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Canada announces further arms shipment to Ukraine as calls grow for industry to shift to “wartime footing”

Defence Minister Anita Anand announced Wednesday that Canada will send C\$9 million worth of replacement barrels for the M-777 artillery pieces it sent Ukraine earlier this year. Coming on the sidelines of a meeting in Brussels of the 40-nation US-led Ukraine Contact Groups, the latest shipment brings to C\$147 million the total that Canada’s Liberal government has spent on military aid for Ukraine since tabling its 2022–2023 budget in early April.

In that budget, the NDP-supported Justin Trudeau-led Liberal government pledged to provide Ukraine with half-a-billion dollars’ worth of armaments by March 2022.



Under Operation Unifier, the Canadian Armed Forces played a major role in training and reorganizing Ukraine's military to prepare for war with Russia (Photo Credit: DND)

Wednesday's meeting underscored that as Ukraine's military position deteriorates, and hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers lose their lives on a daily basis, the Western imperialist powers are determined to further escalate their involvement in the US-NATO war with Russia. The Biden administration, which pledged a further US\$1 billion in weapons for Kiev Wednesday, is determined to "break the back of Russia," so as to reduce it to the status of a semi-colony, seize its resource wealth, and intensify US imperialism's strategic encirclement of China.

Canada, which has depended for more than eight decades on a close military-strategic partnership with Washington to advance its own global predatory ambitions, is fully on board with this reckless agenda, including the provocations Washington is mounting against China in the Asia-Pacific, even while waging war on Russia.

Anand made clear in remarks following Wednesday's meeting that the imperialist powers are planning for an extended period of military conflict. Making a direct appeal to weapons manufacturers and other industrial companies to expand production, Anand declared, "There is a continued need to provide equipment and military aid to Ukraine, and governments across this world only have so much inventory. And therefore the next step is for industry to see itself as having a role."

Anand continued, "We are seeing the need for more industry scale-up. So for example, in the area of ammunition, that's a key area that we need industry to continue to fortify themselves."

What Anand is saying is that the Liberal government and its US allies are planning for many months, if not years, of warfare with Russia, irrespective of the number of casualties suffered by Ukrainian and Russian soldiers. This incredibly reckless policy increases the danger that the conflict could expand into a direct clash between Russia and the US and its NATO allies fought with nuclear weapons, threatening the lives of millions of people throughout Europe and beyond.

Discussions of the need for a dramatic expansion of war production have been ongoing within Canada's political elite and military top brass for some time. Canada's Chief of Defence Staff, General Wayne Eyre, told the CBC in early May that Canadian industry must move to a "wartime footing." Eyre stated, "I think what this has shown though is we need to increase the capacity of [the] defence industry. Given the deteriorating world situation, we need the defence industry to go into a wartime footing and increase their production lines to be able to support the requirements that are out there, whether it's ammunition, artillery, rockets, you name it. There's a huge demand out there."

Eyre is working closely with Anand and Deputy Defence Minister Bill Matthews to develop a comprehensive rearmament plan, including the procurement of new fleets of warplanes, warships and submarines. Anand declared at a Global Affairs Canada conference in early May sponsored by arms manufacturers, "We meet daily, sometimes twice daily. That's the type of team I like to lead and that's the type of team that will continue to deliver in this area."

In its push to ramp up war production, the Canadian government will rely on its close ties to the trade union bureaucracy to maintain labour discipline throughout heavy industry and arms manufacturing. The Trudeau government has experience in this area, having worked with Unifor to ensure the supply of C\$15 billion worth of armoured vehicles to the blood-soaked Saudi dictatorship to wage its brutal war in Yemen, which has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of civilians and plunged millions into hunger and starvation. When extremely limited criticism of this arms deal was raised by the New Democrats during the 2015 federal election, then-Unifor President Jerry Dias stepped in to tell the social democrats in no uncertain terms to shut up—a demand with which the pro-war NDP quickly complied.

Canada's important role in escalating the war with Russia builds on its years-long support for the far-right regime in Kiev. Ottawa was a key supporter of the fascist-spearheaded 2014 Maidan coup, which removed the pro-Russian elected president, Victor Yanukovytsch, and brought to power a pro-Western puppet regime in Kiev. Canada subsequently deployed military trainers to Ukraine, who were involved in providing instruction to the far-right Azov Battalion and other fascist groups as they were integrated into the country's armed forces. At the same time, Ottawa joined NATO's massive

expansion of military force in Eastern Europe, agreeing to lead a NATO battalion in Latvia, one of four NATO advanced battlegroups in the Baltic Republics and Poland.

Earlier this month, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly confirmed that Ottawa is implementing the planned increase of its military contingent in Latvia. “We had 700 troops and we are increasing that now by 450. We are now 1,300 troops in Latvia. We also increased our presence by making sure there is a frigate in the Baltic Sea,” she told the Canadian Press.

Canada will send six CF-18 fighter jets and 200 military personnel to Romania next month to support NATO air provocations against Russia. Bordering Ukraine to the south, Romania lies on the strategically critical Black Sea.

As Ottawa joins in the rapid escalation of hostilities with Russia, it is also ratcheting up tensions with China. Following the lead of the Biden Administration, which is seeking to provoke Beijing into a conflict by overturning the decades-long policy of strategic ambiguity towards Taiwan, Canada has conducted a series of air reconnaissance missions designed to provoke a response from Beijing. Supported by Australia, the US and Japan, Canadian planes took part in reconnaissance missions ostensibly aimed at enforcing UN sanctions on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program between April 26 and May 26. A Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman accused Canada of using the “excuse” of enforcing UN resolutions to conduct operations that were “endangering China’s national security and the safety of frontline personnel on both sides.”

Earlier in May, the Trudeau government confirmed in a long-awaited announcement its decision to ban Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei from the country’s 5G and 4G networks. The aggressive move, which is part of a US-led campaign to cripple China’s major tech companies, underscores Ottawa’s support for the diplomatic, economic, and military moves led by Washington against Beijing aimed at blocking China’s rise as a strategic competitor.

The Trudeau government’s aggressive role as an attack dog for American imperialism around the world enjoys unanimous support within the political establishment. The social democratic New Democrats entered a “confidence-and-supply” agreement with Trudeau in March to guarantee his minority government a parliamentary majority through June 2025. The explicit aim of the agreement was to ensure “political stability”—i.e., the ability to

enforce unpopular policies of waging war against Russia, rearmament, and attacks on the working conditions and living standards of workers to pay for the massive bailouts of the super-rich during the pandemic and the tens of billions needed to fund Canada's preparations for World War III. The NDP's votes secured the passage of the Liberals' latest budget, which included an additional C\$8 billion in military spending increases on top of the massive defence spending hike first unveiled in 2017.

Any criticism of the Trudeau government within the political establishment on these issues comes from the right. In a statement on the Huawei ban, the NDP complained that the move was "long overdue," and accused the Liberal government of dragging its feet on the issue. "It has taken the Liberal government three years to make this decision while other Five Eyes countries made their positions known much sooner. This delay," it continued, "only worked to raise serious questions at home and among our allies about the Liberal government's national security commitments and hampered the domestic telecommunications market."

The opposition Conservatives are demanding that the Trudeau government take an even more belligerent stance against Russia and have repeatedly accused the Liberals of being "soft" on, if not outright appeasers of, China.

The media, led by the *Globe and Mail*, and the Conservatives and New Democrats, launched a broadside against the Liberal government earlier this week following a sensationalized "exposure" of the fact that a low-level official from Global Affairs Canada, Canada's foreign ministry, attended Russia Day celebrations at the Russian embassy in Ottawa last week. The "outrage" expressed by the opposition parties forced Trudeau to declare the official's participation "unacceptable" and promise it would never happen again. "Conservatives have long been calling on the Liberal government to do more to isolate the Putin regime in the world, including by expelling Russian diplomats, as our allies have done," stated interim Conservative leader Candice Bergen.

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