

Top general warns Beijing could “overmatch” Western alliance as Canada steps up provocations against China

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Canada’s chief of defence staff, Lt. Gen. Wayne Eyre, recently told parliament that Canada and the United States are at risk of being “overmatched” by China’s military, accused Beijing of “constantly” “imposing its will on its neighbours,” and claimed that the US imperialist-led “rules-based international order” is in peril.

Eyre’s remarks came as Canada’s ruling elite, through its media mouthpieces and political parties, continues to escalate its provocative campaign of lurid accusations against China. This has included attempts to blame China for Canada’s disastrous response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this campaign is to demonize Beijing so as to mobilize support for the US-led war drive against China and intimidate its opponents.

Eyre told the Senate Committee for National Security and Defence that he has “grave concern” about China’s defence spending, including on “hypersonic” missiles that can evade traditional defence systems. “China is making massive investments into its military capabilities, including new technologies such as hypersonics, such as artificial intelligence, such as quantum computing,” commented Eyre. “And I would say for the first time since the early 1940s, we, the Western alliance, face a military capability overmatch both in terms of quality and quantity of the type of military capabilities that China is investing in.”

While Canada’s top general did not spell it out in so many words, his testimony was an unmistakable call for the Liberal government to accelerate and expand its already massive rearmament program, under which tens of billions are to be spent in the coming years on new fleets of warships and warplanes.

Eyre’s remarks are one element in a sustained propaganda campaign aimed at justifying Canada’s ever more significant role in Washington’s diplomatic, economic, and military-strategic offensive against China. Since Joe Biden took over the US presidency in January and vowed à la Trump to pursue “extreme competition” with Beijing, Canada has doubled down on its support for its US imperialist ally in ratcheting up pressure on China’s Stalinist regime, which, having restored capitalism, represents the interests of the Chinese bourgeoisie.

In late February, the House of Commons with cross-party support labelled Beijing’s mistreatment of the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang province as “genocide.” That same week, Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government held a bilateral summit with the Biden administration that adopted a “roadmap” for expanding Canada-US relations based on North American economic protectionism and enhanced military collaboration against Ottawa’s and Washington’s main rivals, Russia

and China.

In a further provocation, the Canadian government-sponsored Halifax International Security Forum, a leading North American imperialist conclave of military and political leaders and think-tank strategists, announced last week that it has awarded its John McCain Prize for Leadership in Public Service to Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.

The Forum lauded Tsai, whose Democratic Progressive Party cautiously advocates for Taiwanese independence, as an “inspiration and example to freedom-loving people everywhere,” and praised her for “resisting aggression” from Beijing. “Her courage and her fortitude in defending her people against the Chinese Communist Party’s aggression are precisely the qualities that the John McCain Prize was designed to recognize,” stated Forum President Peter van Praagh.

This Cold War-style propaganda, complete with right-wing tropes about “freedom” and “democracy,” turns reality on its head. The promotion of Tsai and Taiwan as bulwarks of the “free world” against “Chinese aggression” has been pushed by the most bellicose sections of the US and Canadian ruling elites, and in lock-step with a campaign of provocative military deployments, bullying and threats.

Continuing on a course set by Trump and his Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, in their last year in office, Washington is systematically breaching the protocols of the “One China policy” it agreed to with Beijing in the 1970s as part of the agreement under which Washington finally accorded diplomatic recognition to the People’s Republic of China. This has included expanding high-level diplomatic interaction with Taipei, pressing for its formal inclusion in various international bodies, and increased military ties. The transparent aim of these actions is to provoke a reaction from Beijing that can then be trumpeted as further proof of Chinese “aggression.”

Taiwan was established as a separate state in 1949 with US support under the military dictatorship of the Kuomintang, and remained an expressly authoritarian regime into the 1980s. Its promotion is part of a dramatic intensification of military provocations by the US and its allies in the region. The Trump administration organized a record number of so-called “freedom of navigation” exercises in the South China Sea during 2020, and Biden is on course to exceed this in 2021. Canada has fully endorsed the US-led military build-up in the Asia-Pacific, including by sending its own warships and submarines to the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait.

At the same meeting that Defence Chief Eyre railed against China, Liberal Defence Minister Harjit Sajjan boasted about the increased

presence of the Royal Canadian Navy in the region, and the Canadian military's plans for a "deeper level of engagement" with states that have border disputes with China, including the Philippines and Vietnam.

Just how provocative is the decision of the Canadian government-sponsored Halifax Forum to honour Tsai and the importance Washington attaches to using Taiwan as a stalking horse against China were underscored by the intrigues that preceded the award announcement.

In early April, *Politico*, a Washington-based news outlet that only occasionally reports on Canadian developments, published an "exposé" that claimed the Trudeau government had threatened to cut off funding for the Halifax Forum if Tsai received the John McCain Prize—a charge Defence Minister Sajjan was quick to deny. This was followed up by a letter addressed to Trudeau by two top US senators, Democrat Robert Menendez and Republican James Inhofe, that urged the Trudeau government to back the awarding of the prize to Tsai.

The reported threat by the Liberal government to cut the Forum's funding became the occasion for a dramatic intensification of the Canadian ruling elite's anti-China campaign and promotion of Taiwan as an outpost of "democracy." In the midst of a media outcry, the House of Commons unanimously supported a Conservative motion declaring Tsai to be a "strong global advocate for democracy" and a worthy recipient of the McCain Award, and that urged the government to guarantee continued funding for the Halifax Security Forum.

The ostensibly "left" New Democrats and Greens, who have previously backed the claims of "genocide" against the Uyghur minority, gave their full-throated support to the motion. For its part, the *Globe and Mail*, which has hardly missed a day in the past 18 months in publishing a new anti-China screed, ran a lengthy piece by a former British diplomat under the programmatic title, "Regime change in China is not only possible, it is imperative." "Regime change," it need be recalled, has been the objective of every US-led imperialist war of aggression since the 1990s, including NATO's bombardment of Yugoslavia to oust Milosevic, the invasion of Afghanistan to remove the Taliban, the illegal assault on Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein, and the savage air war on Libya to destroy the Gaddafi regime, to mention only the most prominent examples.

The Trudeau government has fully embraced the US-led offensive against China. On Trump's behalf, it ordered the December 2018 seizure of Huawei Chief Financial Officer Meng Wanzhou on trumped-up charges of evading illegal US sanctions on Iran. It has also increased the deployment of Canadian military resources to the Asia-Pacific, while unveiling plans to increase military spending by over 70 percent from 2017 levels by 2026.

At February's bilateral summit with Biden, the Trudeau government committed to developing supply chains within North America for rare earths and other materials critically important to future technologies. The explicit aim of this project is to decrease US and Canadian reliance on China, and enable the two imperialist allies to sideline China in key economic sectors in the coming decades, including electric vehicles and clean energy technology. The summit also agreed to work towards the modernization of continental defence overseen by the North American Aerospace Defence Command. The chief goals of this modernization, the cost of which has been estimated at US\$40 billion with \$6 billion coming from Canada, is to ensure US and Canadian imperialism have "first strike" missile capabilities against Russia and China, and can "win" a nuclear conflict against their adversaries. In its 2021 budget, the Liberals set aside over \$250

million for NORAD modernization, a figure that military and security analysts complain is totally inadequate.

In March, the annual Conference of Defence Associations' meeting, held online due to the pandemic, became the occasion for violent denunciations of China for its alleged predatory designs on the Arctic, a resource-rich region that is emerging as an arena for great-power conflict due to the effects of climate change. "We should not underestimate at all that threat of resource exploitation in the Arctic by China in particular," commented Deputy Defence Minister Jody Thomas. "China has a voracious appetite and will stop at nothing to feed itself, and the Arctic is one of the last domains and regions left, and we have to understand it and exploit it—and more quickly than they can exploit it."

However, the Trudeau government's apparent initial reluctance to back the granting of an award to Tsai reflects its desire to avoid a complete diplomatic rupture with Beijing under conditions where China is Canada's second-largest trading partner and delicate negotiations are underway to secure the release of the two Canadians Beijing arrested in retaliation for the seizure of Meng Wanzhou. As the anti-China war drive continues to escalate, this balancing act will become increasingly impossible.

This is underscored by the mounting criticism expressed over the government's current national defence policy, released in 2017. While welcomed at the time, the more than 70 percent increase in military spending is now considered by defence analysts to be inadequate for the task of readying Canadian imperialism for a military conflagration between the major powers. As the Canadian International Council, a foreign policy think tank, wrote in an assessment of the Liberals' latest budget, "America's strategic reorientation towards the Asia-Pacific has accelerated since President Joe Biden took office. The President is calling on America's allies to reinforce this rebalancing in the face of China's growing power. Canada, because of its membership in NORAD, NATO and the so-called Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance, and because of its strategic geographic location, faces American pressure to support this shift with words and resources, as have America's other allies. The 2021 budget doesn't do so."



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