

Canadian government tacitly endorses US assassination of Iranian general Soleimani

By Roger Jordan
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Canada's Liberal government has effectively endorsed the illegal and provocative assassination by the United States of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, which amounts to a declaration of war against Tehran. Just hours after US President Trump ordered a drone strike to exterminate the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force at Baghdad international airport, the Canadian government issued a statement denouncing Iranian "aggression" in the Middle East and cynically appealing for de-escalation.

Washington's calculated murder of Soleimani, who is widely seen as the second most powerful figure in Tehran, and seven other people was a war crime and reckless act of state terrorism. Reflecting the descent into criminality of American foreign policy, which is driven by its deepening geostrategic crisis in the Middle East, Trump openly boasted of having "terminated" Soleimani, who he alleged was the "number one terrorist anywhere in the world." Over the weekend, he issued a chilling threat of further attacks, declaring that the US has selected 52 Iranian targets to be obliterated, including cultural institutions.

The reality, as the long-suffering population of the entire Middle East knows only too well, is that the greatest acts of terror over the past two decades have been perpetrated by US imperialism, which has laid waste to entire societies and slaughtered hundreds of thousands of civilians in one illegal war after another, from Afghanistan to Iraq, Libya, Syria, Somalia, and, through its support for its Saudi allies, Yemen.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who never loses an opportunity in highly choreographed appearances to publicly tout his "progressive" credentials, has not uttered a single word about the state murder of a senior foreign military and political official by Canada's closest ally, one, moreover, which was carried out in blatant violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

In a cowardly and cynical statement released just hours after Soleimani's murder, Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne avoided directly addressing Soleimani's killing. Instead, Champagne declared, "Canada has long been concerned by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, led by Qasem Soleimani, whose aggressive actions have had a destabilizing effect in the region and beyond."

Striking a hypocritical pose of diplomacy and neutrality, Champagne went on, "We call on all sides to exercise restraint and pursue de-escalation. Our goal is and remains a united and stable Iraq."

Champagne's statement turns reality on its head. For a start, it is the military interventions and war-mongering of the United States and its allies, Canada included, rather than the defensive response by the bourgeois-clerical regime in Tehran that have destabilized the entire Middle East. Washington has been attempting since the 1990s to offset its accelerating economic decline and consolidate its unchallenged control over the energy-rich region through virtually uninterrupted wars. Each conflict has been aimed at pushing back Iranian influence and blocking the expansion of the Russian and Chinese presence in the Middle East and Central Asia.

With Canadian support, Washington has brought together an alliance of Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the Gulf sheikdoms to prepare for war with Iran. As well as deploying troops and military equipment to the region, the US and Canada have sold tens of billions of dollars in military hardware to the region in preparation for military conflict. Washington has now effectively triggered all-out war with Tehran with the murder of Soleimani.

Canada will inevitably be a direct participant in the impending war with Iran. Close to 1,000 Canadian troops are deployed in Iraq and across the Middle East alongside US and NATO forces with the twin aims of subordinating war-ravaged Iraq to neo-colonial imperialist occupation

and laying the groundwork for a regionwide war with Iran that would rapidly draw in the major powers.

The Liberal government all but acknowledged the imminent war danger over the weekend with the issuing of a travel advisory warning all Canadians in the Middle East to practice “a high degree of caution.” In the warning, issued for Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates, the Canadian government stated, “The security situation could worsen with little warning. There is an increased risk of attacks in general.”

Canada has 955 troops serving in six missions across the Middle East. It currently has military personnel deployed in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Qatar.

The Canadian government followed NATO in announcing the suspension Saturday of NATO Mission Iraq, a training operation that has been led by 250 Canadian troops since its inception in the fall of 2018. Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan declared that the mission, ostensibly aimed at training Iraqi forces to fight the Islamic State, was being suspended to protect the safety of those involved. A separate training mission being carried out by Canadian special forces troops with militants in northern Iraq was also suspended.

The NATO decision undoubtedly reflects the fear among the Western military alliance that its forces could face a vicious backlash from the local population and military forces they are training to the US’s murderous act. While Iran has vowed vengeance against the United States, the Iraqi parliament, in an indication of the popular hostility to the presence of foreign troops in the country, felt compelled to adopt a resolution calling for the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq.

The Trudeau government’s tacit endorsement of the US assassination of Soleimani was broadly welcomed within Canada’s political establishment. The opposition Conservatives’ only criticism was that the Liberals failed to declare their explicit agreement with Trump’s illegal drone strike. As Shivaloy Majumdar, who served as director of policy for foreign affairs in the Harper Tory government, put it, Canada failed to state its “full-throated” support for the US. “I think de-escalation is certainly an appropriate call, but to somehow insinuate that American foreign policy has unnecessarily escalated the situation is not the best way to frame it,” added Majumdar.

In a cynical attempt to exploit widespread popular opposition to war and the thuggish actions of the Trump administration, New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet

Singh criticized Soleimani’s killing. The assassination, Singh wrote on Twitter, has “brought us closer to another disastrous war in the Middle East.” He appealed to Trudeau to “act quickly with other countries to de-escalate the situation and not be drawn into the path that President Trump is taking.”

These empty bromides will have no impact on the NDP’s steadfast support for Trudeau’s minority Liberal government, as shown by the NDP’s recent backing for the Liberals in their first parliamentary confidence vote. The NDP’s support for the Trudeau government is based on the party’s endorsement of Trudeau’s vast rearmament program, which includes an increase in military spending of more than 70 percent by 2026. The ruling elite views the strengthening of Canada’s armed forces as essential if Canadian imperialism is to share in the spoils of US-led military aggression around the world, including in the Middle East, Asia-Pacific, and Eastern Europe.

Moreover, Singh’s preposterous portrayal of Trudeau and Canadian imperialism more generally as honest brokers in the war-ravaged Middle East is a deliberate political trap aimed at bolstering the Canadian ruling elite’s tattered “humanitarian” credentials. Workers and young people across Canada seeking to oppose the danger of war cannot afford for one moment to have any illusions whatsoever in Canada, or any other country, functioning as a pacifist brake on the drive to war. Instead, they must strive to unite their struggle against military conflict with the widespread opposition to war among working people around the world in an international anti-war movement based on a socialist program.

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