

New Zealand to deepen involvement in Ukraine war

Tom Peters
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About 100 New Zealand troops are likely to remain in Britain, where they were deployed in 2022 by the then Labour-Greens government to assist in training Ukrainian conscripts for the US-NATO proxy war against Russia.

More than 68,000 Ukrainians have completed military training in the UK since the war began.

According to the *Post*, NZ's current National Party Prime Minister Christopher Luxon joined a phone call with other world leaders in the "Coalition of the Willing" on August 24. He told Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky that "we'll look to continue to support [Ukraine in] as many ways as we possibly can."

Luxon told the *Post* he made an "emotional" visit to the UK training ground in early 2025 where Ukrainians, including "bakers, electricians and accountants," were about to be sent into the "trenches in Ukraine, fighting for democracy, fighting for values that we just take sometimes for granted."

Labour's foreign affairs spokesperson Vanushi Walter told the *Post* that her party was "very supportive" of extending the deployment.

"Small to middle powers all over the world have a lot to lose if international law and rules of the UN Charter aren't upheld. So I think it makes complete sense for New Zealand to be standing in defence of Ukraine," she declared.

Such statements are propaganda to justify a brutal imperialist war. While Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was reactionary, it had been provoked by the US and NATO, which backed the 2014 coup in Ukraine and flooded the country with weapons. In the name of defending "independence," Ukraine has become a heavily militarised outpost of the imperialist countries, which are relentlessly escalating the war and building

up their own militaries with the aim of defeating Russia and bringing the entire Eurasian landmass under their control.

The conflict in Ukraine is one front in an expanding world war which includes the US attack on Venezuela, the US-Israeli war against Iran and the ongoing Gaza genocide. The imperialist powers are seeking to redivide the world and establish colonial control over markets and resources. New Zealand's government has supported all these criminal wars of aggression.

Luxon's claim that the war is being waged for "democracy" is a lie. Zelensky has been ruling as a dictator since his presidential term expired more than two years ago. He recently delivered a tirade in which he said holding elections would "destroy the country."

Dozens of opposition parties have been banned and socialist publications including the *World Socialist Web Site* are suppressed. The socialist activist Bogdan Syrotiuk, a leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, has been sentenced to 15 years in prison for writing articles that called on Ukrainian and Russian workers to unite to end the war.

While the Zelensky regime has outlawed socialism, it is glorifying fascism by promoting Nazi collaborators in World War II as national heroes, including Stepan Bandera, Andrey Melyk and Yehven Konovalts.

The anti-democratic repression is aimed above all against Ukraine's working class, which is turning against the war. Many of the conscripts New Zealand has trained in Britain are now likely among the hundreds of thousands of soldiers who have been killed. The Ukrainian military is desperately short of cannon fodder and is facing hundreds of thousands of desertions. Conscription teams are roving the streets and snatching men to send to the front, provoking protests by ordinary Ukrainians.

New Zealand is integrated into the war despite being on the other side of the world. Like Australia, the country has been an ally of US imperialism since World War II and its ruling class relies on US support to maintain New Zealand's own neo-colonial domination over much of the South Pacific.

With an election approaching on November 7, both the National-led government and the opposition Labour Party agree that military spending must be doubled and recruitment significantly increased. The Green Party is also touting its pro-imperialist credentials, with its candidate Josh Jacobsen speaking publicly and proudly about fighting for the NZSAS in the criminal US-led war in Afghanistan.

The corporate media, meanwhile, is actively encouraging young people to go and fight against Russia. In July, the *New Zealand Herald* published an article glorifying Sam Haines, a 22-year-old Auckland man who died while fighting for the Azov Battalion, a fascist unit that plays a major role in the Ukrainian military.

It is not known how many New Zealanders are fighting in Ukraine, but reports indicate that at least seven have died since Russia invaded in 2022. By comparison, 10 NZ soldiers died during the two decades of war in Afghanistan, in which more than 3,500 New Zealanders served.

Ron Mark, who was Defence Minister in the 2017-2020 Labour-led government and is a candidate for the right-wing nationalist NZ First Party, told TVNZ on August 23 that “we should be praising” New Zealanders fighting in Ukraine. He criticised the current Defence Force leadership for failing to “understand the value that these women and men who are serving in Ukraine bring back to us.”

Mark's Facebook feed is dominated by posts glorifying Ukraine's war effort, including its military strikes deep inside Russia, and the involvement of New Zealanders in the war. He has also called for a more rapid military build-up in NZ.

NZ First, which plays a major role in the coalition government, has proposed reintroducing compulsory military service, in line with the preparations being made for conscription in Germany, the US and elsewhere.

The war against Russia is interconnected with the militarisation of the Indo-Pacific, where the US and its

allies are rapidly preparing for a war against China. As part of this, the New Zealand government and intelligence agencies, which are in the US-led Five Eyes spying network, are working to stoke anti-Chinese sentiment.

NATO's top military advisor Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone visited New Zealand from August 23 to 25 and held discussions about the Ukraine war with Luxon and Defence Minister Paul Goldsmith, as well as senior military personnel and pro-war academics at Victoria University of Wellington.

He also told *Newsroom* that China was an “aggressive challenger” ready “to switch to a military orientation, if necessary, whenever they deem it necessary.” The publication reported that “Cavo Dragone was eager to see greater defence cooperation between New Zealand and NATO, including military exercises to build interoperability.”

The escalating world war can only be ended by building a movement of the international working class, against all the capitalist parties, to fight for a socialist anti-war program. Workers and youth in New Zealand who want to stop the descent into global catastrophe should contact the Socialist Equality Group and join the international campaign to free Ukrainian socialist and anti-war activist Bogdan Syrotiuk.



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