

Canada's secret war in Iraq

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Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

How easy it is to make people believe a lie, and how hard it is to undo that work again! - Mark Twain

On March 25, 2003, during the “shock and awe” bombardment of Iraq, then US Ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci admitted that “... ironically, Canadian naval vessels, aircraft and personnel... will supply more support to this war in Iraq indirectly... than most of those 46 countries that are fully supporting our efforts there.”



Cellucci merely scratched the surface of Canada's initial “support” for the Iraq War, but he had let the cat out of the bag. As then Secretary of State Colin Powell had explained a week earlier, “We now have a coalition of the willing... who have publicly said they could be included in such a listing.... And there are 15 other nations, who, for one reason or another, do not wish to be publicly named but will be supporting the coalition.”

Canada was, and still is, the leading member of this secret group, which we could perhaps call CW-HUSH, the “Coalition of the Willing to Help but Unwilling to be Seen Helping.” The plan worked. Most Canadians still proudly believe that their government refused to join the Iraq War. Nothing could be further from the truth. Here are some of the ways in which we joined the fray:

Escorting the US Navy: Thirteen hundred Canadian troops aboard Canada's multibillion dollar warships escorted the US fleet through the Persian Gulf, putting them safely in place to bomb Iraq.

Leading the coalition Navy: Canadian Rear Admiral Roger Girouard was in charge of the war coalition's fleet.

Providing war planners: At least two dozen Canadian war planners working at US Central Command in Florida were transferred to the Persian Gulf in early 2003 to help oversee the war's complicated logistics.

Commanding the war: In 2004, Canadian Brigadier General Walt Natynczyk commanded 10 brigades totalling 35,000 troops. He was Second-in-Command of the entire Iraq War for that year. When Governor General Clarkson gave Natynczyk the Meritorious Service Cross, her office extolled his “pivotal role in the development of numerous plans and operations

[which] resulted in a tremendous contribution... to Operation Iraqi Freedom, and... brought great credit to the Canadian Forces and to Canada.”

Helping coordinate the war: Canadian military personnel working aboard American E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System warplanes helped direct the electronic war by providing surveillance, command, control and communications services to US war fighters.

Providing airspace and refuelling: Countless US troop and equipment transport aircraft have flown over Canada, to and from the Iraq War, and many refuelled in Gander, Newfoundland.

Providing air transport: At least three Canadian CC-130 military transport planes were listed by US military to supply coalition forces during the Iraq War.

Freeing up US troops: Canada’s major role in Afghan war has freed up thousands of US troops for deployment to Iraq.

Providing ground troops: At least 35 Canadian soldiers were directly under US command, in an “exchange” capacity on the ground, participating in the invasion of Iraq.

Testing weapons and drones: Two types of cruise missiles (AGM-86 and -129) and the “Global Hawk” (RQ-4A) surveillance drone, used in Iraq, were tested over Canada.

Depleted uranium (DU) weapons: Canada is the world’s top exporter of uranium. Our government pretends that Canada’s uranium is sold for “peaceful” purposes only, but absolutely nothing is done to stop the US from using DU in their weapons. America’s A-10 Warthog warplanes have fired DU munitions in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq, while each cruise missile contains three kgs of DU ballast. Providing RADARSAT data: Eagle Vision, a US Air Force mobile ground station, which controls Canada’s RADARSAT-1 satellite and downlinks its data, was used from the start of the Iraq War.

Diplomatic support: Former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien supported the “right” of the US to invade Iraq, although Kofi Annan said it was an illegal occupation. Chrétien criticized Canadian citizens who questioned the war, saying they provided comfort to Saddam Hussein.

Training Iraqi police: Canada has spent millions sending RCMP officers to Jordan to train tens of thousands of cadets for Iraq’s paramilitary police force.

Training Iraqi troops: High-level Canadian military personnel joined the “NATO Training Mission in Iraq” to “train the trainers” of Iraqi Security Forces who are on the leading edge of the US occupation.

A Canadian colonel, under NATO command, was chief of staff at the Baghdad-based training mission.

Canada was the leading donor to this centre, providing an initial \$810 thousand.

Funding Iraq’s interior ministry: Canada provides advisors and financial support to this ministry, which has been caught running torture centres.

Thousands of its officers have been withdrawn for corruption, and it has been accused of working with death squads that executed a thousand people per month in Baghdad alone in

the summer of 2006.

Military exports: At least 100 Canadian companies sold parts and/or services for major weapons systems used in the Iraq War. Quebec's SNC-TEC sold millions of bullets to the US military forces occupying Iraq. General Dynamics Canada, in London Ontario, sold hundreds of armoured vehicles to the US and Australia. Between October 2003 and November 2005, these troop transport vehicles logged over six million miles in Iraq. Winnipeg's Bristol Aerospace sells cluster-bomb dispensing warheads used by US aircraft in Iraq.

Canada Pension Plan investments: Canadians are forced to invest their pension money in hundreds of military industries, including most of the world's top 20 weapons producers, which are the leading prime contractors for virtually all the major weapons systems used in Iraq.

So the next time a proud fellow citizen tells you that Canada didn't join the Iraq War, remind them of Mark Twain's famous quip: "It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so."

For more information on the myth of Canada's role as a global peacemaker, read Press for Conversion, coat.ncf.ca or write to COAT, 541 McLeod St., Ottawa, ON, K1R 5R2. Richard Sanders is the coordinator for the Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade.

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