

Canada complicit as Trump escalates toward war on Venezuela

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The defining feature of the Canadian government's response to the Trump administration's escalating campaign of aggression and war against Venezuela is its quiet complicity.

Over the past three months, Washington has acted with brazen criminality—indiscriminately massacring dozens of people in air strikes on defenceless boats, seizing oil tankers, and imposing a de facto blockade on Venezuela's oil exports. These acts of military violence and economic warfare are flagrant violations of international law and constitute war crimes.

For decades, the Canadian ruling class has portrayed itself as a staunch proponent and defender of international law. Yet the Liberal government under former central banker Mark Carney has greeted the criminal acts of Trump and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth with a diplomatic shrug.

Ottawa has failed to breathe a word of criticism of the Trump administration's aggression against Venezuela. This is not just because it is eager to reach an accommodation with the fascist, would-be dictator Trump, in which Canada's privileged access to the US market is preserved and its military-security partnership with the US reinvigorated.

The Canadian ruling class shares the goal of ousting Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and plundering the country's natural resources. It worked closely with the White House toward that end under the first Trump administration and that of the Democrat Joe Biden.

The coming US war against Venezuela is aimed at placing the world's largest oil reserves under direct imperialist control. At the same time, the campaign against Venezuela is aimed at denying strategic rivals such as Russia and China access to the hemisphere.

International law, which Ottawa claims to champion, is treated as irrelevant when it aims that the Canadian ruling class support—such as these—are pursued by the United States.

Since early September, the Trump administration has sharply escalated its criminal campaign against Venezuela. US forces have carried out dozens of lethal airstrikes on small boats in the Caribbean under the pretext of drug interdiction, and seized a Venezuelan-linked oil tanker. Most recently, Trump announced a blockade of Venezuelan oil exports, a measure that constitutes an act of war under international law.

The claim that these operations are aimed at combating drug trafficking is a transparent fraud. Venezuela is not a major source of illicit narcotics flowing into the United States. Moreover, no country has the right to kill civilians on the high seas or anywhere else at will. The invocation of "drug interdiction" serves as a concocted pretext for military actions whose real purpose is regime change and the reassertion of American dominance over Venezuela.

These steps form part of a broader drive to reestablish unbridled American imperialist dominance over Latin America. This ambition is baldly asserted in the Trump administration's National Security Strategy, which was released earlier this month. It speaks of a Trump corollary to the Monroe Doctrine under which Washington claims the right to intervene militarily throughout the Western Hemisphere to enforce its

strategic and economic interests and prevent its geostrategic rivals from establishing a presence.

In announcing the oil blockade, Trump dispensed even with diplomatic euphemism, declaring that Venezuela must "return to the United States of America all of the Oil, Land and other Assets that they previously stole from us." The statement amounts to an unvarnished threat of imperialist plunder.

At no point has the Canadian government questioned or criticized, let alone publicly condemned, Washington's illegal military actions and threats of war. It has not demanded clarification, suspended or even threatened to suspend its cooperation with the US in drug interdiction operations in the Caribbean. And it has studiously avoided declaring whether it condones or opposes the killing of people at sea without due process.

The last public expression of Ottawa's position came in November at the conclusion of a G7 foreign ministers' meeting in Ontario. Asked whether US strikes on boats in the Caribbean violated international law, Canada's foreign minister Anita Anand responded that while Canada concerns itself with its own compliance, the legality of US actions is a matter for American officials to decide.

"As Canada's foreign minister, I hold responsibility for Canada's compliance with international law—we are always seeking to comply with international law," Anand declared. "Regarding the question that you asked, I would say it is within the purview of US authorities to make that determination."

In plain terms, Ottawa's position is that international law does not apply to Washington. The Carney government will not challenge US actions regardless of their clear illegality or human cost so long as they advance American and Canadian strategic objectives. Anand's remarks provide political cover for extrajudicial killings at sea and confirm that Canada will continue to work with the United States as it commits acts that meet the definition of war crimes.

Canada's posture exposes the real content of its claims to uphold a "rules-based international order." Ottawa invokes international law selectively. When it comes to the enemies of US and Canadian imperialism, it cries from the rooftops, demanding that the perpetrators of both real and concocted war crimes be "held to account." But when Washington carries out killings, blockades and plots illegal invasions, international law is of no account. Far from a neutral framework, Canada invokes international law as an instrument of imperialist coercion.

Canadian imperialist interests and ambitions in Latin America

The Canadian government's readiness to defend Trump's criminality is rooted in Canada's long-standing economic and military collaboration

with the United States in the Caribbean. Since emerging as an imperialist power in its own right at the turn of the 20th century, Canada has viewed Latin America as a key area of interest, though it has always played second fiddle to its much more powerful American imperialist ally to the south.

Canada's foreign direct investment in the region is now estimated to be in the order of C\$100 billion, concentrated in mining, energy and financial services. Since joining the Organization of American States in 1990, its military-security presence in the region has also expanded significantly.

In 2004, Canada and the US invaded Haiti in conjunction with a fascist rebellion led by former Haitian army officers and Tontons Macoutes to overthrow the country's elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Since 2006, Canada has participated in Operation Caribe, a US-led naval and aerial surveillance mission presented as a counter-narcotics effort, but long used to assert imperialist control over the Caribbean Sea region. Under this operation, Canadian warships, patrol aircraft and personnel conduct "find and track" missions and pass intelligence to US Coast Guard forces that carry out interceptions.

In October, with US airstrikes off Venezuela's coast in full swing, a Department of National Defence spokesperson claimed that Canada's interdiction operations under Operation Caribe were "separate and distinct" from US airstrikes on purported smugglers.

Since then, the government has said nothing about whether Canadian intelligence, surveillance data or other military assets have contributed to the deadly strikes. It has not suspended or even paused its participation in Operation Caribe. In the context of an illegal campaign of lethal violence, the continued provision of intelligence and operational support to the US constitutes facilitation of criminal acts.

The Carney Liberal government's alignment with Trump's offensive is the continuation of a long record of aggression aimed at subordinating the oil-rich country to North American imperialist economic and geostrategic interests.

Canada played a central role in the Lima Group, the US-aligned regional formation established in 2017 to isolate Venezuela diplomatically and legitimize regime change. Ottawa acted as an organizer and enforcer, pressing Latin American governments to reject Venezuelan elections, impose sanctions and coordinate political and economic pressure against the Maduro government.

This role assumed its most blatant form in 2019 when Canada rushed to recognize Juan Guaidó as Venezuela's "interim president" following a US-orchestrated coup attempt. Canadian diplomats worked behind the scenes to unify the right-wing opposition and line up international recognition for an unconstitutional seizure of power, lending pseudo-legal legitimacy to an operation that threatened civil war and was considered a potential pretext for US military intervention.

Although the coup failed, Canada never repudiated it. Liberal governments under Justin Trudeau and now Mark Carney have continued to treat regime change in Venezuela as legitimate, escalating sanctions and diplomatic pressure in close coordination with Washington.

Global Affairs Canada publicly congratulated US-backed opposition leader María Corina Machado on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, praising her "courage and resilience" and declaring support for her vision of Venezuela's future. Machado is a far-right politician who has openly advocated for a US invasion to impose regime change. Ottawa's endorsement, issued as Washington escalates military operations and tightens its blockade, underscores Canada's active participation in the campaign to engineer the violent overthrow of the Maduro regime under the cover of democratic rhetoric.

Canadian banks, mining companies and energy firms stand to profit from the opening of Venezuela's resources.

At the same time, Ottawa's silence on the Trump administration's aggression against Venezuela reflects domestic political calculations.

Large sections of the Canadian population are revolted by the spectacle of US forces carrying out killings on the high seas and imposing blockades in open violation of international law. Carney was elected while posturing as an "Elbows Up" opponent of Trump's threat to annex Canada as the 51st state.

Moreover, in the eyes of wide sections of the population, Canada's claims to uphold international law and human rights have already been seriously discredited by Ottawa's full-throated support for Israel as it has mounted its genocidal assault on the Gaza Palestinians.

The trade union-backed New Democratic Party (NDP) has mirrored the Carney government's stance. It has voiced no substantive opposition to the airstrikes or the economic blockade. This silence is in keeping with the NDP's longstanding integration into the foreign policy consensus of Canadian imperialism, including its support for the US-NATO-instigated war with Russia over Ukraine and for Canada's integration into Washington's military-strategic offensive against China.

The same class logic that drives Canada's policy toward Venezuela has impelled a massive further lurch to the right in ruling-class politics since Carney assumed the reins of government from Justin Trudeau last March. This includes a massive new austerity drive, an intensification of the state assault on the right to strike, the curtailment of refugee rights and the strengthening of the border in collaboration with the Trump administration's war on immigrants.

At the centre of the Liberal government's agenda is a massive rearmament drive and the building up of Canada's military-industrial base to prepare Canadian imperialism for global war.

This is to be paid for by the working class through the dismantling of public services, the slashing of social supports, and the gutting of democratic rights.

Workers must oppose US and Canadian imperialism's aggression against Venezuela. Such opposition does not imply political support for the Maduro government. The Venezuelan state represents a bourgeois-nationalist faction that has responded to economic collapse and imperialist pressure with repression against workers, restrictions on democratic rights, and offers to Trump to give the US privileged access to the country's oil wealth.

The struggle against imperialist war demands the unification of the working class in the imperialist centres of North America with workers in the countries targeted for imperialist onslaught, like Venezuela, China and Russia.

The defence of the Venezuelan masses and of working people internationally requires the political mobilization of the international working class. This means building rank-and-file organizations, breaking with the union bureaucracy, and all the political representatives of big business, and developing a mass movement for workers' power and socialism.

Canadian workers must oppose the blockade, airstrikes on boats and the threat of direct war on Venezuela; demand Canada's withdrawal from all military operations that facilitate US violence; reject imperialist sanctions and asset seizures; and link the struggle against war abroad to the defence of jobs, social services and democratic rights at home.



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