canada's workers and abundant natural resources.

Ottawa is striving to establish closer relations with the European imperialist powers, on the basis of their common determination to escalate the NATO-instigated Ukraine war, even at the risk of triggering a nuclear conflict, and to rapidly rearm in preparation for an all-out war with Russia. As part of his June 9 military spending announcement, Carney affirmed that a key government objective is to make Canada a partner in Europe's US \$1 trillion Readiness 2030 rearmament plan. Carney is to discuss this and related plans to expand Canada's production of critical minerals and strengthen its military-industrial base with European leaders on the sidelines of the G7 summit. During the summit, he is also expected to announce a further Canadian commitment of \$2 billion to fund the Ukraine war.

That said, the Canadian bourgeoisie's primary objective, as underlined by the secret Carney-Trump negotiations, is to secure the status of a duly recognized junior partner in a US-led Fortress North America.

Meantime, the Carney-led Liberal government and the entire political establishment are stampeding to the right, using Trump's threats and a din of Canadian nationalist tub-thumping to provide political cover for the implementation of class war policies for which the ruling class has long been agitating.

Meeting the NATO spending target in one fell swoop

With the government's immediate 17 percent increase in military spending, Canada's defence spending in the current fiscal year will surge to more than \$62.5 billion—well over double in real dollar terms the approximately \$20 billion that Ottawa spent on defence in 2015-16.

The military spending hike and the related decision to militarize the Coast Guard mean Canada will meet NATO's 2 percent of GDP defence-spending floor by the end of the 2025-26 fiscal year. This is a full five years earlier than the 2030-31 target date that Carney and the far-right leader of the official opposition Conservatives, Pierre Poilievre, laid out in their platforms for the election held just seven weeks ago.

This reversal will mean tens of billions of dollars in additional military spending before the decade is out, all of which will be funded through social spending cuts and other austerity measures directed against the working class.

But, as Carney has made clear, the 17 percent hike is only a down payment.

In his June 9 speech and press conference, the prime minister pointed to a raft of as yet unfunded military needs, including procuring a new fleet of submarines and advanced attack drones. He also pledged that the Liberal government will hike its military spending in line with the new spending floor that NATO is to announce at its leaders' summit later this month. The new target is almost certain to be annual expenditure of 3.5 percent of GDP on core military needs—which for Canada would mean a defence budget well in excess of \$100 billion—and a further 1.5 percent on military-related infrastructure.

Declaring the world to be riven by conflict and “disorder” and threatened by a “new imperialism,” Carney announced his government will also “immediately design a new defence policy,” even though a comprehensive update of the existing one was issued in April 2024. The update announced a massive rearmentment drive aimed at making Canada capable of waging war, in conjunction with its allies, in all parts of the world, from the Arctic to the South China Sea, space and cyberspace.

Underscoring the government and Canadian ruling class' readiness to use naked aggression and countenance and commit horrific war crimes, Carney and Foreign Minister Anita Anand were quick last Friday to proclaim Israel's unprovoked and patently illegal attack on Iran an act of “self-defence,” while demanding Tehran take no retaliatory action. This is entirely in keeping with the full-throated support Ottawa and the entire ruling class has given Israel's genocidal assault on the Gaza Palestinians.

A class-war assault

The Liberal government has also brought forward legislation that would severely curtail the rights of refugee claimants, that is people fleeing war, repression and poverty, and expand the powers of the national security apparatus. Under the “Strong Borders Act,” large numbers of people would lose any right to make a refugee claim, making them subject to immediate deportation, and the intelligence agencies and police would be able to compel telecommunications companies to hand over subscriber information without a warrant.

Under other legislation, the government, in the name of enhancing inter-provincial free trade, is preparing to set aside federal health and environmental regulations in favour of inferior provincial ones.

Last but not least, the government is escalating the assault on workers' rights to strike and collectively negotiate the terms of their employment.

In the second half of 2024, the Liberal government, then led by Justin

Trudeau, repeatedly used a newly cooked-up and patently illegal “reinterpretation” of Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code to criminalize strikes, including a month-long walkout of 55,000 Canada Post workers.

Now Minister for Jobs and Families Patty Hajdu has used her arbitrary powers as labour minister to order postal workers to vote on Canada Post's “best and final” contract offers in a government-supervised vote. Hajdu has further signalled that if workers continue to resist Canada Post's sweeping concession demands, she stands ready to use a rigged binding arbitration process to impose them.

Provincial governments across the country are also attacking workers' democratic and social rights wholesale.

Late last month, Quebec adopted anti-strike legislation that will strip large sections of private sector workers of the right to strike and empower the labour minister to illegalize virtually any worker job action and impose binding arbitration at will.

Ontario's Doug Ford-led Tory government has rammed through legislation (Bill 5) authorizing it to establish Special Economic Zones in which any provincial law or regulation, whether pertaining to the environment or workers collective bargaining rights or health and safety, can be suspended at its say so. No sooner had the government empowered itself to override laws and regulations by decree, than Ford vowed that anyone who joined direct action protests against special economic zone-facilitated resource extraction projects would face state violence for “breaking the law.”

The ruling class' stampede to the right has been facilitated at every point by the pro-capitalist trade unions, the social-democratic NDP, and the pseudo-left parliamentary party Québec Solidaire. For years, they systematically suppressed the class struggle while propping up the minority Trudeau government, thereby ensuring that workers were faced with the Hobson's choice on April 28 between a government led by Carney, who has spent his life in the service of the capitalist oligarchy, or the far-right provocateur Poilievre.

The labour bureaucracy is completely integrated into the ruling class drive to reorganize Canadian imperialism for trade and world war and is in the forefront of the flag-waving “Save Canada” campaign that is the political-ideological spearhead of its drive to impose austerity and rearmentment and militarize society.

As the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) explained in its comprehensive statement on the April 28 election, convulsive social struggles are inevitable, but this opposition must be armed with a socialist-internationalist program and leadership. Workers, the statement declared, “must assert their independent class interests by forging a movement for workers' power and fighting to fuse their struggles with the mass opposition to Trump emerging with the American working class. ... To Fortress North America, and the predatory ambitions of American and Canadian imperialism, whether as partners or cut-throat rivals, we counterpose the mobilization of the working class in the struggle for workers' governments in a united socialist North America.”



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