

Australian Labor government gives \$95 million to Ukraine for war with Russia

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The Labor government announced on Thursday that it is providing the Ukrainian government with \$95 million to help it prosecute the war with Russia that has already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives in the worst European conflict since World War II.

The package is the first by the Labor government since it was reelected in May, and is among the biggest provided by an Australian government to Kiev since the US and NATO deliberately provoked Russia's reactionary invasion in March, 2022 and the war that followed.

The latest spend is striking for its militarist thrust. When the war began, Australian governments, first the Liberal-National Coalition and then Labor, downplayed their involvement, presenting assistance as humanitarian or as indirect military support.

That pretext has been dispensed with. Of the \$95 million, it appears that not a cent is earmarked for humanitarian relief. The vast majority of the money is going to offensive weaponry, including advanced US and NATO supplied munitions, which could provoke a war throughout Europe.

Labor also announced further sanctions on 45 commercial Russian vessels, which it accused without proof of violating crippling US-NATO sanctions, bringing the total of Russian ships sanctioned by Australia to 200.

"These commitments will make a tangible difference in Ukraine's defence against Russia's illegal and immoral invasion," Labor's Defence Minister Richard Marles declared in announcing the funding. Foreign Minister Penny Wong described the sanctions as "part of a coordinated effort to starve Russia's oil revenues and limit its ability to finance its invasion."

The depiction of the war as being a defence of Ukrainian "democracy" and of "human rights" was

always a fraud. In reality, the US and NATO transformed Ukraine into a garrison state over the course of more than a decade, deliberately provoked the Russian invasion and have used it to further longstanding plans for regime-change in Moscow and the breakup of the Russian Federation.

However, the events of the past several years have taken the official lies to an almost unsurpassable level of hypocrisy.

Marles and the Labor government, intoning against Russia's "illegal and immoral invasion," and its "aggression," have been steadfast supporters of Israel's genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza. As the Zionist regime has massacred up to 100,000 people, dropping bombs on schools, hospitals and all buildings, Labor has proclaimed Israel's "right to defend itself."

That has included ongoing military exports from Australia to Israel, in defiance of findings by the International Court of Justice that Israel had a "plausible" case to answer for genocide and an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court for its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other leaders on charges of crimes against humanity.

The very same forces that have funded the Israeli genocide, above all American imperialism and its NATO partners, are also financing and directing the Ukrainian war effort, bluntly rejecting international law in the first case, and cynically invoking it in the second.

Ukrainian democracy, too, has been exposed as non-existent. The term of its President Volodymyr Zelensky expired in May, 2024 and he has ruled as a dictator since.

The government, roiled by corruption scandals over the siphoning off of state funds, is rounding up ordinary people in the streets to force them to fight. It is also persecuting opponents, including the young Ukrainian

socialist Bogdan Syriotuk, who has been imprisoned for more than a year on trumped-up charges for opposing the war from a socialist and internationalist standpoint.

The phony professions of humanitarian concern for the Ukrainian people have increasingly been dropped, with the Trump administration deporting Ukrainians so that they can serve as cannon fodder.

The Labor government announcement boasted that its latest spend takes the Australian contribution to the Ukrainian war effort to \$1.7 billion. Some \$1.5 billion of that has been in military aid, which Labor claims is the highest of any non-NATO country.

Labor is providing \$43 million in Australian military equipment, including “tactical air defence radars, munitions and combat engineering equipment.” A further \$2 million is earmarked for “advanced drone technologies” which have played a central role in the carnage of the war.

The other \$50 million is being poured into the Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List (PURL), a fund administered by the US and NATO to provide weaponry to Ukraine. Ukraine’s Defence Minister Denys Shmyhal stated last week that since it was established at a NATO meeting in July, PURL has accounted for around 75 percent of all missiles provided to Ukraine for the US Patriot system, and almost 90 percent for all other missiles.

That means that with its latest spend, the Labor government is directly financing the provision of offensive weaponry to Ukraine, which can be used for strikes on Russian territory. Such strikes, carried out repeatedly throughout the war, risk a direct conflict between NATO and Russia and the development of a European-wide and even global war.

Labor’s involvement in the Ukraine war is part of its participation in an eruption of imperialist militarism globally. The Labor government is ironclad in its commitment to the US alliance, which in the Indo-Pacific centres on a massive military build-up in preparation for war against China, which is viewed as the chief threat to the hegemony of American capitalism.

The Trump administration has gyrated wildly on the question of Ukraine, suggesting at times that it would withdraw from the conflict and at others threatening a more direct war against Russia. The shifts reflect

divisions within the US national-security establishment, including the view of some that American imperialism should cut its losses in Ukraine and focus all of its resources on conflict with China.

The oscillations have also been tied to demands for far greater military spending by the European NATO states, a demand contained in Trump’s National Security Strategy released this month.

In the Indo-Pacific, too, Trump has demanded that allies divert ever greater resources to preparations for war. That has included this year public calls by Trump administration officials for Australia to boost its military spending from the current level of little over 2 percent of gross domestic product, to 3.5 and then 5 percent of GDP.

Labor’s announcement on Ukraine was made just days before Marles and Wong departed Australia for Australia–United States Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) in Washington. Those meetings will be followed by a summit of AUKUS, the anti-China pact involving the US, the UK and Australia.

Commentary in the press this morning indicated that Labor will face renewed demands from Trump, for an even greater commitment to domestic military spending. Already, Labor has increased the defence budget to a record of nearly \$59 billion this financial year, with scheduled increases each year over the decade. Labor is committed to the \$368 billion AUKUS program to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, and has vastly expanded US basing arrangements, including permitting the most potent strike assets of American imperialism to be stationed in Australia.

But clearly more is being demanded. In that context, the \$95 million to the Ukrainian dictatorship and its NATO puppet-masters is little more than a downpayment, aimed at assuaging Trump.



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