

Canada's Actions, Inactions Leading Us Closer to Nuclear War

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Global Research, August 09, 2022

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Humanity is a mistake away from “nuclear annihilation”, according to the head of the United Nations. But the Canadian government refuses to support efforts to lessen that risk. In fact, they’ve pursued policies that increase the likelihood of nuclear war.

At Monday’s opening of the review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) UN **Secretary General Antonio Guterres** warned of the dangers of nuclear weapons. He said, “humanity is just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation.” Numerous other prominent individuals have made similar statements and the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Doomsday Clock is set to [100 seconds](#) to midnight.

The war in Ukraine has greatly increased the possibility of nuclear war. By promoting NATO expansion, the overthrow of an elected Ukrainian president in 2014 and subsequent eight-year war in the east, Canada helped precipitate the war. Since Russia’s illegal and brutal invasion, Ottawa has poured in weapons, encouraged Canadians to go fight and sent Canadian special forces. At the same time, they’ve openly opposed negotiations to end the war.

On Tuesday Russia’s defence ministry accused the US of being “directly involved” in the war, which puts the countries with 90% of the world’s [13,400](#) nuclear weapons in open conflict. Detonating a small share of these nukes could make the planet uninhabitable.

Then, amidst the war in Ukraine, US House leader **Nancy Pelosi** decided to ramp up tensions with China, which has about [350 nuclear](#) warheads. In the latest move to chip away at Washington’s four-decade-old One China policy, Pelosi visited Taiwan. Canadian **Foreign**

Minister Mélanie Joly and **Defence Minister Anita Anand** both blamed China for the tensions, strengthening the position of the hawks in Washington preparing for an apocalyptic confrontation with the world's most populous nation.

Growing tension between nuclear-armed powers takes place amidst the shredding of the limited arms control measures built up over decades. The Donald Trump administration pulled out of the Open Skies Treaty and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), which have mitigated the dangers posed by nuclear weapons.

But Canadian officials blamed Russia for the demise of the INF Treaty, which banned an entire class of nuclear weapons. In April 2019 Director General of International Security Policy at Global Affairs, Cindy Termorshuizen, said, "[we call](#) on Russia to return to compliance with the INF Treaty." But it's [not clear](#) Russia violated one of the most significant nuclear accords ever signed. The Trump administration, on the other hand, began to develop new ground-launched intermediate-range missiles prohibited under the pact long before it formally withdrew from the INF. US military planners wanted to deploy intermediate-range missiles against China, which is not party to the INF.

In December 2018 Canada voted against a UN General Assembly resolution for "[Strengthening](#) Russian-United States Compliance with Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty." At that vote Canada's representative said Moscow's position on the INF reflected its "[aggressive](#) actions in neighbouring countries and beyond." But it is Washington that broke its word in expanding NATO into Eastern Europe, withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty in 2001 and establishing missile 'defence' systems near Russia.

Canada has opposed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which is designed to make weapons that have always been immoral also illegal under international law. Canada [voted](#) against holding the 2017 UN Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination. Ottawa then boycotted the TPNW negotiating meeting, which two-thirds of the world's countries attended. In December 2020 Canada [voted against](#) 130 UN members that backed a resolution supporting the TPNW and, despite pressure from the disarmament community, Canadian officials failed to attend (even as observers) the TPNW's first meeting of state parties in June.

At the NATO Summit in Spain that same month, however, Canada supported the alliance's statement that it will "[remain](#) a nuclear alliance while nuclear weapons remain."

This position undercuts the NPT, which is supposed to lead to nuclear disarmament. Despite officially supporting the NPT, no Canadian minister has attended the ongoing NPT review conference in New York (the US, German and other foreign ministers attended). The federal government doesn't even appear to have released an official statement about the NPT conference.

Saturday is the 77th anniversary of the US bombing of Hiroshima. Canada is increasing the likelihood of a similar nuclear horror.

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Featured image: The world's first nuclear explosion – the U.S. 'Trinity' atomic test in New Mexico, July 16, 1945. If a nuclear war breaks out today, the devastation caused by modern nuclear weapons would make Trinity's power look small by comparison. Most life on Earth would likely be wiped out. | U.S. Department of Energy

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